

THESIS

A RHETORIC OF BLOOD:  
CINEMATICALLY DEPICTING THE DUEL

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## ABSTRACT

### A RHETORIC OF BLOOD: CINEMATICALLY DEPICTING THE DUEL

This thesis examines the duel as a pivotal narrative event in three case studies: *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and *The Duellists* (1977). I begin by introducing the duel historically and rhetorically. I argue for its importance as a cornerstone of each narrative that lends it strength to stand. In my subsequent analysis, I break the duel into its parts: the insult and challenge, role of seconds, and, finally, the combat. Analysis of the insult and challenge offers insight into the structure of narrative equilibrium and the type of transformation at work, while also delivering keen visual metaphors for various states of narrative. Subsequently, I turn to the seconds of each film as rhetorical proxies. The seconds elaborate a unique deliberative and metaphorical rhetoric that argues for the acceptance of the narrative's form. Lastly, I examine the phenomenological implications of the combat as it frames the filmic body's interaction with a viewing subject, typically referred to as the audience. I argue that this relationship forms a consubstantial bond through identification of viewing subjects. In the end, I offer the duel as a substantive way of understanding the narratives of each film and the experience offered by each film.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter 1: Throwing the Gauntlet .....	1
The Significance of the Duel in Fiction .....	5
Toward a Rhetorical Understanding of the Duel .....	12
A Neo-Aristotelian History of the Duel .....	15
Review of Relevant Literature .....	26
Framework and Goals .....	30
Chapter 2: Insult and Challenge as Narrative Disruption .....	36
Honor and the Challenge .....	39
The Insult and Challenge Reveal Equilibrium .....	41
Visual Metaphor and Equilibrium .....	47
Todorov's Narrative Principles .....	57
Chapter 3: The Rhetorical and Symbolic Importance of Seconds .....	64
The Duel: Between dialectics and rhetoric .....	70
The Metaphorical Foundation of Rhetoric .....	78
Seconds as a Rhetorical Language .....	82
Drawing Boundaries and Demarcating Rhetoric .....	88
Chapter 4: Combat as Phenomenological Event .....	90
The Duel Intending Toward the Audience .....	92
Mirrored-gaze and Close-up .....	95
Reflexive Symmetry .....	97
Consubstantiality, Identification, and Pure Symmetry .....	107
Chapter 5: Satisfaction: The Duel's Fundamental Challenge .....	114
Implications .....	119
The Rhetoric of Blood and Satisfaction .....	123
Endnotes .....	126



## Chapter 1

### Throwing the Gauntlet

Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
— William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*



FIGURE 1.1: The opening shot in Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975)

Consider the death of a man by gunfire. This event transpires in the opening scene of *Barry Lyndon*, director Stanley Kubrick's 1975 adaptation of the (1844) William Makepeace Thackeray novel of the same title. Two individuals meet to settle a question of honor. Framed in extreme long shot they appear as tiny figures against a pastoral backdrop rather than as clearly defined persons with distinguishable features. [FIGURE 1.1] In the film's first shot, these two characters form a symmetrical balance, mirroring each other's movement and position within the

frame. Like Caravaggio's *Narcissus* (circa 1597-99), they reflect one another and seem to hold a mutual, almost spellbound, attention. The task set before them dictates that they establish and maintain a concomitant bond. This bond is a dualism of style and being. It manifests as aesthetic in its stylistic reflexivity, and ontological in the participants' being-towards-the other—in other words, their mutual purpose and intention. Thus, in unison they cock their pistols, aim, and fire. This final action, which results in the death of one figure, unsettles the symmetry of the scene and, from a distance, appears bloodless. The balance of form is thus shattered, and the bond broken. The vanquished figure has defended his honor, but his life-story ends. Handel's *Sarabande* (1733) plays as the transition into the scene, serving as an aural cue for what might be the most grisly ordeal of punctuality the Western world has known. This is the duel. And its depiction in fiction—both filmic and literary—is the heart of this thesis.

It is significant that this first scene of a film often characterized by critics as being “cold” and “distant” (a standard response to Kubrick's filmmaking style) presents a visual barrier to the viewer. A grey stone wall in the foreground separates the spectator from the characters and action. This is the first metaphor in a film filled with symbolic deployments of material and visual elements. Characterized by our innate distance from the practice, the wall serves as a representation of a contemporary stance toward the duel, one that regards it as an “outdated,” archaic practice. In other words, it reflects the way that the duel is treated as “history,” as something consigned to the past. We are foreigners to the practice, separated by time as well as changes in manner, civility, and social expectations. The wall serves as a physically inscribed means of disconnecting audiences from a practice that is a capital offense, with no social sanction. But history, in the hands of Kubrick and cinematographer John Alcott (who won an Oscar for his efforts) “comes alive.” Indeed, the filmmaker, like many other creators of fiction,

performs this trick poignantly, and by following the scene more closely, this magic is further unraveled.

The distance at which the characters stand from the audience is telling. As stated earlier, Kubrick positions them far away from our viewing position, and the details of their faces and demeanor are indiscernible. The essence of the act remains and is articulated to us by an off-screen, non-diegetic narrator. Two young sons of a genteel family, as the voice describes them, stand their ground at the ready to exchange fire. Because this is the first scene of the film, it strikes a chord immediately and demands scrutiny for the way it frames the ensuing drama. It is a meaningful point of narrative entry for the audience, whetting the viewer's hermeneutical interest. Simply put, the duel offers the first symbolic lens to the audience, the first point of reference for how they will make sense of the ensuing narrative events, many of which pivot on subsequent duels that likewise draw acute attention to themselves, standing out in the narrative progression. However, the scene simultaneously distances the viewer from the duel through its cinematic arrangement of setting and character. Kubrick invites the audience into an immediate relationship with the duel while also blocking that audience from the act, abstracting it in the process. In doing so, he creates a representation of the duel's conflicting place within fictional narratives: As I shall elaborate throughout this thesis, in many films and novels the duel is both an integral part of the unfolding drama and a completely distinct event with its own structural integrity, metaphorically registering the audience's own divided experience as involved yet distant participants.

This scene is remarkable in its symmetrical arrangement of objects in space that articulate the idea of harsh opposition—a visual component of the duel. For example, positioned on either side of the frame are two trees, which serve to frame the action and call attention to an

oppositional effect. Visually, this reflects the duel's own binaristic character, and, ultimately, the structure of the narrative itself. Although one tree is situated in the foreground space and the other is located in the background, both appear to flank the duelists, indicating the combatants' fixed (and logical) positions within the frame. Additionally, in the distance two hills are visible, their tops rising up and mimicking the paired opposition of duelists. Besides visually echoing the curved line of the wall in the foreground, these hilltops mark off boundaries, serving as spatial metaphors for the way in which narrative itself is structurally delimited. Thus another opposition presents itself, and a further juxtaposition of form is unraveled. The framing and the arrangement of objects in space can consequently be understood as a formal expression of the scene's content. Indeed, a *duel of form* becomes apparent in this opening image, one that is commensurate with the formal duel that is the narrative "content" of the scene. Like the individual forms in the scene and their momentary ascendancy, the duel stands out in the narrative as something unique and captivating, and it creates a distinctive space almost independent of its narrative residence. Ultimately, it is the fulfillment of what the duel demands—the action of its participants—that shatters this space and symmetry.

As the narrator makes clear, one combatant (the protagonist's father) is doomed to an early grave. Kubrick shows us the opposition of death and life through reliance on visual metaphors. Dominating the right side of the frame is a field of lush, verdant grass, which reflects the position of the forthcoming victor. Conversely, drawing the viewer's attention on the left of the screen is a patch of dead grass, with only a hint of life; consequently, occupying the left side of the frame is the less fortunate of the two adversaries. By shooting in this way, Kubrick and Alcott have revealed the essence of the scene through visual metaphor. Although it concludes with a disruption of equilibrium and the sense of wholeness that such an arrangement of objects

in space suggests, the scene's balanced visual schema will continue to exert influence on the audience's (perhaps romantic) understanding of the duel as an elegant, seemingly bloodless meeting of equally poised gentlemen. One additional visual flourish is the ominous clouds, which hover over the participants and speak to the bleak state of the ordeal and the film's darker, thanatological themes. The scene is tragic in its finality, yet beautiful (aesthetically "pleasing"), and—thanks to the narrator—a bit droll. In thirty-seconds of screen time, a surfeit of symbols demands interpretive satisfaction.

In this short scene, Kubrick paints a picture and brings it to life. He has encapsulated the duel in fiction, using cinematographic means to express its archetypal characteristics. Through visual distancing, he has turned the duel into an object of contemplation—an approach that can effectively catalyze, or kick-start, critical engagement with its significance as a narrative event and its suggestiveness as a rhetorical metaphor. Following Kubrick's lead, accepting his "challenge," I seek to capture and make sense of the duel in fiction. Like *Barry Lyndon* (a text that both demands critical engagement and offers interpretative satisfaction), the following pages affirm the narrative and rhetorical force of the duel.

### **The Significance of the Duel in Fiction**

Besides *Barry Lyndon*, two other films that feature the duel with near equal narrative vigor, Ridley Scott's *The Duellists* (1977), and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) (henceforth referred to as *Colonel Blimp*), will also be examined in this thesis. Whereas *Barry Lyndon* and *The Duellists* are unique because the duel is crafted into the narrative as a device to move the story forward, Powell and Pressburger's duel is unique not only because it acts as an early plot motivator, but also because it illustrates the

ritualistic aspects of this social phenomenon clearly, giving the upmost detail to how the protocols of the late modern duel would unfold.<sup>1</sup> Through their film, Powell and Pressburger demonstrate in fine detail the process under which two parties would have met to settle a dispute of honor. In historically accurate fashion, they exhibit important conceptual points for understanding how the duel worked. The insult develops clearly, such that an aggrieved party feels the need for “satisfaction” (an important term in both the histories and fictions written on the duel). Next, the filmmakers capture a meeting of the “seconds” (friends of the combatants who serve as mediators for the dispute, opting to meet each other in lieu of the “primaries,” or combatants) in which the rules of the next meeting are discussed and the representatives of both parties judiciously agree upon all necessary points of concern. Finally, Powell and Pressburger reveal what were considered proper customs during actual meeting of the combatants, covering details from rules of attire, to the neutral parties involved (in this case a doctor and Swedish officer who serves as a referee of sorts), and the proper form of the German saber match or *mensur*.<sup>2</sup> The major difference between *Colonel Blimp* and the other films is that it presents the duel in only one scene, but this does not diminish its overall centrality to the story or its elucidative qualities.

In fact, I argue that each film, including *Colonel Blimp*, features the duel so prominently that it becomes a “narrative cornerstone.” This means that narrative progression in each film is both arrested by, and facilitated through, critical moments centered on the duel.

Moreover, like a cornerstone these cinematic representations of the duel stand out in the narrative structure, such that the narrative would fall apart without them. Merriam-Webster defines a cornerstone as “a stone forming a part of a corner or angle in a wall; specifically: such a stone laid at a formal ceremony,” or “a basic element: foundation.”<sup>3</sup> In the latter respect, the

duel functions as a basic, foundational element of each of the films. We often see cornerstones marking particular buildings as a sort of signature of the architects or people behind the building's history and construction. In this respect, the cornerstone acts as a decorative signifier, as a unique mark of the building's place in its urban setting. Likewise, the duel manifests as a unique signature by the auteur in each film. Stylistically it functions as part of each film's form, giving it a unique set of functional operative qualities. These cornerstones thus represent distinct points of the film that are nonetheless embedded in an overall structure. In other words, through their unique nature and basis as cornerstones, they belong within the narrative's overall form, while maintaining their own independence as individual form—an idea I alluded to above.

As seen in the aforementioned reference to *Colonel Blimp*, cinema paints something of a broad historical picture of the duel, which allows viewers a momentary glimpse into a now extinct social phenomenon. However, rather than provide a purely historical analysis this project will venture into rhetorical analysis, concentrating on the themes and motifs present in the selected films, while also focusing on the logic of the duel as it fits into narrative structures. Broadly speaking, the duel as an operative communicative metaphor—its narrative functions and rhetorical solicitations—will be uncovered.

Before proceeding any further, it is important to distinguish the honor duel from the common usage use of the term, and extend some of the exposition developed earlier with reference to *Colonel Blimp*. The colloquial use is rooted in the simple notion of combat or struggle between two adversaries or opposites. Reasons for these types of duels or struggles are broad and may vary, but they generally do not pertain to the idea of honor, as was understood throughout the honor duel's history. Nonetheless, the word's straightforward etymological root excuses a colloquial rendering of the word. The term “duel” derives from the Latin *duellum*,

which is a hybrid of *duo* and *bellum*, or two and war. The root detonates a battle between two adversaries, and this broad definition and origin make it a versatile term.

Indeed, the word finds a healthy and diverse life in common parlance. Commentators often speak of participants in sport contests or games (such as tennis and chess, primarily played as one-one-one competitions) as being engaged in “duels.” Historians readily speak of historical struggles, such as the half-century struggle between the United States and Soviet Union, as duels, undeniably a simplistic metaphor or figurative image that nevertheless captures the essence of complicated geopolitical struggles. As many fans of Steven Spielberg know, *Duel* is the title of his 1970 film about a struggle between a traveling salesman and crazed trucker (the focus is on the truck as the driver is unseen). The film’s title once again underscores the ease with which the term has been applied to a variety of different scenarios in popular culture. In literature, cinema, and video games, protagonists, fulfilling their role in a hero-versus-villain scenario, frequently face off against their antagonist in order to fulfill requirements of a quest. The overall struggle is a duel, as are the direct confrontations that erupt between the two. For instance, the six films comprising George Lucas’s *Star Wars* series feature many such matchups, Luke Skywalker versus Darth Vader being the most famous. These examples, however, lack the connotative undercurrents of the *honor duel*, which has a complex, specifically European history rooted in trial by combat and competitive joust.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the general deployment of dueling metaphors in the abovementioned sport competitions, geopolitical scenarios, and fictional texts, the duel of honor has a specific purpose, and it pertains to an individual’s reputation, virtue, and social standing. Put simply, and as drawn out in the analysis of *Colonel Blimp*, the aggrieved party sought satisfaction from his adversary for some perceived insult or slander, the idea being that one could satisfy one’s honor (and uphold it), by standing ground against the insulter. As I will



briefly address, this centered on the notion of honor and dictated the life of many individuals during the long span of the honor duel's existence. Although abridged, the distinction I make here between the simple colloquial use of the term and the honor duel demands consideration in order to lend terminological precision to the claims made in this thesis.

Through the duel, these narratives are able to explore timeless themes like youth and ambition (in *Barry Lyndon*), anxiety and death (in *The Duellists*), and pride and friendship (in *Colonel Blimp*). These themes adjoin with a sense of the "real" fiction creates, and they are thus instrumental insofar as the story effectively creates verisimilitude, or a perceived authenticity. As Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren state, "With fiction, in so far as it is successful, the imagination creates a world, characters and events which exist, as it were, in their own right."<sup>5</sup> The power of successful fiction encourages its audience to treat its world as real, and invites their interpretive faculties to consider the themes they explore. This invitation develops what Brooks and Warren will articulate a "sense of deepening discovery" and "the growth of awareness and appreciation."<sup>6</sup> To be sure, films present a unique potential for engagement through their visual aspects related to framing, shot composition, mise-en-scène, and so on.

The visual components of the cinematic medium can have a powerful effect on sparking the spectator's involvement and offer a bounty of symbolic references and interpretive opportunities. For instance, in all three films violence undergoes an erasure, or, at the very least, a glossing over. The cinematography and the refined nature of the participants can, on occasion, counteract and deflect awareness of the ritual's spilt blood and brutal nature. The final duel of *Barry Lyndon* is brutal even when contextually imbalanced by the serenity of the church. The frequent duels in *The Duellists* are absurd even when grafted to realistic iconography, historically verifiable social conventions, and so on. In short, the narrative's ability to bring the viewer into a

world and present this world beautifully can belie the violence of the act. Ultimately, the duel can unveil a sophisticated and manipulative façade. While the absurdity and violence of the duel is developed, concomitantly so are its romantic and idealistic qualities. Of course, no two films are the same, and each of my selected case studies utilizes the duel in unique ways, an element that will be explicated over the course of this thesis.

We can extract much from the narratives of these films thematically speaking. However, what is especially exceptional about them is their structure. I argue that the narratives reflect a structure identical to the edifice of the duel. In other words, the films open, operate, and conclude in a way that is suggestive of the duel's formulaic protocol. *Barry Lyndon* is a perfect example of this. The death of Redmond's (Ryan O'Neal) father in the first scene issues a challenge, or demand for satisfaction. Redmond must then fill the void his father's death has left; his identity depends on him proving his worth, and this becomes the recurring basis of his struggles. By the story's conclusion, Redmond has fulfilled the challenge thus inscribing finality and a sense of closure both for him and for the narrative. Moreover, if we push this metaphor further we can perceive Redmond as issuing his own broad challenge throughout the narrative, a challenge aimed at his fate. In essence, from the onset Redmond must "demand satisfaction" of a tumultuous but malleable world, and when the world matches his demand he is satisfied, even in defeat.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the film opens with Redmond's challenge to the world and concludes with the challenge fulfilled. Notably similar to this, *The Duellists* plays out a single challenge that spans the careers of the two lead characters: D'Hubert (Keith Carradine) and Féraud (Harvey Keitel). The film's narrative is Féraud's enigmatic challenge. D'Hubert must contend with this challenge throughout the narrative or be perceived as ignoble. Even if he never fully understands or commits himself to the basis of the challenge, D'Hubert's stubborn adherence to social

convention dictates his actions. The film transforms into a duel itself, one that begins with a clear challenge and concludes with satisfaction. Structurally speaking, the duel informs, shapes, and dictates the narrative as a whole, transcending from its place as a simple plot device. As opposed to *Barry Lyndon*, *The Duellists* centers on one challenge that manifests in multiple duels over time. Despite their surface dissimilarities, the two films share an emphasis on satisfying a need for closure, which renders as both a function of the duel and a function as the narrative. Likewise, the predominant theme of *Colonel Blimp* is honor or, more precisely, the honor of nations in modern warfare. Candy begins as an idealistic young officer during Great Britain's engagement in the second Boer War. In the style of a duel, he tests his mettle by challenging the viewpoints of his German counterparts whom he has perceived as slandering his nation's honor. Candy, as with Redmond, throws himself against and into the world in an effort to whet his stone in the guise of preserving his nation's honor. In effect, the narrative is determined by Candy's issuing of a challenge and its slow becoming or unfolding. This is also indicative of Candy's own becoming, and it is not until the end of the film that this challenge—Candy's existential realization and fulfillment—is satisfied. Thus, each film ultimately uses the duel not only as a narrative cornerstone but also as a meta-textual moment conducive to spectatorial participation. The films end satisfactorily when all points of issue are reconciled. Yet, as I intend to show in this project, this satisfaction is a double-satisfaction, satisfying a narrative demand for conclusion and an audience demand for a distinct ending that reflects a change in the progression of narrative events.

Thus, the duel becomes what can be termed a "meta-duel," a moment in which the duel appears to stunt the flow of narrative only to spark progression (and audience reflection) through its privileging of storytelling, or the distinct forms (such as the duel) within the wider narrative.

In this manner, the narrative is a duel, as a rhetorical indication of how dialectical tensions are staged and resolved. Consequently, each film communicates its own narrative structure through its utilization of the duel as a dominant feature. I will analyze these features, paying particular attention to the duel as the central operating metaphor of the films themselves, and of their structure.

Furthermore, I will trace out how these features occupy a unique space within the narrative. Thus, not only do the films foreground themes native to the human condition, but they also reveal how one can understand narrative operation through an interface with the individual, often formulaic, set piece of the duel. I argue that analyzing how the plots function in relation to the protocols of a duel offers new insight that may be formative in future cinematic analysis. I hope to shed new light on how the tropes, plot devices, and forms present in narrative can serve as illuminating measures of how cinematic storytelling functions.

### **Toward a Rhetorical Understanding of the Duel**

As I suggested earlier, the duel has its own rhetorical quality within the narratives. But how is the duel rhetorical? And how do the films function as rhetoric? This project aims to demonstrate the inherent rhetorical quality of the duel and the way in which the films function as rhetoric. Borrowing from Edwin Black's averment that "It is the task of criticism not to measure . . . discourses dogmatically against some parochial standard of rationality but, allowing for the immeasurable wide range of human experience, to see them as they really are,"<sup>8</sup> we can understand how a phenomenon like the duel communicates its function and discourse through fictional depictions. Further, the persuasive ability of the films lies in the artful way they construe reality, as referenced in Brooks and Warren. Therefore, by examining the duel closely

in its narrative home we are better able to understand the aim of Black's task to see how the discourses in these narratives function.

The duels operate powerfully as a rhetorical language that strengthens its place in narrative. Ernesto Grassi proffers the idea that rhetoric can move beyond simply analyzing texts for persuasive quality and towards understanding the rhetorical language at the heart of human understanding. This supposition relies on metaphor:

But we must go a step deeper than the "literary" plane. The metaphor lies at the root of our human world. Insofar as metaphor has its roots in the analogy between different things and makes this analogy immediately spring into "sight," it makes a fundamental contribution to the structure of our world. Empirical observation itself takes place through the "reduction" of sensory phenomena to types of meanings existing in the living being; and this "reduction" consists in the "transferring" of a meaning to sensory phenomena. It is only through this "transference" that phenomena can be recognized as similar or dissimilar, useful or useless, for our human realization. In order to make "sensory" observations we are forced to "reach back" for a transposition, for a metaphor. Man can manifest himself only through his own "transpositions," and this is the essence of his work in every field of human activity.<sup>9</sup>

Extending Grassi's work will garner insight into how the duel operates as metaphor and expresses or unfolds human realization. Furthermore, exploring the duel reveals a realm of human activity in which metaphorical understanding takes place. The duel becomes an instance in which its participants (and the audience) can "reach back" for a metaphorical understanding of its form and action—metaphor accordingly provides a means to understand the duel as object. Thus, the duel concurrently operates *as* metaphor. The task, therefore, is to understand how the duel operates rhetorically, through its metaphorical unfolding in narratives. Likewise, the duel functions as a rhetorical object that expresses, through its fictional presence, a distinct human countenance. Arguably, this reveals that the duel is a unique, hermeneutically accessible object that contains a rhetorical language based in metaphor.

The director's lens discloses the rhetoric of each film. For instance, there is rhetorical force in the horrified expression on Captain Quin's (Leonard Rossiter) face, or Redmond's staid resolve, in the duel between the two. The cinematography of each film provides ample material for analysis of the duel's rhetorical and metaphorical function. Indeed, a rhetoric of blood is evident in scenes in which the combatants actually spill the blood of their opponent. In these scenes, the audience experiences the visceral aspect of the duel: the physical violence. *The Duellists* stands as another example of this rhetorical offering. When D'Hubert and Féraud battle ferociously in an old church, each of their clothes torn and soaked with blood, an argument for the brutal nature of the act and the absurdity of their plight manifests, and is made forceful through cinematic depiction. Scott exhausts his viewers with the beastly way the characters clash metal and tire from combat.<sup>10</sup> This is opposed to the most *indirectly* visceral aspect of the duel: the anxiety experienced by the duelists. The anxiety and apprehension that frequently precedes the combat is a theme that each filmmaker taps into and captures in distinct ways. One need only watch Redmond's first duel in *Barry Lyndon* to see the way in which Kubrick wants to communicate the physical anxiety present in the occurrence and, successively, the becoming or change the act produces in Redmond's character. These two small examples highlight the ways in which the cinematic medium can uniquely capture thematic certainties, and metaphorically articulate anxiety or the visceral, among other aspects of the human condition.

Uncovering the duel in fiction is a hermeneutical project. In this regard, the duel is a rhetorical device that bends distinctions and tests audience assumptions, while pitting opposing themes against one another in order to work out new understandings of these themes, while simultaneously working out its own ontology. Accordingly, the duel operates diacritically, revealing its own inner workings and thus acting as its own, self-contained hermeneutical object.

Similar to this, the violence and blood prevalent throughout the films can be seen as a symbol of the self's *becoming*, and the tension that surrounds the self's navigating of social norms and opposing ideas. The duel, conceptually framed in this way, becomes a metaphor for the inner struggle involved in the process of interpretation or sense-making. In essence, it is through the films' sanguine struggles that the characters come to a deeper understanding about their inner self, a significant, if not revelatory, realization that runs parallel to the spectator's own search for meaning. Unraveling these rhetorical implications and possibilities, which are frequently cloaked in metaphor is a central aspect of this project.

In the following section, I outline the modern duel by examining some of its key historical concepts. Fortunately, the recorded history of the duel is extensive. Several historians have contributed a greater understanding to its cultural and social significance, such that a rhetorical and narrative analysis need not worry about repeating such a task. Consequently, chronologically relaying this history, as interesting as it is, or citing the abundance of anecdotes related to the duel would lead to redundancy for a rhetorical project. Still, understanding some of the key concepts which define the duel in history will be helpful for a project focused on its depictions in fiction.

### **A Neo-Aristotelian History of the Duel**

In introducing rhetoric, Aristotle gestures delightfully toward the modern duel. In fact, I argue that *On Rhetoric* elucidates the very first ontological basis of the modern duel, even if inadvertently. I base this in Aristotle's claim that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic. The duel is intrinsically a dialectic experience, at its heart it is based in the notion that two beings can come together to "work out" a difference; in other words, it has the ability to work out tensions

both literally and figuratively. And, if it is dialectic by Aristotle's definition it must also be rhetorical, or, at the very least, it must express certain rhetorical qualities.<sup>11</sup> An added example of this comes directly from Aristotle's notion of judicial rhetoric.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle postulates that judicial rhetoric is based in the idea that one must "defend themselves and attack."<sup>13</sup> The duel follows the same logic. Indeed, some researchers have argued that the duel was often a direct manifestation of, or allusion to, the court of public opinion. Ryan Chamberlain makes this connection clear in his *Pistols, Politics, and the Press: Dueling in 19<sup>th</sup> century American journalism*. His analysis relates that journalists and politicians of this time were often pulled into honor duels because of their public statements.<sup>14</sup> Barbara Holland, in *Gentlemen's Blood: A history of dueling from swords at dawn to pistols at dusk* also relates countless political and rhetorical anecdotes surrounding politicians and other professionals who took policy arguments to a grave level.<sup>15</sup> The duel found itself manifest in political as well as judicial argumentation, to the extent that these authors make it known that it, at times, directly affected deliberative argumentation and thus policy making. History shows that when the barriers of civility were broken, and the best available means of persuasion failed, a distinct, violent, and visceral "means" became apparent to all gentlemen who gave themselves to dueling's honor code. That is, all men who could be considered "gentlemen."<sup>16</sup> Thus, I will connect Aristotle's notion of rhetoric directly to the duel, and show how his *On Rhetoric*, in league with his *Poetics*, can aid in fictional analysis.

I will attempt to trace out Aristotelian rhetoric and its relationship to the fictional depictions of duels in film. In order to better understand the duel and its significance, some of the key historical concepts which informed dueling must be reviewed. However, I will proffer this review of the historical literature through a traditional neo-Aristotelian critique, in which I will identify the logos, ethos, and pathos of the duel as made evident through its key historical



concepts. Specifically, I will cite some major texts which articulate a broad historical view of the duel. Understanding that a chronological recounting of the duel's history is peripheral to this project, I will instead focus on some of the important concepts these texts cover and weave them into a rhetorical understanding of the duel, leaving the reader to trace out, on their own, the duel's rich history—with these texts as viable starting points.

While there is an abundance of historical accounts of the duel's significance, its theoretical implications have largely been overlooked. Moreover, little exists concerning the duel in fiction, especially filmic fiction. Therefore, to strengthen the connection between the duel and rhetoric we can base a broad history of the duel in Aristotle's rhetorical project. Furthermore, I would argue that drawing out this rhetorical component of the duel and theorizing on its role in fiction is salient because it may uncover, through its focus on the reflexive qualities of specific forms in fiction, a greater understanding of narrative structure and rhetorical theory. But to start I base a rhetorical understanding of the duel in terms of logos, ethos, and pathos, in order to convey a fundamental understanding of its rhetorical qualities. Ultimately, I aver that building this connection can help strengthen my supposition: that the duel is rhetorical. Here I will focus on how it is rhetorical not from its essential basis in dialectics, or from its unfolding of human experience through metaphor, but because of its connection with Aristotle's modes of proof. Moreover, this model will help weave a history of the duel into a broader rhetorical project. What follows is a broad review of some of the relevant historical literature, framed as the duel relates to the modes of proof.

The logos of the duel resides most firmly in the code of honor that governed duelists through history. V.G. Kiernan's *The Duel in European History: Honour and the reign of aristocracy* stands as a seminal work in the history of the duel, Kiernan positions honor in a

purely Marxist paradigm, underlining the classist nature of the institution. He argues that “Behind all the doings of the higher class lay the code of honour which supported its confidence in itself and in its capacity to rule. A sense of ‘honour’ could be thought of as an innate virtue, or as conformity with stereotyped rules of conduct.”<sup>17</sup> In this fashion, Kiernan assesses the duel as an inner logic with which duelists made sense of the outer-world, and which legitimized their aristocracy, even dividing it as a legitimate space from the monarchies of the time.<sup>18</sup> Honor fused into the duelist as an essential part of his being and mettle. For Kiernan, the duelist relied on an inner ideal:

It is part of what makes man human that he should be capable of a conviction, or at any rate of being impressed by it in others, that life is not worth living at any price. He needs the assurance—illusory it may be—of an impregnable inner self that the outer world cannot tamper with . . . the point of honour . . . is its boundary-stone.<sup>19</sup>

In summary, Kiernan’s historical assessment of the duelist is based in class analysis. Douglas Allen and Clyde Reed take a similar approach, arguing that the duel functioned as a screen of social capital, ultimately allowing for social movement.<sup>20</sup> Both works argue that honor made up the essential logos of the duel. In other words, honor dictated how the duel was to be rationalized and how its justification was “argued” to society as a whole. Honor became one of the focal ways of making sense for individuals tied to its codes, and one of the focal means of expressing this sense-making in their social habitus. Holland also gives detailed accounts of how honor became a paradigm in itself from which to make sense of the world.<sup>21</sup> Occurring from this was the formulation of strict codes of honor which directly manifested the duel’s logos. The codes physically manifested as dueling manuals or written codes of honor—reminiscent of modern texts on civility and manners. As honor became codified the duel’s logos was not only an inner way of making sense, but also the outward expression of this inner logic. And, as an aside, while works like Kiernan’s focus on the duel in its broadest European scope, many studies henceforth

cited study it in its various national iterations. Each, however, provides in-depth analysis of many of the universal truths and themes present in the duel across national borders.

This assessment leads to the idea that the written codes that governed the duelist also represented the duel's logos in print. These codes developed through the history of the duel and articulated the mentality and ontology of honor.<sup>22</sup> They also served as pedagogical tools for aspiring gentlemen. In his work *Dueling: The cult of honor in fin-de-siècle Germany*, Kevin McAleer, who provides a comprehensive account of the duel in Germany, notes that “over five thousand works on dueling had appeared worldwide” since the invention of the printing press.<sup>23</sup> Written notions of honor and the procedures for securing it were practically ubiquitous. These codes served as rulebooks and guidelines for how one would recognize insults, and prepare to protect his honor. Markku Peltonen argued in *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, politeness and honour*, that codes dictated that a gentleman must defend himself if insulted, lest his honor be “diminished or destroyed altogether.”<sup>24</sup> In a chapter wholly devoted to conceptions of honor Peltonen shows how theorists of honor surmised honor's inherent reflexive quality, arguing that honor had to be defended or else lost entirely, and was therefore contingent on the individual's preserving/maintaining it.<sup>25</sup> Similarly to logos in discourse, if honor was challenged it needed to be defended—and, extending the metaphor, this could happen point by point with rapiers, as it would point by point with words in an argument. As shown, the reflexive quality of honor stipulated that honor could be called out, impugned, and slandered such that a gentleman was forced to defend it lest he risk losing it.<sup>26</sup> This occurs in the same way as the denied or disputed argument. Corresponding with the analogous relationship of honor and argumentation, Jennifer Low's *Manhood and the Duel: Masculinity in early modern drama and culture* posits that honor was aligned with the veracity of one's statements:

In contrast to the trial by combat, the duel of honor defended one's overall reputation as much as it defended the actual value of any given statement. While the popular understanding was that the test of truth was essentially a test of character . . . . Many quarrels of extraordinary triviality led to the duel. Combatants intended not to prove another man wrong but to prove themselves the "better" man . . . . what mattered was public opinion.<sup>27</sup>

The duel served as proof of the merit, or veracity of character, of the individual, as well as his statements (both verbal and socially enacted) in society, much like the logos serves as the rational proof or validity of an argument. What the literature crystalizes is our notion that the duel essentially represented a logos which the duelist operated under, and directly expressed to society. Honor was his argument, reasoning, and *raison d'être*, it was also the ontological basis for his status as gentlemen. Concomitant with this logos was the ethos of the duel, or how the character of the duelist expressed the logos of the duel.

The ethos of the duel is acutely tied to the logos of the duel and the codes which communicated this logos. The duelist is, obviously, the participant in the duel; he is also the individual responsible for communicating the duel. Therefore, following Aristotle, the duelist must depend on an ethos. The ethos was both an ethos of the duel and an ethos of the duelist. This ethos weaves itself deeply into the duelist's code of honor. Consequently, the codes of honor and dueling manuals became representative of a greater duelist character, and take on a larger importance with regard to ethos. According to Steven Hughes in *Politics of the Sword: Dueling, honor, and masculinity in modern Italy* the duelist was immersed in a vast litany of codes that "refined and sharpened sensibilities to insult while dictating proper behavior among 'gentlemen.'"<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, dueling manuals, which shaped the duelist's ethos, became "prized possessions."<sup>29</sup> These codes, therefore, contained not only the innate logos of the duel, but also directed and expressed the ethos of the duelist.

The individual regarded as a duelist exhibited particular traits, which also manifested the duel's ethos. The predominant of these traits was a sense of masculinity. Robert Nye, along with a few of the authors previously mentioned, makes this assessment in *Masculinity and Male Codes of honor in modern France*, where he argues that honor was tied directly to masculinity:

Honor codes, with their exacting and often brutal exigencies, afford us a chance to glimpse the challenge that faced any man who aspired to honorability. The 'problem' of honor, as I hope will emerge in this book, is that it was never secure, required constant reaffirmation, and was always open to challenge. Ironically, in a society governed by honor, masculinity is always in the course of construction but always fixed, a *telos* that men experience as a necessary but permanently unattainable goal.<sup>30</sup>

The duelist's constant bid to construct and tailor his masculinity evokes an image of an intractable individual, willing to stand their ground time after time. According to Nye, this may be one of the reasons the duel existed as long as it did. The duelist's ethos rested in masculinity and the notion of the gentleman. According to James Landale, in *The Last Duel: A true story of death and honor*, notions of the perfected gentlemen, or the proper decorum extended to the realm of style and was often reduced to disputes concerning dress codes suitable for a duel.<sup>31</sup> In this manner, duelists had to affix to standards of gentlemanly and masculine behavior, adjusting their outward comportment as necessary.

Despite the rigid codes of the gentleman and ancient standards of honor, Landale shows how honor degenerated into baseless peer pressure by the late nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Arguably, this was because the various codes, although modified and edited throughout history, held significant sway over individuals. This attachment to codes exhibited by duelists, points to the notion of social malleability and peer pressure, strengthening Landale's claim. Nonetheless, the notion of honor persisted as the basis for a gentlemen, and even when pretexts for these encounters were dubious, honor was the stock concept behind them. Many historians show that honor remained an important concept up until the duel went out of vogue. In Germany's Second

Reich, for instance, honor held considerable sway, even as university students turned the duel into a game. The duelist expressed his character through his disciplined adherence to honor and social expectation. Thus, the duelist's ethos (and the ethos of the duel itself) was intertwined with the logos of the duel, and both were embedded in the notion of honor. Finally, I turn to examining the pathos of the duel, by looking at its cultural impact through fiction.

The duel established its pathos through the manner in which it affected the societies and cultures in which it resided. According to Dick Steward's *Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri*, the duel had the capacity to mold fundamental ideas of heroism, and create its own mythologies. Although Steward's work is specific to duels in Missouri and the American western frontier, it reveals the manner in which dueling could emotionally captivate the public and mold ideologies of individualism and self-determination.<sup>33</sup> Irina Reyfman's account in *Ritualized Violence Russian Style: The duel in Russian culture and literature* makes the Russian ideal explicit:

A gentleman, he is always true to his honor; he elegantly challenges his offender for some equally elegant indiscretion, behaves courageously and magnanimously at the dueling site, and shows fortitude in the face of possible punishment afterward . . . . He cannot live if he is dishonored and he never deviates from the honor code. Russians still take pride in this figure.<sup>34</sup>

Reyfman's description takes into account a general cultural attitude or outlook. The duel had a fundamental effect on the Russian soul. And Reyfman shows how writers such as Pushkin, Chekhov, Lermontov, and Turgenev created this effect through the emotion they poured into their depictions of the duel. In this way, the duel solidified notions of heroic figures and demonstrated a clear pathos appeal to existing social orders by showing them idealizations, through fictional accounts and characters, which resonated emotionally and culturally as unique and worth a measure of blood. Likewise, as it was often the target of legal punitive measures

through its long history, the duel established a notion of individuality. Historically, the duel appealed to the desire to be free. The duel carved a space for the individual to act as an individual existing separate from the state.<sup>35</sup> These authors show how the duel maintained an emotional cultural weight that affected wide social orders and built ideologies, and, when mixed with fiction, the duel was able to create a dominant cultural pathos.

The pathos of the duel is most explicit in its fictional depictions and drama. Indeed, this arena has proven the best able to set the parameters of the duel as an emotional experience in the public's consciousness. Reyfman pays particular attention to literary analyses of the duel in Russian literature, showing how Russian identities were formed through a cultural interpretation of the duel in fiction.<sup>36</sup> Andrew Wisely approaches the duel in fiction from the perspective of a thoroughly anti-duelist, in his study of the Austrian writer Arthur Schnitzler entitled, *Arthur Schnitzler and the Discourse of Honor and Dueling*. Schnitzler positions the duel as a socio-political problem, using its violent emotional qualities to argue against it. Sean Gaston's article entitled, "Conrad and the Asymmetrical Duel," suggests Conrad intended "The Duel" to be a direct analogy to Napoleon's campaigns and trials in Europe, which hoped to conjure the emotions present in an archetypal struggle of individual versus the wider world dichotomy.<sup>37</sup> Kathleen Leicht's "Dialogue and Duelling in Restoration Comedy" reveals how comedy of Restoration England often utilized the duel in order to belie the more serious cultural debates surrounding the practice.<sup>38</sup> In this case, the duel represented as containing both humorous and morose qualities. Through their refusal to acknowledge the established practices of the duel many narratives in Russian literature demonstrate this element of farce as well.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, fiction utilized the duel in numerous ways, which established a unique pathos of the duel. These depictions ranged from the dramatic to the comedic, highlighting everything from the savage to

romantic characteristics of the duel. Indeed tragedy and fiction depicting the duel repeatedly proved to be an effective source for a general working through of social emotions.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the historians previously mentioned also recognize the duel's inherent value to drama. Kiernan echoes this sentiment most closely:

Irrational as it might be, it was no more so than a great deal that is inexplicable in the human condition itself, that strange medley of the fascinating and the hideous, tragedy and obscenity and romance. It was because of this heterogeneity lying behind the formal logic or neat insanity of the duel that it could find analogies or stir echoes in so many other provinces of human life. Imaginatively presented in drama or fiction it could become an emblem of man's struggle with fate, or with heaven or hell, or with his fellow-men, or with himself, an epitome of his whole destiny.<sup>41</sup>

Simply put, the duel fascinated people. It became a measure of humanness for the members of society who held most closely to it, through either their participation in its deadly practice, or their adulation of the duelists they read about in fiction and news outlets. The goal of this thesis is to not explore the rich history of the duel, but rather to capture its role as a symbol in narrative, as well as its inherent rhetorical qualities in order that we may be better able to understand how it informs both narrative theory and rhetorical theory. Ultimately, the effect of this could very well be a small contribution to understanding the duel's role in history.

Aristotle argues that rhetoric is a *techné*. Following its other connections to rhetoric, I will add that the duel is likewise a *techné*. Moreover, as Aristotle maps out a rhetorical theory based on rhetoric's definition as *techné*, we can build a theory of the duel. Simply put, Aristotle sought to elaborate on the idea that rhetoric was *techné*, and from this show how, as a skill, it could be learned, developed, and classified. The duel is also a skill or art that can help inform our own theorizing. If we are able to understand its place in fiction as well as what it meant both ontologically and rhetorically speaking, we may be able to utilize it as a *techné* that will help discern ways in which we interpret and understand. The duel, when treated this way, can serve as



a tool for future, broad hermeneutic projects. Therefore, by understanding the framework of the duel, we can build it into a broader applicable theory, or model for interpretation. In this manner, the duel is a *techné* that can aid future theoretical work.

This theory is based in our capacity to understand, borrowing again from Aristotle, to understand the paths others take, and to observe their activity.<sup>42</sup> This aligns with his broad rhetorical project; it is, at its heart, a classification of rhetoric and the rhetor. Equally, we can perform a classification of the duel, one that concentrates on its depictions in fiction rather than its historical trajectory. Having established rhetoric as an art, Aristotle believes the first function of rhetoric should be inherently revelatory. He states,

That rhetoric, therefore, does not belong to a single defined genus of subject but is like dialectic and that it is useful is clear—and that its function is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case, as is true also in all the other arts; for neither is it the function of medicine to create health but to promote this as much as possible.<sup>43</sup>

In this case the emphasis should be on *to see*. The study of rhetoric should reveal what is available for the individual at any given when the individual is actively involved in discourse. Likewise, the duel can reveal new conceptual paradigms that could very well aid general interpretive projects. In this case too should any theorization of the duel in fiction be revelatory. Just how does the duel work in fiction? How does it situate itself in narrative? How is it rhetorical? These are the questions I will address in my study on the duel's rhetorical role and narrative function in fiction. If Aristotle is our first "duel theorist" he is a subtle teacher. His knowledge of the duel and of fiction and rhetoric in general is not like our own, even if it is the basis of much of this theory. However, Aristotle lends insight into the function of both rhetoric and narrative, insight that can lead to a greater appreciation of the duel's significance in fiction.

## Review of Relevant Literature

As both narrative theory and rhetorical theory are important aspects of this project, I will proceed to review some of the vast amount of ink that has spilled on both subjects and that I employ in this study. Essentially, I focus on three aspects of the relevant literature: the narratological, rhetorical, and phenomenological. Through these paradigms, I attempt to uncover what the duel offers to the texts and how it formulates some fundamental understandings of the texts. Here I give the texts I draw from or that offer some better understanding of the literature I use. Thus, even if I do not work with them in detail, they constitute the basis of my study and will be mentioned in what follows.

Aristotle's *Poetics* offers the first attempt at systematically addressing the form and function of fiction—poetry in ancient Greek terms. As in his *On Rhetoric*, his goal is to give a detailed classification of the subject, in this case tragedy and comedy. Aristotle treats plot as a whole and the most important part in tragedy. In his scheme plot must adhere to a rigid and logical beginning, middle, and end, in order for it to resonate with an audience.<sup>44</sup> Aristotle succinctly surmises the plot functions as a structural whole consisting of distinct parts. Aristotle's summary of plot helps us understand the first notions of the structure of narrative, and the ways in which individual forms function within that structure. Perhaps most telling in his privileging of plot structure is the subordinate position of characters in his theory, which he posits as being less important than the plot as a whole. His theory breaks down the working mechanisms of plot, thereby elucidating the first systematic approach to the function of distinct elements in fiction.

Narrative theory is a vast field to which many disciplines and theorists have contributed. Vladimir Propp's work on narrative is one of the initial attempts (beyond Aristotle) at distilling

foundational elements of a story. He postulated that Russian folktales could be broken down into discrete units he termed functions, and analyzed accordingly.<sup>45</sup> Propp cleared a path for the classification of narrative forms. Others, like Tzvetan Todorov and Claude Lévi-Strauss, challenged Propp's argument. Todorov, who is credited for creating the term "narratology," avers that not all functions in narrative are equal, and that stripping certain functions out of a narrative does not eliminate its recognition as narrative. Therefore, Todorov suggests that a working narrative must contain functions or elements that are more important than others, allowing narrative theory to form hierarchies.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Lévi-Strauss departs from Propp's favoring of the *form* (termed in narrative history as "formalism") of narrative over the underlying and concrete *structure* of narrative, which Lévi-Strauss deemed as the more insightful aspect of narrative analysis.<sup>47</sup> Instead, Lévi-Strauss posits that narrative analysis should focus on the deep structures of narrative rather than abstractions of its surface form.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Propp's attempts at analyzing the form of narrative and organizing it into distinct functions marked a turn towards an analysis of form, or the mechanisms that make narrative work. Consequently, this opened the door for theorists such as Todorov and Lévi-Strauss to extend the structural analysis of the narrative.

Through critical frameworks like structuralism and formalism these theorists turned discussions of narrative into a kind of anatomical project. In *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative*, Mieke Bal distinguishes further the various components of the structure of narrative. She finds that narrative is best broken down into three component aspects she terms, the text, the story, and the fabula.<sup>49</sup> Bal's goal is to delineate a narrative system from which critics could more easily break down the essential functions of a narrative, a delineation that I borrow and utilize in this thesis. Essentially, her project extends the work of Propp and Todorov,

but pays closer attention to the discrete, smaller mechanisms of narrative, rather than the broader conceptual terms Todorov outlined. Bal's work is a diverse attempt to pinpoint the many dimensions of narrative; essentially, it is a dissection of story, but in this dissection, an extensive theoretical understanding of narrative becomes manifest, one that goes beyond Propp's "simplistic" formalism. Similarly, Seymour Chatman, in *Story and Discourse: Narrative structure in fiction and film*, analyzes narrative structure, while giving a broad historical overview of narrative theory. Whereas Bal recognizes the narrative qualities of non-textual sources, Chatman specifically addresses film, utilizing medium-specific terminology in the process. For example, he evaluates how the position of the camera itself can heighten the dramatic qualities of a narrative, accentuating certain moods or tones.<sup>50</sup> Like Bal, Chatman's work culminates in a detailed account of the various parts of narrative, specifically focusing on the story, or chain of events, and the diverse elements within the story, such as characters, settings, and so forth.<sup>51</sup> Both Bal and Chatman offer broad views of narrative theory, and, in many ways, follow Todorov's hierarchical model, as well as favor Lévi-Strauss's emphasis on deep structure. These narratologists proffer astute, almost mechanical, insights into the structure of narrative, which will prove helpful in explicating the unique position and functionality of the duel in narrative. Individual forms within the narrative—such as the duel—are better understood through a focus on the minute details of narrative that both Bal and Chatman proffer. While these theorists will prove a crucial part of the narrative theory used in this project, it will be wise to touch briefly upon other texts that demonstrate the elasticity of narrative theory. These theorists study both narratives innate qualities but also demonstrate its wider implications.

Theorists of the poststructuralist stripe have challenged and deconstructed the perceived hegemony of narrative authority. Jacques Derrida challenges the assumption that narrative must

dictate story. In *Deconstruction & Criticism*, Derrida puts forth the idea that narrative is violently thrust forward with precedence over story. He states, “What is judiciously called the question-of-narrative covers, with a certain modesty, a demand for narrative, a violent putting-to-the-question.”<sup>52</sup> Derrida distinguishes between narrative and story, and is concerned with the logocentric favoring of narrative over story. For Derrida, there exists the possibility that both narrative and story can have distinct discourses in fiction, and that narrative should not be implicitly favored over story. Thus, Derrida offers unique insights into the problem of the narrative/story dichotomy.

Rhetoric and narrative theory have had a strong, if occasionally uneasy, alliance throughout their history. Among other things, rhetoric is the study of discourse. It both classifies discourse and reveals the way it operates. Obviously, Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* posits many of the foundational blocks for any study regarding rhetoric, and as previously mentioned will be an important aspect of this study. However, work has been done to connect rhetoric and narrative. Wayne Booth’s broad *Rhetoric of Fiction* argues that rhetoric is always present in fiction through devices like telling; Booth argues that the author’s rhetorical function is best displayed through telling, or directing the audience’s attention to details, beliefs, and points of interest. Booth pays particular attention to the supposed death of the author by defending the author’s omnipresence in the story, “We must never forget that though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear,” ultimately choosing not to efface the author from the text entirely.<sup>53</sup> Most interesting is Booth’s basic assertion that narrative is a form of rhetoric. Both works attempt a “freeing” of narrative in rhetoric and, consequently, offer powerful insights into rhetoric’s role in narrative. Likewise, Chatman offers terms for such an understanding in his *Coming to Terms* wherein he posits a rhetoric of fiction based on the fundamental ways a

narrative discloses and makes believable, even enticing, its basic form. Ultimately, I use Chatman's terminology exclusively, but because Chatman is explicitly indebted to Booth, I cite both here. Finally, Gilles Deleuze offers some insight into the symbolic nature of the structuralism, in the case of this thesis the narrative structure, in his essay "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" Borrowing terminology from his discussion of structuralism, the rhetoric of fiction is further elaborated on by considering how the elements within fiction work in tandem to position each other on a symbolic level. This means that the suasive qualities of a work of fiction come from how the work is laid out, how the parts articulate the whole.

Finally, Vivian Sobchack's formative work *Address of the Eye: A phenomenology of film experience* combining phenomenological theory with the filmic experience offers a useful vocabulary for conceptualizing the duel as an experience. Furthermore, Christian Metz attempts to understand narrative in phenomenological terms as a closed-sequence of temporal events in *Film Language: A semiotics of the cinema*. Metz's contribution for this study lies in the potential discursive understanding of film to audience that Sobchack develops in her work. Finally, the relationship of both spectator and text culminates in work from Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* wherein identification is established between viewing subject and viewed subject (film).

I have attempted to highlight some of the foundational literature on both narrative theory and rhetoric in this section. In addition to the work I previewed in prior sections, this theory will constitute the bulk of my analysis. The sea of work on both topics is vast, but these selected texts will prove helpful in elucidating how the duel functions in film and expresses its own rhetoric within narrative. What follows are the goals of this project and the general framework theoretical framework I will follow.

## Framework and Goals

The cinematic texts chosen for this thesis—*Barry Lyndon*, *Colonel Blimp*, and the *Duellists*—not only solicit spectatorial activity/interpretation but also serve as significant case studies for adducing the effectiveness of rhetorical-narratological approaches to film. Although these films can be analyzed through a strictly structural lens (looking, for instance, at the relationship of parts to the whole), as duel-filled texts they “stage” literal and figurative conflicts in ways that foster audience participation. This regards them as equally attentive to poststructuralist critiques, revealing how they are sufficiently “flexible” to allow negotiation on the audience’s part. I argue from the outset that, like a duelist, the narrative issues a challenge, one that—if accepted—can lead to insight. However, this challenge adheres to protocol and is enacted in a structural unit—the narrative. A type of “hermeneutic duel” thus ensues. Moreover, because the texts behave as structural wholes, they have no recourse but to give satisfaction to their audience. Therefore, the complexities of the narrative lie within its structure and the audience’s involvement with that structure, and not in any attempt to force a hegemonic reading on the audience. This relationship reflects the duel’s place within structure, as a point within the narrative that simultaneously ruptures or wounds the narrative, calling attention to itself.

At the most fundamental level, the case studies are fictions with healthy and bountiful interpretive potential. Because of this, such a seemingly esoteric quality like the duel is fair game for a critical hunt. As Walter Benjamin notes, fiction gains power in being flexible:

There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis. And the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story’s claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later.<sup>54</sup>

Benjamin believed the story should avoid forceful (hegemonic) messages. According to him, if the story avoided psychological-laden content it would have a longer life span and impact on the reader. Ultimately, moving away from “psychological analysis” allowed a great deal of flexibility for the reader. In turn, I would argue Benjamin believed stories were structural wholes, and got their interpretive value from an author who *chose* to let them remain open. In doing this, the stories are flexible throughout time and culture, and the criticisms broad to life by poststructuralists seem to reconcile with the original structuralist project. Thus, even in its structural whole the narrative is challenging the audience by leaving its doors open, so to speak. I believe the duel presses this issue through its position in narrative. In other words, its immediacy (and nature) causes a rupture that supersedes both narrative structure and authorial intent. I explore this major issue in what follows. Benjamin, nonetheless, gestures towards a potential for bridging structuralist and poststructuralist criticisms, which precludes neither audience nor author.

As I have indicated, my goal is to determine how the duel is as a unique point of rupture within the filmic narratives, and how these narratives reflect a structure similar to the procedure of the duel. Furthermore, I will explore the duel’s rhetorical language as developed through the films—a language that lends it its strength and unique aesthetic. I base my framework in both the narratology and rhetorical theory I have cited. Narratology offers useful terminology for defining and conceptualizing the diverse parts of the narrative structure. Therefore, for this study I will borrow many of the tools these theorists have provided. The rhetorical theorists I have outlined will be the basis for understanding how the duel is rhetorical and how it creates a rhetorical language. Finally, the contribution of phenomenology adds to the narrative and rhetorical



discussion. Thus, while the texts I have reviewed provide helpful terminology, my primary analysis will come from a few key works.

The duel is a particularly exceptional point in storytelling. For a modern audience it draws much of its uniqueness from the distance it has from us historically speaking. Moreover, the authors of each piece of fiction offer it as a singular moment within their narratives, relying on it to disrupt and restore equilibrium, all the while giving it a unique aesthetic (especially apparent in its cinematic renditions). These qualities alone warrant further investigation, and can reveal some of the overarching communicative elements of both the duel and its fictional renderings. Essentially, the duel's distinctive and substantial position in these narratives invites theoretical work. The fundamental aspect of this type of work lies in drawing out the duel's distinctive elements and implications—an aesthetic taxonomy of sorts. Rhetorically speaking, what is the discourse of the duel in these narratives? How does it express its uniqueness? These broad questions constitute the realization and basis of my study.

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first I present here as my introduction, which is in fact my own challenge and outlines the texts and theory from which I approach the duel. Following this there are three analysis chapters, each treat the broad topics of the duel I have introduced here. I have chosen to organize these chapters topically and in a style reminiscent of the duel. More precisely, I organize this thesis in a style mirroring the duel's protocol. Because the duel is a rigidly organized social ritual, it provides a solid paradigm for organization and conceptualization. In other words, understanding how the duel operates is a potentially rich method for thinking and organizing. Each part of the duel from the challenge, meeting of the seconds, combat, and aftermath, are exceptional individual pieces in the fictions I have chosen,

exceptional even when absent or implied. As discrete conceptual units, they provide a firm foundation for theory building.

In chapter two (my first chapter of analysis), I concern myself with the challenge of the duel. I use the term “challenge” as both a verb and noun. I explore how the duel in film offers a challenge to the audience, the way in which the actual challenges unfold in the narrative, and finally how the narrative structure revolves around the idea of a challenge. I cite both the insult and challenge that follows as exemplary of the actualization of narrative functions. Specifically, my focus applies Aristotle’s terminology on actualization to the Todorov framework of equilibrium and narrative transformation.

In chapter three, I work out the representations of seconds in the texts, and the meeting between them that ensues after a challenge. Some of the texts gloss over any direct reference to a meeting but nonetheless feature seconds. I demonstrate how seconds set the terms and conditions or the “rules of the game.” They act in as symbolic indicators of the narrative structure and disclose its rhetoric. Furthermore, in acting rhetorically they invite the audience’s own rhetorical engagement with the text. Essentially, seconds serve as functionaries that make a rhetorical argument for the narrative’s form and invite spectatorial engagement. The rhetoric they employ, to disclose narrative form, is based in metaphor and I treat them as metaphorical proxies for both the narrative and viewer.

While the preceding chapters deal with the duel, chapter four focuses on the combat. I treat the duel experience in terms of the phenomenology of film. By examining how the combat of dueling is framed and exhibited, I propose ways in which the film as a body extends outward to the audience. In doing so, I argue that it calls attention to the relationship between cinema and spectator, and reflects this relationship through oppositions. The duel, therefore, entreats a

discursive understanding of the text. The audience is engaged with the film as much as the film engages the audience. The duel provides another metaphorical understanding of the relationship of my selected case studies to the audience which consumes them. Ultimately, I argue this contributes a level of identification and consubstantiality between audience and text.

Finally, chapter five stands as my conclusion. Here I attempt to offer some concluding remarks based on Derrida's challenge of narrative. Can the duel demonstrate a way the fundamental elements of narrative challenge narrative's hegemony? In a way, the narratological, rhetorical, and phenomenological aspects of the duel argue that it is its own element separate from narrative but contributing invaluable meaning to narrative. In being singularly compelling within each narrative, the duel has the potential to upset, even break, the narrative ties that bind. Finally, I offer some cursory remarks aimed at satisfying the question of analysis, and position the duel within analytic endeavors by elaborating how the spilling of blood reflects critical and spectatorial engagement with a text. Simply stated: can the critic ever gain satisfaction? I conclude with these remarks hoping this study may compel me further by offering some introductory thoughts on the complex subjects of narrative, rhetoric, phenomenology, and film. In the end, satisfaction may not be gained if it implies absolute resolution. However, as was the case with the climatic duel between Lord Bullingdon (Leon Vitali) and Redmond in *Barry Lyndon*, it is up to the audience/reader to accept this satisfaction.

## Chapter 2

### Insult and Challenge as Narrative Disruption

It was a gentlemanly letter,  
A challenge or cartel he'd penned;  
Polite and cold and to the matter  
He sought a duel with his friend.  
Eugene's immediate reaction  
To this demand for satisfaction  
Was swift enough. Discussion spared,  
He said he'd 'always be prepared'.  
Zaretsky rose without explaining,  
Not wishing to prolong his stay,  
For household business claimed the day,  
He left forthwith; Eugene, remaining  
Alone, encountering his soul,  
Was not contented with his role.

— Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*

Having established the historical framework and assessment of relevant literature in the preceding chapter, I wish to approach the aforementioned cinematic depictions of the duel (on view in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* [1943], *Barry Lyndon* [1975], and *The Duellists* [1977]) with a focus on the instrumentality of its introductory elements. Foremost among the duel's introductory elements is the challenge—the moment when a summons to uphold one's social position and honor by means of confrontation is issued. I propose that every scene featuring a challenge in these three films serves an important narratological function that extends beyond mere plot device. Each film handles the reasons for the challenge differently, and treats the depiction of the challenge in unique ways. By examining consistencies among these scenes and among the films as well, I hope to reveal that the challenge is a central component of the duel's narrative logic and rhetorical force. It is also a defining characteristic of each film's narrative as a whole; its operations, its organization, and, perhaps most importantly, its

solicitations to audiences, who are invited to participate in the storytelling process and to reflect on the ways in which narrative employs actualization in order to disclose its otherwise hidden functions.

Rooted in Aristotle's notion of *energia*, that actualization process—at least within a cinematic context—depends on the filmmaker's ability to harness the visual as a means of “showing” and bringing to life discourse's invisible “other,” the story (or, in Russian formalist terms, *fabula*) conceptualizing both the visual and the notion that the visual begets action by the way it reveals and brings to light. In what follows, I will argue that the challenge does both things and acts in the same way as Aristotle's *energia* and coincides with the notion of metaphor and visualization he develops in book three of his *On Rhetoric*. Approaching the duel as a visually persuasive stylistic device that enlivens what at first sight appear to be “distant,” “cold,” treatments of story material. In other words, works ostensibly lacking *energia* (or the “enlivening” force of visualized discourse)—are shown to rely on their visually compelling components to reveal their narratives to an audience.

The challenge is one aspect of the duel. The duel is, in turn, one aspect of each narrative. However, the narrative hinges on the successful elaboration of each of its aspects, and likewise the duel does not exist without a challenge. Reasoning from this the duel is as important a part of the narrative as the challenge is a part of the duel. That is to say, the two are intertwined and each of these narratives relies on the duel in order to be sensibly communicated. The duel (and by extension the challenge) holds a part in the very basis of the narrative. In other words, the challenge occupies a position of inextricable importance as a process by which the narrative comes to fruition. In narratology, these “parts” or “processes” are termed the *fabula*, or the “material” that needs to be arranged into a series of events to construct a narrative.<sup>55</sup> Typically,

the act of arranging these processes is termed the syuzhet. However, Mieke Bal places special importance on fabula, while further defining its dimensions:

A fabula may be considered as a specific grouping of series of events. The fabula as a whole constitutes a process, while every event can also be called a process or, at least, part of a process. Three phases can be distinguished in every fabula: the possibility (or virtuality), the event (or realization), and the result (or conclusion) of the process.<sup>56</sup>

For Bal, the fabula persists as the most elementary way to understand the ordering of events in narrative, and therefore extends to an understanding of the challenge (and the duel) as a process within narrative. Accordingly, the idea of fabula closely matches the construction of the duel in the sense that both are ordered and resolved in similar manners. With regard to the duel honor is always impending in social situations, and in the film the dialogue is crafted so as to make this felt. In terms of fabula, the notion that honor governs possible action would link it to the possibility Bal ascribes as the first phase of the process of fabula. The event would be when the insult happens and a challenge is issued, from there combat or reconciliation would be the realization of the possibility. Finally, the conclusion is the satisfaction of the demand to answer for the impugning of honor. It is the result of the initial process. Hence, fabula construction is representative of the process of the duel. Furthermore, fabula is what constructs the initial challenge to the spectator because fabula demands ordering, and that it be built into a coherent narrative, otherwise it would be a senseless collection of events or a dry chronology and not a complete narrative. Bal's attention to processes as the basis of the fabula is a useful way of understanding how an ornamental part of narrative such as the duel, which operates from its own rules of process, connects deeply with narrative structure. In fact, what I will argue for throughout this thesis is the idea that this process, and, therefore, fabula ultimately defines the narrative and establishes its form and logic by virtue of its role as an individual piece of the

fabula (as a function or process of narrative). Accordingly, the narrative demands that it be told, and it argues for itself through the unraveling of its form.

Tzvetan Todorov contributes another fundamental understanding of how the structure of the duel might inform the structure of the narrative, and therefore will be an important part of this chapter. For Todorov, narrative is governed by two principles. Specifically, these principles are the “rules” of succession and transformation. Succession and transformation direct and guide how the course of narrative’s equilibrium operates, another important narrative element.

However, transformation is most important in Todorov’s eye because understanding how events transform within narrative leads to an understanding of a narrative’s organization. Todorov breaks transformation down into three organizations: mythological (narratives dictated by a change in action), gnoseological (narratives dictated by a search for some type of knowledge), and ideological (narratives dictated by a governing ideology or set of rules).<sup>57</sup> In this chapter, I will attempt to connect ideological transformation to these “duel narratives” and explicate what relationship to equilibrium exists. Once more, we will find that the duel is setting terms and dictating how the narrative functions through its nature as a vital part of its operation.

### **Honor and the Challenge**

There are a few remarkable differences to note in how each film foregrounds and explores the idea of a challenge and honor. *Colonel Blimp* deals with the honor of nations, which seems like a matter that could more easily capture the audience’s attention and lend credibility to the challenge due to the immense gravity of the situation, that is, the honor and reputation of whole nations. This is especially pertinent when one considers the historical context of the film in 1943 war-torn England. Conversely, some issues as the basis of duels might alienate

contemporary audiences because they might seem too unusual or nonsensical to fight to the death over. Most people will not challenge somebody to a potentially deadly arrangement over the loss of a lover to another. Yet, love forms the basis of the first duel (the first complete duel) in *Barry Lyndon*, and is ultimately the cause that spirals him into a lifetime of adventure and fortune seeking. Even still, this might breed more attachment to the character as a fictional figure, the audience might be more willing, knowing that Redmond is not real, to attach themselves to his plight and journey because they feel sympathy for a young, scorned lover who bravely stood up to the other courter. Finally, the reasons for a duel may be so intensely personal or steeped in an indescribable type of madness that it confounds both the historical figures who encountered, witnessed, or took part, as well as contemporary denizens of society. This is certainly the case with the duels in *The Duellists*, and director Ridley Scott enhances the uneasiness and anxiety surrounding the conflict with chilling music at each peak of violence, to make felt that the duels were no trivial matter. The young French maiden screams in horror when Feraud impales his first victim, presumably running home in shock at such a grisly event. D'Hubert is puzzled by Feraud's indifferent attitude towards the duel when he asks him, in the Madame's salon, whether he fought a duel that morning, to which Feraud ruminates on (as if a sane man could forget such an event) momentarily and finally answers with a nonchalant response. The tone and stylistic imperatives of each director alter and shape the manner in which the challenge will be relayed and the duel fought. All of these differences are enticing bits of aesthetic reflection that call for further investigation. However, my aim is not to perform a comparative analysis but instead to focus on the underlying currents that help determine narrative traits.

While the reasons behind the duel in each narrative might vary, digging deeper illuminates many consistencies in how the duel embeds itself into narrative and how narrative



fosters a symbiotic relationship with the duel. Building from a set of seemingly straightforward, “simple” questions concerning how it affects, directs, and structures the narrative, we can begin to understand how the duel demarcates the individual elements that constitute cinematic storytelling, including introduction and exposition, development, transitions, climax, and denouement. In what follows, I examine the challenge as one part of the duel—an especially significant and revelatory aspect of the duel—to shed light on the introductory elements of both the individual event and the overall narrative that “contains” it.

### **The Insult and Challenge as Revealing Equilibrium**

I wish to begin my investigation by making a simple claim: arguably, the most pervasive element of a traditional work of fiction is its insistence on drawing in its audience. I argue that the duel in each of my three case studies operates at this level. Furthermore, the “challenge,” a constituent feature of the duel, has a twofold meaning and context. In the first sense, it refers directly to the challenges made by characters in the narratives that allow the characters to fulfill their sense of honor (giving these plot points historical justification) and continue the plot (which gives the challenge a unique role in the narrative). In this sense, it is employed as a noun, or, more precisely, an event that takes place in the narrative and, in the case of narrative’s relying on duels, an event on which the narrative hinges. Second, the challenge is what the narrative offers the audience and what the characters must fulfill in order to maintain a coherent plot. Therefore, this latter sense of challenge is a verb, or more akin to an act that must unfold throughout the narrative, and which invites the audience’s participation in its laying down the terms of the engagement between audience and text. This definition moves it beyond an event and into a more transformative or engrossing action that helps fulfill fiction’s need to capture its audience.

There is always something at-hand, or pressing, that provides the reason for action to come to fruition. The duelist, grasping sword or pistol, is a useful bit of imagery that brings this idea to life. With sword or pistol, the duelist must resolve to act, to perform something in order to evade death or usher it along. Elementarily, this cause brings forth an effect. At times, these causes run deep in social thinking. With regard to the duel, this is the idea of honor, which both governs and mediates every encounter that is termed an “honor duel.” Moreover, for there to be an honor duel there must be a challenge. The challenge is the invitation for the encounter and is the precursor to the setting of terms and the combat itself. It is also the implication of a conclusion. When the challenge is issued it must be resolved in some fashion, whether it be through apology, combat, or cowardice. Thus, in the process of witnessing an individual uphold his honor, spectators are privy to the means by which the initial insult might be resolved; a resolution “in miniature” that mimics the larger narrative’s imperative to fulfill its own challenge (one that is issued to the audience).

The challenge puts something into question and demands action from both participants. Thus, the term “demand for satisfaction,” as historically employed, reveals something about the nature of the activity. What must be satisfied? Put simply, honor. However, in the case of a film removed from both the reality of the conflict and its historical time and place, this demand as the idea of upholding one’s honor is mediated by the *mise-en-scène*, as well as concerns for plot and character development. Indeed, the idea of honor transforms into an object for narrative, a tool to move the plot forward, a trope employed as dramatic device. That is not to say, however, that honor is removed from the story or is not the reason the characters engage in their conflict. Rather, I merely point out that honor is no longer as pertinent or pressing in a work of fiction removed from the real events of history, whether these events be contemporary with the author

or not. Nevertheless, the demand exists in these films, removed or fictional as it is. This demand leveled at the audience as a demand for completion or resolution of the narrative. The idea that the duel can satisfy the narrative, or that the narrative reflects its own individual elements in the duel is a crucial point of interest in this chapter.

The duel obliges the narrative in the same way that Todorov's notion of equilibrium explains narrative.<sup>58</sup> Todorov speaks of narrative equilibrium as the focal point of succession and transformation; both govern how the stages of equilibrium operate. Essentially, narrative consists of an established equilibrium, the unsettling of that equilibrium, and, in the end, the reestablishment of equilibrium.<sup>59</sup> The challenge both highlights the equilibrium by pointing out the calm status quo that has come into question, and disrupts the equilibrium by putting forth a demand for satisfaction or proposing an action that must be resolved. For instance, in *Barry Lyndon* the equilibrium is established with short scenes involving the romance between Redmond and Nora Brady (Gay Hamilton) and is disrupted with the introduction of Captain Quin. However, it is not so easy to demarcate this disruption if one remembers that the film opens with the death of Redmond's father in a duel, a bit of foreshadowing that helps establish the overall tone of the film. In other words, disruption occurs at the moment equilibrium is broached. The challenge is both a reminder of the equilibrium, *as it was*, and a marker of its disruption. Therefore, the duel (the whole event, from beginning to end) begins to look something like this:

Insult → Challenge → Combat → Satisfaction

Where the insult occurs in *Barry Lyndon* is a matter warranting further consideration. Redmond fumes at the thought of Nora with Quin and directs his anger with Nora at Quin; this could be

deemed the insult. However, Redmond's challenge of Quin is more explicit than where the insult occurs and Quin's hand is forced into action lest he risk looking like the coward.

Arguably, the challenge acts as both an indicator of what stood before and a catalyst for what will unfold throughout the narrative. Through challenging the other, the challenger affirms the status quo by demanding some acknowledgement or redress. Rather than desiring action, the challenger desires that the other party recognize that the status quo has been disrupted in some way and that a return to that status quo is the best outcome, especially for the challenger who stands to lose something be it reputation, a lover, honor, and so on. Despite a desire to uphold the status quo, the very act of pressing the issue pushes action further, and, in each film, this will irrevocably alter the course of the plot away from the initial equilibrium. The challengers have no recourse but to press the issue and therefore propel the narrative forward. However, what is crucial for narratology is that the act of affirmation of the equilibrium inherent in the challenge is also the disruption of the equilibrium because it brings the plot to a turning point. In short, for the characters involved the attempt to uphold the status quo results in a breaking of equilibrium. The duel is unique precisely because it intends to keep things as they were by calling a break in social grace into question, but inevitably, it creates an irrevocable tension or effect. Redmond seeks equilibrium through retaining Nora, but in order to do so must break this equilibrium by fighting for Nora. In contradictory fashion, the narrative establishes certainty in order to dash it away and bring action to life.



FIGURE 2.1: Producing the insult that will lead to a challenge.

In *Barry Lyndon*, Redmond enacts this contradictory sequence of equilibrium through visual metaphor by breaking his glass on Quin's face in order to produce an insult from which a challenge would be issued. [FIGURE 2.1] Earlier, Redmond proclaimed to Nora he would fight Quin in order to prove himself, "If ever should I meet him again, you will find out who is the best man of the two. I'll fight him sword or pistol, captain as he is." At this stage, Redmond seems resolved to prove himself because the initial insult was directed at him from Nora not Quin. His lover rebukes him. However, Nora's aim is not to provoke Redmond but to calm him down and dissuade him from pursuing violence (as would result from the perceived insult). Equilibrium has been destabilized and Redmond proceeds with his plans, though they are not yet fully known to the audience he seems to foreshadow them. Redmond reaches a point in which in attempting to affirm the status quo will prove to be the catalyst that propels the narrative forward. He disrupts equilibrium through his affirmation of the narrative's initial equilibrium, for the story this is his desire to stay with Nora. Thus, the physical insult of Quin metaphorically

represents the call to equilibrium to provoke a challenge, and it disrupts the equilibrium causing “the reestablishment of the initial equilibrium”<sup>60</sup> in order to complete narrative’s demands.

The insult and challenge as precursors to combat is important because it attends to the narrative’s equilibrium and reveals events in the narrative. Scenes which touch upon the notion of a challenge, or which make the challenge manifest serve as a means of conveying the narrative integrity of what is to come, they also serve as a direct visualization of the narrative as a flow-of-events. What I mean by “narrative integrity” is simply how plausible an event seems based on what has come before. Following Bal, we can call these events the *fabula*, or events within narrative that must be arranged into a cohesive unit, this arranging is termed *syuzhet* and together they form a narrative. Furthermore, narrative must be understood not as the entire text but as the parts of text that concern the progress of events within the plot.<sup>61</sup> In film, a particular point of departure from the events may be shots of setting, or sequences that serve to introduce characters but do not, in a strict sense, progress the events in the narrative.

As an example, a character’s costume may have no direct effect on events in the narrative but focus on, for instance, their shift into formal attire may set the tone of a scene that does move along events. It may also lend the audience a better understanding of their character; a character may be described as well dressed and befitting of his or her place in society. This type of characterization would lend credibility to the idea that this person is a gentleman or lady, which would open a wide string of plausible plot developments (the gentlemen may be moved to duel, for instance). The challenge is a visualization of this *fabula*, and it brings to light the necessity of progressing events for the narrative while simultaneously revealing facts about characters, settings, or the rules that dictate the choices these characters make. All of this adds to the

progression of plot and belongs, again, in the strict sense, to the series of events that consist of the heart of narrative.

### **Visual Metaphor and Equilibrium**

Fundamentally, film depends on the visual to express its narrative and represent its logic; in other words, film as a medium “speaks” through visual metaphor. Noel Carroll has done much to link visual metaphor in film to the wider arts, and posits the simple notion that images are what dictate the screen of cinema:

The screen is a mindscape . . . The coherence of film is not derived via a consistent perspective on the nature of thought, but instead coherence emerges through the succession of imagery that proposes different images that proposes different images of the mind, though not manifestly reconcilable ones.”<sup>62</sup>

Essentially, film depends on our manipulation of images that relate to our ability to translate how images relate to our understanding of phenomena. If they are not clear, metaphors may be difficult to understand and may be lost in not being easily reconcilable. In short, the succession of imagery depends on metaphor through proposing different images that stand in for various meanings or narrative functions. A single metaphor can carry a lot of weight in relaying a simple narrative proposition. Unsurprisingly, the sequence of events in film are articulated visually, plot moves forward only when the audience can perceive visually what is happening, and/or hear what is happening.<sup>63</sup> The idea of the visual helps to develop the ontological qualities of the challenge in these films.

Aristotle’s notion of *energia* applies directly to the discussion of Todorov’s equilibrium I have elaborated upon, the relationship rests in the idea that visual metaphor actualizes the establishment and destabilizing of equilibrium: the audience “sees” this basic function of narrative, according to Todorov. In effect, the challenge is a moment of visualization rather than

merely an exchange of words that precipitate violence. The challenge reveals a glimpse of the narrative structure, but also pushes the audience from its bareness through sophisticated visual metaphors. For Aristotle, people desire to learn easily and the best way to bring about learning in an audience is through metaphor.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, an audience follows the various functions of narrative (introductions, plot progression, conclusions), but must be smoothly brought into a relationship with these functions through engrossing aesthetics and compelling stories. In other words, the audience wants to learn easily the parts of narrative but also seeks absorption into the narrative—they do not want the knowledge that what they are experiencing is simply the mechanics of narrative—they want story. Thus, compelling visualization is a dynamic and active process that brings the audience into the narrative fold, and enlivens seemingly lifeless narrative functions that constitute the narrative's logic. Following Aristotle, the audience learns through seeing something in a new light, with the added effect that they are absorbed into the product of visual metaphor.

In order to explicate this idea, Aristotle relies upon Homeric metaphors that create activity, such as describing an arrow as flying or a stone rolling upon a field.<sup>65</sup> Aristotle argues that *energia* helps make things otherwise lifeless clearer by imbuing them with lifelike qualities and activity. They become more pleasing and easier to perceive and understand. In terms of the selected texts, the challenge operates at the level of *energia* by making visible the fundamental functions of narrative. Thus, narrative relies on actualizing itself through the challenge.

The challenge is an exceptional point of storytelling because it serves as a coordinate in the larger narrative scheme, one that demarcates the point in which returning to the initial state of equilibrium is impossible. Furthermore, it is an actualized point in narrative that argues for the events to follow. The challenge visualizes the entry point of narrative we might term



“introduction.” These scenes are not introductions to the text, that is to say they do not mark the chronological beginning point of a text (they are situated at many points within the text’s fabula), but rather they are introducing the notion of “introduction.” The narrative utilizes the challenge in order to visualize the establishment and destabilization of equilibrium. This introduces the need to reestablish equilibrium and, consequently, introduces the imperative for a plot to play out in order to return to initial equilibrium. In Aristotelian terms, the challenge is a “bringing-before-the eyes” this fundamental function of narrative, and it visualizes a point of entry into the active narrative.

The challenge also acts as part of the narrative’s beginning in that it is a representation of a point of no return. Even while other events unfold during the first scenes of each film, the plot reaches a turning point when the duel begins. As Aristotle writes in *Poetics*,

A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it.”<sup>66</sup>

Before equilibrium is broken, the narrative arms the audience with the visual vocabulary necessary to build from a chain of causal relations. These opening scenes provide background and exposition necessary to understand what is to follow. The challenge situates itself after the beginning, at a point of causal necessity with what has come before. Introduction occurs at the point in which further action is causally required by what has happened and thus not at the beginning which is not dictated by causal necessity but instead by where the author wants to begin. Accordingly, the introduction is *not* the beginning of the film but rather it is the point at which equilibrium is established and broken.

What the insult and challenge actualize is the first point of causal necessity. Exposition occurring before them establishes the justification for their existence, and everything that follows

subsequent to them is based off them having existed. In a few short scenes, the audience trusts that Redmond is smitten with Nora and that Quin presents a rupture in this picture. Nora upsets Redmond's love and his sense of honor when the narrative introduces Quin. But where do we find the causal beginning to all of this? It does not exist in the text. The narrative does not present it to us but instead implies its existence. We learn of Redmond's love for Nora during another ritualistic scene: card playing. This is the first scene featuring Redmond and has no direct link to any previous scene; therefore, this scene is presented as the beginning of the narrative. Only later, when Redmond insults Quin and awaits his challenge (in fact it is Grogan, serving as Redmond's second, who eventually issues a challenge on Redmond's behalf), do we find a semblance of causal necessity directly in the film. This point of causal entry is actualized visually in the early scenes of challenge. Thus, the beginning is the set of assumptions an audience draws from, assumptions tied to what has come before the fictional piece began and which justify what is unfolding in the narrative. Introduction, on the other hand, approaches the chain of causally linked events in the narrative and makes clear a point of entry into the narrative's active equilibrium.

Therefore, when Redmond breaks his glass upon Quin's face in order to insult and usher in a challenge, he is pronouncing a keen visual metaphor for introduction.<sup>67</sup> What is being introduced is the establishment equilibrium based on the affirmation of what existed before, namely his love for Nora and the status quo, and the destabilization of that equilibrium that his affirmation inevitably brings about. Also, while being a look into narrative's equilibrium this insult is the introduction to the duel as an event within narrative and point of interest within the plot. In this way, it could be argued that the glass-on-face operates as an introduction because it

actualizes the notion of an entry point into the story. Redmond's entire story exists because of this particular action.

Similar to Aristotle's claim about Homer, "He makes everything move and live, and *energia* is motion,"<sup>68</sup> so too does Kubrick bring the idea of inevitability and pending violence to activity and life. The metaphor also displays the degree of urbanity or sophistication, again borrowing from Aristotle, the filmmakers demonstrate. For Aristotle, "Urbanities . . . come through metaphor and from an added surprise; for it becomes clearer [to the listener] that he learned something different from what he believed, and his mind seems to say, 'How true, and I was wrong.'"<sup>69</sup> Aristotle speaks of moments of public address when the speaker can enlighten or persuade the audience on some new point by demonstrating a felicity with metaphor. This in turn adds a degree of urbanity to their argument which impresses the audience and leads them "to see" something new. But the idea of making something clearer through seeing, both literally and figuratively, can be applied to a wide milieu of social interaction and moments of edification. In the case of Redmond's challenge of Quin, which follows almost instantaneously from his insult, Kubrick has chosen to edify his audience through metaphor.

Scott's *The Duellists* offers further evidence of this utilization of the challenge as visual metaphor for the concept of introduction. The similarity between the opening of *The Duellists* and *Barry Lyndon* is noteworthy in that both begin the narrative with dueling scenes. In the latter's case the duel is between two characters the audience never becomes familiar with, while in the case of *The Duellists* the first duel serves as exposition of the primary antagonist of the film: Feraud. However, if a spectator proceeds through the opening sequence of the film, he or she witnesses Feraud's call to answer for his earlier duel. This sequence is important in terms of introducing the film's establishment of equilibrium and disequilibrium. The film's protagonist

d'Hubert is tasked with ordering Feraud to report to his commanding officer to answer for his duel. D'Hubert is forced to pull Feraud away from a prominent local Madame's salon. Feraud begins to perceive d'Hubert's presence as an insult and the two begin to quarrel. Upon returning to Feraud's quarters, the verbal exchange escalates and at the insistence of Feraud, a duel ensues. Because this scene springs from the causal necessity of prior scenes, it is not the beginning, but it is an introduction. The key distinction is that it introduces the tensions in the narrative's equilibrium.

Again, the filmmaker relies on visual metaphor to enact a break in narrative equilibrium. In the aforementioned scene, the conflict reflects an opposition of reason as well as a rupture in the narrative's equilibrium. Feraud appears as a madman (d'Hubert implies as much) while d'Hubert attempts to retain a level of calm. Feraud imposes a duel while d'Hubert does his best to laugh it away. All of this takes place in Feraud's lodging which also reflects ability to set the terms of the scene. When Feraud blocks the door and rebukes d'Hubert's attempt to exit, d'Hubert undergoes a shift in comportment. No longer is d'Hubert as calm as he was, he surrenders to Feraud's terms and relents to an improper duel (d'Hubert's admonishment that no seconds are present undermines the act, but both proceed regardless). In fact, d'Hubert is visually transformed from confident officer to a man resigned to a duel [FIGURES 2.2 and 2.3]:



FIGURE 2.2: D'Hubert transforms visually upon insult and challenge.



FIGURE 2.3: The once calm officer becomes despondent, signaling a shift in narrative equilibrium.

In the first image, d'Hubert reacts and argues with Feraud, attempting to reason with him. The subsequent image occurs after Feraud blocks the door and captures d'Hubert's reaction upon hearing Feraud's challenge. D'Hubert has no recourse but to accept the challenge out of honor and this precipitates his fall into Feraud's world. The entire narrative bases itself on this break in equilibrium wherein d'Hubert must eventually escape Feraud's honorable tyranny. D'Hubert, unable to leave the residence despite Feraud no longer blocking the door, surrenders his saber to the other's demand. Honor holds d'Hubert. Thus, d'Hubert's insult and Feraud's challenge constitute the actualization of the disruption of equilibrium. D'Hubert will spend the rest of the story overcoming this and attempting to reestablish equilibrium. Mirroring d'Hubert's expressions, Feraud shifts from gloating and prodding to a realization of insult, the outcome he all along desired. [FIGURES 2.4 and 2.5]



FIGURES 2.4 and 2.5: Feraud hears d'Hubert's insult, visually transforming from instigator to the subject of instigation.

Visual metaphors such as facial transformation allude to the films' tonal qualities. The initial insult and challenge of *The Duellists* demonstrates as much. Throughout the scene, from the Madame's salon to Feraud's lodgings, the audience is given a bevy of visual cues that act to strengthen the tonal aspects of the film. For instance, the comportment of the character's facial expressions actualizes their characterization and function within the narrative structure because it

underlies their intent and motives. As I previously mentioned, d'Hubert undergoes a contrasting shift in expression. In addition, Feraud accentuates his attitude with piercing glares, in both ways *The Duellists* relies on distinct facial expressions to add to its tonal quality. Feraud treats dueling as a game of sorts (and idea d'Hubert alludes to in the salon) and this attitude reflects his madness and is reflected by his looks of wild eyed excitement and foreboding determination at the first hint of insult. Contrary to Feraud, d'Hubert's comportment is representative of his calm, even offhand, attitude and his adherence to protocol and regulation.

D'Hubert is truly the opposite of Feraud, and their comportment is symbolically significant. While Feraud treats d'Hubert's incursion as an insult, d'Hubert writes the whole thing off, even attempting to convince Feraud that he is thinking too deeply into matters. Thus, Feraud's madness is opposed to d'Hubert's reasonability, however, when insults fly and challenges are issued the situation quickly dissolves. Facial expression becomes a metaphor for their symbolic position within the narrative, and another example of how the active visual qualities of film actualize and make well known the intent and functions of narrative—in this particular case, they make known narrative's tonal qualities. The audience, in the sequence following the insult and challenge between Feraud and d'Hubert, is given reason to believe that their rivalry is justified (even if based in the madness of both to follow honor in a steadfast manner).

Thus, through visual metaphor and *energia*, the challenge expresses and introduces the tone of the film. The scene develops the idea that this is a film less about honorable duelists and more about a blood feud that runs at a level deeper than social convention—the madness of Feraud. This madness rests on the pretext of the gentleman's duel but nurtures off the fury of the “villain.” The duel offers an aesthetically urbane way of articulating the plot and establishing the

central tenets that will govern the logic of the narrative. In the coinciding establishment and destabilizing of equilibrium of the narrative, it is through the challenge that the duel achieves this in *The Duellists* as in *Barry Lyndon*. With regard to the former, the scene communicates that the plot will be centered on the rivalry of the two characters, but, more specifically, it is representative of Feraud's madness and d'Hubert's commitment to upholding his honor even when nonplussed by the origins of their duel.

Similarly, Clive Candy's visit to Germany in *Colonel Blimp* offers more evidence for the claim that the challenge serves as a visual metaphor for the flow of equilibrium and introduction. However, introduction in this scene is distinct from "beginning." Candy's objective while in Germany is to find and call out a German officer named Kaunitz (David Ward) whom he suspects of spreading propaganda about British action in the Boer War, thereby impugning his nation's honor. At this point in the story, Candy is blinded to the atrocities Kaunitz claims are happening. His stalwart standpoints and established principles reflect the stabilization of equilibrium, and establish his willingness to engage Kaunitz over the matter reveal his desire to uphold the status quo, similar to Redmond's desire for Nora and the expulsion of Quin from her life, which he feels might come about through direct confrontation. Ultimately, Candy's blindness, which resolves itself with his awakening at the end of the film, forces him to destabilize the narrative equilibrium through his attempt to uphold the status quo, or equilibrium. And while Candy cannot see what is evident, his actions reveal the flow of narrative equilibrium to the audience.

To achieve his ends, Candy accompanies Ms. Hunter (Deborah Kerr, who plays each of Candy's three female companions throughout the film) to a drinking hall. When they reach the hall, Candy reveals that he intends on backing out of the arrangement for fear that his superiors



will catch wind of his plan and punish him. However, upon noticing Kaunitz his mind changes immediately. Instead of withdrawing from the plan, he escalates the tension and forces the break in equilibrium by provoking Kaunitz through a musical duel. He requests the ensemble play a piece Kaunitz would recognize from his time as a British prisoner. This infuriates Kaunitz and what follows is a humorous exchange of musical requests. This exchange is a bit of light foreshadowing of the much more serious exchange that is to come. Accordingly, in playing with a musical duel, Powell and Pressburger mimic the oppositional nature of Candy's relationship to Kaunitz. Consequently, Candy's exchange with Kaunitz in the drinking hall embodies the transgression of narrative equilibrium and sets the course of Candy's engagement with the plot.

### **Todorov's Narrative Principles**

In the exchange between Candy and Kaunitz, *Colonel Blimp* undergoes Todorov's third narrative organization: ideological transformation. The narrative hinges on Candy's decision to provoke his adversary into action. At first glance, however, the transformation occurring in this scene aligns with what Todorov calls mythological transformation.<sup>70</sup> Mythological transformation is concerned with the logic of succession and the question of what happens next based on the actions, choices, and intentions of the characters.<sup>71</sup> As he seems forced into making a decision that will compel further action, ostensibly Candy works out the narrative's mythological transformation based on conflicts that arise for him to meet. The camera frames him and Ms. Hunter as opposites at their table, divided by a large metallic dining dish at the same time he expresses reservations about their plan. [FIGURE 2.6] Simply enough, this framing visualizes the conflict between the two. Ms. Hunter is dismayed that Candy proposes a retreat, while Candy explains his position. At this point Ms. Hunter forces Candy into a dilemma, and

this indicates the presence of a mythological transformation in the narrative. In short, this type of dilemma represents what Todorov describes as the “passage from A to non-A,” or the simple evolution of causal events.<sup>72</sup> Essentially, Candy is poised to move the plot from A to non-A on his own volition (as far as such independent volition can exist in a narrative).

However, by introducing Kaunitz Powell and Pressburger thwart this expectation and shift from a seemingly mythological transformation into ideological transformation. Furthermore, they do this through another active visualization akin to an act of *energia*; in effect, they bring a seemingly lifeless governing rule of narrative to life through actualization. As Todorov tells us, the important distinction between mythological and gnoseological transformation is the fact that:

The relation of the propositions among themselves is no longer direct; one no longer moves from a negative to a positive version, or from ignorance to knowledge. Instead, actions are linked through the intermediary of an abstract formula . . . . These rules in turn refer to the organizing ideology of the work as a whole.<sup>73</sup>

In these films, the duel forms the abstract rule of the narratives because it reflects honor and the themes that guide actions and ultimate resolution of narrative. Because Kaunitz is tied to Candy's notions of honor due to his anti-British propaganda, his appearance in the drinking hall triggers Candy's action and progresses the narrative. Candy can only look on as he recognizes Kaunitz, and forces the issue through the aforementioned musical duel. [FIGURE 2.7] Kaunitz's entrance breaks Candy from his doubts by forcing him to uphold his beliefs. In this scene, not only does Candy's resolve to withdraw from confrontation erode, but so does the film's equilibrium. Having been insulted, the German officers issue Candy a challenge and disrupt equilibrium on the basis of ideological transformation. [FIGURE 2.8] No longer does Candy have control and the narrative progresses toward reestablishing equilibrium only when Candy has his self-awakening in the final moments of the film. Therefore, the challenge sets the terms for the

narrative, breaks equilibrium, and plays out the oppositional themes that will guide Candy back to equilibrium.



FIGURE 2.6: Candy and Ms. Hunter sit divided as Candy ponders retreat. His decision seems to align with a mythological transformation.



FIGURES 2.7 and 2.8: Kaunitz's entrance upsets narrative equilibrium and Candy's insult is driven by an ideological transformation based in honor.

This transformation is borne out of opposition that eventually instigates the duel. Opposition is a prevalent theme in *Colonel Blimp*, Candy opposes the Germans and the new warfare that both sides perpetuate (although he is blind to his own side). This is the basis of Candy's story. D'Hubert and Feraud face off psychologically and physically and this opposition allows the audience a way into their psyches, opening up wider themes of the narrative. Lastly, in *Barry Lyndon* we could say Redmond's biggest opposition is his own ambition. These ambitions lead to his rise and eventual fall. Therefore, Aristotle's notion of *energeia* plays a crucial role in the filmmakers' ability to shift audience expectations (from the expectation of mythological transformation to ideological transformation), while also demonstrating to them, with a degree of urbanity redolent of the Kubrick analysis, the framework of the narrative: ideological transformation.

The narratives in each film are examples of ideological transformation because the feeling of insult that springs from an ideology of honor dictates characters' actions and thus unravels the conflicts making up plot. The need to decide on a course of action is irrelevant because the code of honor does not allow for decision, it only warrants action.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the protagonists of each film are not allowed to decide, but instead are flung headlong into an honor bound tradition. Reflecting the needs of narrative to create conflict (which we call plot) that will compel it towards closure (at least in the sense that the narrative finally comes to a completion/end) the characters of these narratives are likewise compelled to attempt to create closure through the duel. Both the narrative and the challenge reflect one another in that they imply and arrange the terms of their own satisfaction:

Narrative → (dictates/implies) → Completion

Correspondingly:

Challenge → (dictates/implies) → Satisfaction

Furthermore, the duel was a way of preserving the status quo and maintaining honor, standing one's ground infers that one already holds that ground and consequently has the right to defend it. Equally, because the duel supplies the narrative with aesthetic (in its metaphoric and cinematic dimensions) and logical foundations, it justifies its coherence and its claim to engross the audience. Therefore, the duel is a way that the narrative establishes the terms of its explication and its completion/satisfaction. Thus, the idea that the logic of narrative is intertwined with the logic of the duel becomes a bit clearer.

These differing types of transformation may find their way into various scenes in the film or parts of the narratives. As Todorov notes, "It is clear that individual narratives exemplify more than one type of narrative organization . . . but the analysis of a specific type is more helpful for the comprehension of a particular text."<sup>75</sup> In other words, simple progressions of causal change (whether through negation or intention) do seem to occur in the narratives. For instance, we may take Redmond's resolution to fight Quin as a transformation of intention in that Redmond decides to fight Quin and then proceeds to insult, challenge, and fight him: action A to action B to action C. However, interpretation of this mold undercuts the importance of his exchange with Nora wherein she calls out his manhood and where he first upholds his honor. Because his honor is at stake and therefore forms the basis of his decision to act (in fact, compels him to act) the narrative falls back on ideological transformation.

Ultimately, this ties analysis back into ideological transformation, and here Todorov's point is simple: understanding the text through understanding how one type of transformation

makes understanding the narrative much easier because it allows one to build outward rather than collapse inward.. Where collapsing inward is the specific application of all types of transformations and narrative organizations to one text, building outward focuses interpretation on the text elaborates itself at the most fundamental level. One might critically limit their analysis by feeling obliged to apply each level of transformation to a text, whereas the careful elucidation of one level of transformation may garner much deeper insight into the text and therefore explain how the narrative functions at the most elementary level. I believe further study of each text would support Todorov's exhortation to limit analysis of a particular transformation to a particular text. However, I limit myself to some cursory inspections of the texts and leave this open to further investigation.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the challenge serves as a visual metaphor that, following Aristotle's *energia*, actualizes introduction through its establishment and destabilization of equilibrium. In a strict sense, this notion of introduction is separate from a narrative's causal beginning (as described by Aristotle) or simple exposition of plot, characters, and setting; although, those aspects of narrative may be included as a part of introduction. Visual metaphor and actualization, as described here, also reveals the logic of narrative, further demonstrating how active visualization as *energia* unfolds the intentions of the authors and the functioning of narrative. Thus the challenge, and the insult that precipitates it, are not only important aspects of storytelling, but, and in actuality because of their significance as pieces of storytelling, they signify deeper implications of the narrative. From this reasoning, the narrative relies on them to articulate its discourse and reveal the way it positions important symbolic points in order to express its thematic, tonal, and overall meanings. Through close inspection of

the challenge, we see how it, as a constituent part of the duel, explains the important aspects of narrative, thereby offering a paradigm into understanding the logic of narrative.

## Chapter 3

### The Rhetorical and Symbolic Position of Seconds

'My second? Yes, let me present him,  
He's here Monsieur Guillot, my friend,  
I do not see what should prevent him,  
He's someone I can recommend.  
Although he's not a well-known figure,  
He is an honest guy and eager.'  
Zaretsky bit his lip, appalled.  
Onegin then to Lensky called:  
'Shall we not start now?' 'If you're willing,'  
Vladimir said. Behind the mill  
They went. At some remove, meanwhile,  
Zaretsky solemnly is sealing  
A contract with the 'honest guy'.  
The two foes stand with lowered eye.  
— Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*

Having explored the significance of the challenge as a rhetorical object and as an act that foregrounds processes of spectatorship and actualizes the narrative functions, I now wish to investigate the role of the seconds in each film by focusing on the rhetoric they employ to disclose narrative form. By “seconds,” I mean the attendants to the duel who facilitate, moderate, and, to a certain extent, govern the boundaries of the narrative event. Seconds are supplementary characters in relation to the main protagonist(s) and antagonist(s), but serve an essential role as narrativizing agents establishing the “rules of the game.” In addition to addressing some of the narrative concerns introduced in the preceding chapter, I hope to elaborate how the seconds dictate and reflect those “rules,” not only in relation to the duel itself but also with regard to narrative processes. It would be easy to dismiss or gloss over the importance of seconds—to push them to the background as minor actors within the overall story. In fact, the narrative processes within each of my case studies—*The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *Barry*



*Lyndon* (1975), and *The Duellists* (1977)—actively promote this type of reading as a clever way of disguising their aims and manipulating audience attention. Such an approach is consistent with fabula (story) construction, which entails a willing submission (among audience members) to preexisting syuzhet (plot) structures, or the narrative’s ordering of events, presented in such a way as to promote coherence and believability. Therefore, in what follows I argue that the seconds are rhetorically significant narrative functionaries who establish the discourse of the story-events (like the duel) but also outline the general tendencies of the narrative. In short, the seconds are rhetorically important because they are agents within the narrative that facilitate the spectator’s involvement with and understanding of narrative.

The seconds manage the protocols and technicalities concerning the duel, leaving the primaries to their pre-fight reflections and apprehensions. They inspect the weapons and dictate the etiquette of the dueling grounds. In essence, after the challenge is issued, seconds bring the duel to life. If they are not present, the event is undermined or impossible to designate as a true duel. Therefore, the seconds in these films are a direct manifestation of the narrative’s structural imperatives; in each text they serve a consistent role as mediators of both highly regulated and involved processes: the duel and the narrative. Their absence makes the duel unintelligible and little more than an excuse for brutal murder, and likewise limits the narrative’s ability to be fully comprehended. In short, they have an active role in fabula construction because they guide audience attention and symbolic meaning making. Thus, the seconds fulfill at least two roles within the given case studies and, by extension, other films revolving around the duel as a narrative event. Simultaneously, they reflect a text’s ability to dictate the terms of its own unfolding while serving a role as a plot device that ushers the narrative along and activates spectatorial agency in fabula construction.

Historically, a duel without seconds was deemed illegitimate, not only by the participants but also by society as a whole. Seconds brought sophistication and order to the fights, which were lent a degree of “justification” by their presence. In the early days of the duel (roughly speaking, medieval ages and into the renaissance) seconds would at times engage the opposing sides’ seconds if properly instigated, thus joining their primaries in the effort to defend the latter’s honor. Even into the nineteenth century, seconds could and would be called on to fight in place of their primary if he was judged ill-fit or a poor swordsman because wounding or slaying an obvious poor swordsman would do little for one’s honor. Indeed, *Barry Lyndon* features a scene in which Redmond stands in for the chevalier (Patrick Magee) in order to settle the elder’s gambling disputes. Even if not physically present at the event, the seconds in the above films maintain an important role as confidants and friends to the primaries and as implied or off-screen arbiters. This is true of the opening duels in both *Barry Lyndon* and *The Duellists*, in which the seconds appear as passive onlookers rather than active accomplices.

As a dyadic presentation of a generally violent yet socially accepted and physically circumscribed or “governed” event, the onscreen duel—presided over by seconds—can be mapped onto the narrative operations linking “author” and “spectator.” That is, much like duelists who agree to the terms of honor, cinematic auteurs and film audiences subscribe to the language and logic of the duel, which demands a certain visual presentation—a certain way of being seen (on the screen). As explained in the previous chapter, the visual manifestation of the event is redolent of Aristotle’s notion of *energia*. However, by asserting its autonomy, the duel, which is rendered in a consistent fashion in each of the three otherwise distinct, stylistically varied films, both challenges and supports the notion of authorial imprint.

Authorial presence permeates each film and warrants an understanding of each text as a rhetorical object, much less the individual devices in the narrative as rhetorical devices. This poses the question whether the fictive goals of the authors are rhetorical goals that exist through seconds. According to A.L. Kennedy the stylistic and moral predilections of Powell and Pressburger are evident throughout *Colonel Blimp* and inform much of the text's narrative form. As he states, "Because this a moral film, a Powell and Pressburger film, a film with a human centre . . . . Powell and Pressburger have already established a tone for their piece which is light and warm, inviting, but there has always been a threat of something darker, winking through."<sup>76</sup> Certainly, Kennedy has begun to detect, from both the directors' biographies and artistic productions, a consistent vestige of their collective self in this wartime film. Tonally speaking, Kennedy begins to detect that presence throughout the narrative, even when so caught up in its flow to become enamored or ensnared by thoughts of mortality. Referring to the "referee" for the duel in which Candy is about to partake (a figure who announces, "Now you, alone, will come with me, please"), Kennedy explains, "That's how Death works and this script knows it. Suddenly events speed, become so plainly irreversible that they are both truly horrifying and truly ridiculous."<sup>77</sup> The horrifying and absurd nature of the dueling scene turns Kennedy to thoughts of death and the finitude of human existence, yet he still can bracket this realization and his own absorption in the text to appreciate and take notice of the authors' presence.

Similarly, several critics have noted the "cold" and "distant," at times painterly, tendencies in Kubrick's body of work, and have labeled him as a director more dependent on the visual articulation of shots than on character-guided dialogue.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, this implies that Kubrick, not his characters, guides the narrative along. By this reading, his characters are rather like golems who, as automatons, assist their master who shaped and molded them to fit his will.

Even a cursory look at the extra-textual discourse surrounding his productions reveals a consistent claim about Kubrick's stylistic proclivities, his penchant for reverse zooms, symmetrical shot compositions, and long shots and extreme long shots in which humans are often dwarfed by natural or industrial surroundings. Similarly, Scott seems to exert weight on his audience's reception of his texts. The film critic Roderick Davis explains how the opening scene of *The Duellists*, which, through the eyes of a young maiden, captures Feraud dueling, encapsulates the primary themes of the film succinctly. That scene, like many others, fosters a careful attention to detail from Scott as he reveals Feraud's madness and obsessive fascination with honor and duel. Thus, the director encourages a certain way of seeing, and does this through multifarious aspects of the narrative. Notably, seconds come to stand in for the director as a proxy, and, by extension, they serve a role as proxy for the audience as they follow the authorial intent. For Davis, Scott's direction makes the film more emotionally affective. His direction consistently ferrets out the dominant tonal moods of the film and points them toward the audience.<sup>79</sup> In the end, each filmmaker allows the audience in by making the narrative compelling, but simultaneously allows them a critical out through making their presence felt. Arguably, each of these case studies features the strong style and voice of their respective authors, making them, in many ways, rhetorical.

So too are the seconds manifestations of authorial intent in each film. In narratological terms, they exist for the sole purpose of pointing out symbolic references, directing audience attention, and establishing the terms of the narrative's disclosure. Even more fundamentally, they reveal that the narrative is always dictating the terms of the arrangement, and progressing to serve the ends of its believable form. The seconds give legitimacy to not only the duel but also the sequence of functions in the narrative itself. When the seconds are missing, for instance, or

fail to conform to the rigid dictates, codes, or historical precedents of the duel, the uneasy tonal qualities of the scene play out. The tension between d'Hubert and Feraud is on full display as Feraud calls out d'Hubert and despite the latter's protest a duel proceeds. Thus, the seconds serve a function similar to the challenge. In reality, they are an extension of the primary's intent to duel, and in fictive terms, they are an extension insofar as they are a catalyst for the duel event. In many ways, therefore, they serve to actualize, akin to the challenge, the procedures of narrative.

If the challenge issued by one character to another is a manifestation of the narrative's challenge to the audience, or an actualization of this challenge that is implicit at the start of the text, then the seconds operate to unfold, relay, and set the rules of the game, and therefore serve as rhetorical manifestations of authorial intent. The seconds, though "secondary" to the primary participants, are nevertheless instrumental and central to the argument narrative makes for acceptance of its form and structure; in other words, how believable, entertaining, and veracious it is. Structurally speaking, seconds operate within the positional terms as outlined by Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze explicates the concept of the positional by nature of the primacy of entities in structural space. As Deleuze states, "places in a purely structural space are primary in relation to the things and real beings which come to occupy them, primary in relation to the always somewhat imaginary roles and events which necessarily appear when they are occupied."<sup>80</sup> Perhaps paradoxically, the duel is rendered a "primary" site of signification by virtue of the emplacement of the *seconds*, not the primaries. Moreover, seconds infuse these structural spaces with meaning by rhetorically directing spectatorial engagement with the scene, and by elaborating the focus of authorial intent. In other words, in designating zones of importance within the narrative, seconds come to embody the manner by which the narrative directs

audience attention. As central components of the event, they transform its location (both within space and within narrative) into a “positional” vector. The preeminence of secondary elements in a narrative, best symbolized by seconds in texts featuring the duel but applicable elsewhere, operates through a relation with the position they occupy within a structure. The narrative structure emphasizes certain elements and seconds become their instrument for doing so; that is to say, “Structuralism cannot be separated from a new transcendental philosophy, in which the sites prevail over whatever occupies them.”<sup>81</sup> In moving into position, seconds value the particular sights of the structure. Translated to cinematic narratives, they occupy and produce meaning in the scenes that feature them.

### **The Duel: Between Dialectics and Rhetoric**

Ostensibly, the duel fits under a dialectic paradigm because it features two sides seeking resolution. However, this interpretation is misleading when one considers the duel’s manifestation in fiction where it exists as a creation distanced from its historical roots. Arguably, the duel in fiction is rhetorical because it reveals an aspect of narrative that was once unseen. Within narratives, exposition is in a permanent state, the audience is rarely in a position to perform dialectic because the terms are rarely ever settled. Thus the narrative constantly evolves and unfolds. As George Kennedy notes, “Dialectic progress by question and answer, not, as rhetoric does, by continuous exposition.”<sup>82</sup> Fiction operates similarly, not by a continuous examination of premises to be tested out through question and answer but through a sequence of proposed truths, which are ultimately interpreted by an audience in a variety of ways (for their aesthetic merit, verisimilitude, morality, and so on). Through exposition, narratives offer a bevy of truths that will be interpreted and judged by its audience. Essentially, they argue through

propositions about a believable world they create, and their propositions are elaborated through various functions of storytelling (characters, plot, setting, and so forth). Yet, as rhetoric, like dialectics, deals with opposites so too does a narrative.<sup>83</sup> The seconds, therefore, proceed to expose and demonstrate the various ways in which the narrative finds “the available means of persuasion.”<sup>84</sup> Through exposition of its always-unfolding form, the narrative rhetorically employs seconds.

Seymour Chatman offers a succinct definition of the rhetoric of fiction when he surmises, “The expression ‘rhetoric of fiction,’ I believe, best refers to a fiction’s suasion that its unfolding *form* be accepted.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Chatman argues that rather than subsisting at the level of a taxonomy of grammar or definition of technique, the rhetoric of fiction shows how the text’s end is revealed and submitted to the reader (or viewer, as the case may be).<sup>86</sup> In short, the nature of this rhetoric is “to accept the form of the narrative as most appropriate to its content.”<sup>87</sup> Fictions create enticing and believable worlds, they seek to attract an audience and persuade them that their enticements are the most desirable or fitting for their ends. If fiction is to be rhetorical then it must rely on rhetorical devices to properly persuade and reach its aims, therefore it must find the available means of persuasion in order to truly capture an audience. In each of the three selected films, the seconds serve the invaluable role of persuading an audience of the narrative’s form by directing spectatorial engagement to the narrative’s available means of persuasion.

In addition, Chatman bases the notion of aesthetic rhetoric in the epideictic rhetoric of ancient Greece. Epideictic rhetoric evolved from praise or blame aimed at persons or institutions and into the formal qualities of a text.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, a critic can give a rhetorical account of what is sound and noteworthy about the form of narrative, just as the Greeks praised or cast down persons in public life. The individual functions of narrative form the language of this epideictic

account of narrative, namely elements such as seconds inform the ways in which we praise or blame narrative form. In effect, the narrative dictates the measure of its own judgment. However, within the narrative seconds exist not on the epideictic level but on the deliberative, because they form the basic propositions from which the audience will either accept or reject the narrative's form. Narratives make deliberative arguments based on what is to occur in the future (whether an audience accepts its form or not) and the viewer in turn makes the epideictic case. Narratives make the case for whether accepting their form in epideictic fashion is "possible or impossible for us to do."<sup>89</sup> This differs from the social or political implications of deliberative rhetoric for Aristotle, but still addresses a need for future action and thus fundamentally remains deliberative.

Kennedy writes that Aristotle believes the "the actuality produced by the potentiality of rhetoric is not the written or oral text of a speech, or even persuasion, but the art of 'seeing' how persuasion may be effected."<sup>90</sup> Thus, rhetoric consists of *seeing* what exists, which would imply that the audience then *accepts* its existence through seeing. Rhetoric makes what might seem elusive, ineffable, and even invisible into sight. The rhetoric of fiction is deliberative insofar as it proposes that its form be accepted, and it argues for this through a visual rhetorical language based in metaphor in which the audience is asked to believe in the proposition. Aesthetic rhetoric is the belief (*pisteis*) in the narrative, or in the text as a whole. Moreover, the rhetorical argument is based in the functions or elements of the narrative, such as the seconds. Aristotle argues that "the subjects of deliberation are clear, and these are whatever, by their nature, are within our power and of which the inception lies with us . . . . we limit our consideration to the point of discovering what is possible or impossible for us to do."<sup>91</sup> The epideictic ability of the audience to accept the narrative's form is precipitated by the deliberative qualities of the narrative. As the narrative's rhetorical functionaries, seconds attempt to direct attention to the unfolding narrative,



inform us of its “reality,” and persuade us of its believability. They direct us and urge us to accept the cohesiveness of form, and direct our attention where it needs to be directed while simultaneously acting as elements of the constructed fabula. Seconds make the deliberative propositions and the audience makes the epideictic judgment.

Powell and Pressburger’s *Colonel Blimp* offers possibly the most detailed account and rendering of deliberative rhetoric through a direct exhibition of deliberation. In the film, the seconds meet to perform their duty, which is to set the rules of engagement and arrange the duel. The scene displays the deliberative process and therefore exists as a direct visual metaphor for the deliberative quality of the narrative. Furthermore, the prominent seconds of the scene reflect audience participation in this deliberative process through their direct appeals and argumentation. The seconds from each side put the deliberative process on full display, exchanging various rules, proposing the conditions of the duel, and eloquently exchange in a dyadic manner all the necessary points of honor and involvement. In *Colonel Blimp* deliberation is rendered as an entire scene and as a dominant aspect of the duel, making it a unique example and event among each of the films. However, in each film, seconds serve the needs of the narrative’s deliberative rhetoric by establishing its terms, calling attention to important symbolism, and serving as proxies for audience involvement, or as concomitant witnesses to the duel-event.

Playing out opposition, the scene introduces two stern German officers as they march into a British embassy to an irreverent piece of music. The two officers inquire about Candy’s position in the military, and when answered, inform a helpless diplomat that Candy is to be involved in a duel, to which the shocked diplomat exclaims, “Duel?!” The diplomat’s exclamation is the punctuation to the scene and excites our investment with the duel, designating it as an extraordinary event. While the German seconds have yet to make the deliberative

propositions, they establish the groundwork for where the sequence will lead, that is to the meeting room and the formation of the duel. Their stoic nature in juxtaposition with the excited British embassy (the very next scene depicts the spreading news in a comedic fashion) also sows the groundwork for the opposition inherent in the film, and thereby positions the audience in between the two sides. The goal is now to argue for the duel and situate the audience into believing its relevance and importance in the narrative.

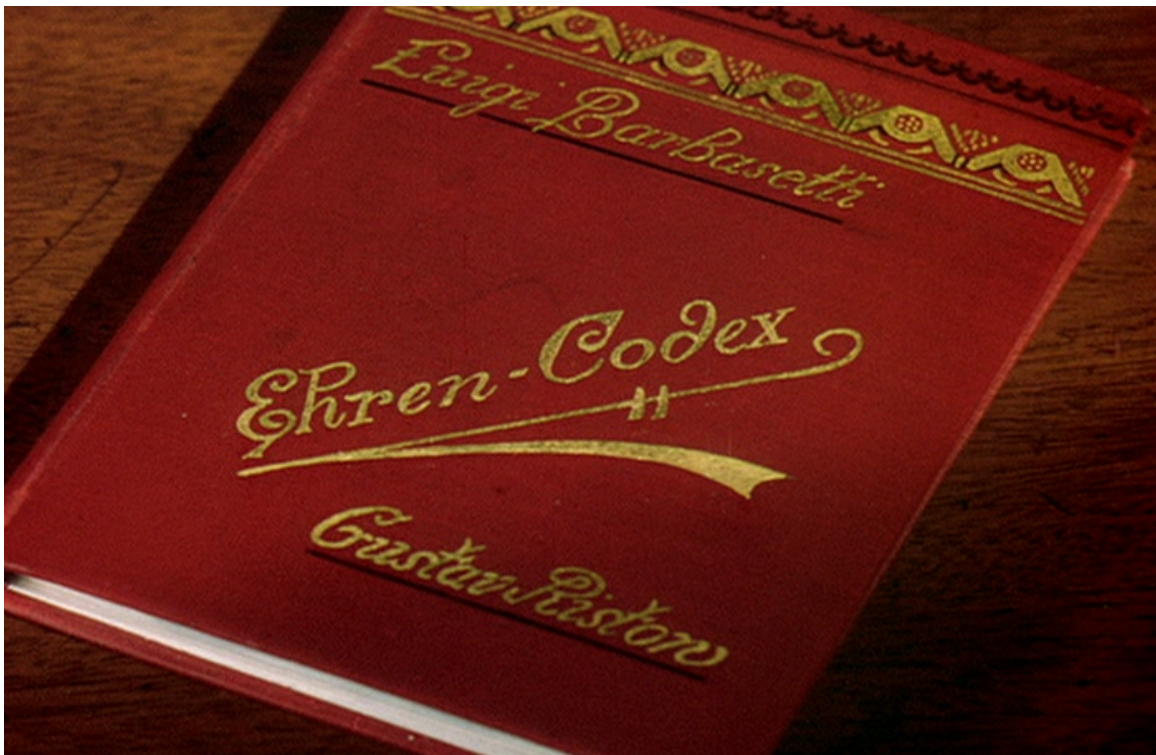


FIGURE 3.1: A dueling manual establishes the deliberative nature of the scene.

As the scene opens, Powell and Pressburger direct attention to the uniformity and strict procedural tone of the scene with an opening shot of a dueling manual. [FIGURE 3.1] The scene is governed as one concerning rules, and these suspicions are confirmed when the camera takes in a large conference room, round table, and even attendants seeing to the lights, establishing a deliberative setting and tone. Indeed, the subsequent shots position the audience in close

proximity with the deliberation. Now the audience is another member of the proceedings.

[FIGURE 3.2 and 3.3] The Germans gesture toward the British by presenting the manual to their counterparts, signaling the beginning of deliberation to the audience. Soon it is evident the Germans invest a high degree of attention and meaning into rules and protocols; because of this the audience is brought closer to the world the narrative is establishing. In contrast to the German severity, the British offer commentary on the affair by stating it is strange to fight a duel for two who have never met. The British seconds seem beleaguered by the process and simply go through the motions, while they understand the rules and implications. The audience, on the other hand, learns the protocol of the event. In this exchange, the seconds seem to reach outward and meticulously cover every detail for the audience. In effect, they are teaching. With the knowledge the viewer gains from this scene, the duel seems less alien. Therefore, the scene plays out as a didactic exchange between the seconds and the audience. Not only do the seconds perform their role but they also inscribe the vocabulary necessary to understand the violence that will follow.



FIGURES 3.2 and 3.3: As the two sides deliberate, the audience is positioned in close proximity with the proceedings, as if a participant.

The question of the duel's merit, as posed by Candy's second, is a deliberative one. In the first moment of oppositional exchange, the Germans ask whether Candy has fought a duel to which the British respond no and counter with the same question. As the Germans reveal that their duelist does not actually believe in the idea of dueling, the British ask, "Is this fight really necessary?" In sharp response, the foremost German second coldly states that Schuldorff (their chosen duelist) knows his duty and will disavow his personal objections because of this.

[FIGURE 3.4] The fact that the objection is raised at all begets its importance for the deliberative aspect of the scene. Up until this point, only cordial settlement of the finer points of the duel have been proposed and brought into agreement. The exchange of rules and procedures, proposition and counter-proposition are symbolic indicators of the deliberative process.



FIGURE 3.4: The German second reacts coldly to British objections.

However, a question must be raised for consideration in order for the discourse to be deliberative. In a positional relationship with the question of the duel, these symbolic indicators point out its significance and establish the scene's meaning. By raising the question, the British seconds pose the duel as a deliberative question needing to be resolved. On the other hand, this question makes no sense to the Germans who simply assume the duel is warranted out of honor. While the Germans accept the duel without thought, the British demand further consideration but are ultimately bound to honor. From the standpoint of honor, the duel is inevitable from this standpoint and the film transitions, after a few perfunctory last statements from both sides, into the duel. The Germans propose the duel and the British are framed as opposed to the event. The scene revolves around the deliberative question: is the duel necessary? By the end, the Germans answer with an appeal to honor. With the justification of the duel established, the seconds therefore validate, in part, the duel as a part of the narrative form.

Not only are the differences and attitudes and ideologies obvious, but the position of scarring in the scene denotes the opposition present in the scene. Scars are moved into proximity with the clash of ideology and are "marked in the structure following . . . topological order of proximities."<sup>92</sup> The shots of the Germans emphasize their military attire and dueling scars. Earlier in the film, during the insult and challenge stage of the duel, Ms. Hunter emphasizes the importance of scars for Germans. After the duel is brought to a closure, Candy hides his scars out of embarrassment by growing a mustache, and time and dialogue are given to explaining this seemingly trivial detail, implying its importance for the story. On the other hand, the German seconds proudly wear their scars during the meeting in stark opposition to the British who bear no such traces of violence and don civilian garb. Thus, the zeal with which the Germans argue for the duel (first broached in the challenge scene) and propose to the audience that it be

accepted as part of the narrative's unfolding form is countered by the reluctant British envoy. Ultimately, this reluctance culminates in their questioning the event to which a close-up, with scar on full display, captures the German's response and highlights the opposition between the Germans and British. To be sure, this opposition would be relevant for the audience of 1943.

In this deliberative scene, seconds perform an essential role as narrative functionaries, meaning the elements of narrative come to regulate its disclosure. As Chatman argues, "Narratives entail both transformation and self-regulation. Self-regulation means that the structure maintains and closes itself."<sup>93</sup> Seconds facilitate this self-regulation and indicate important points of the structure's symbolic positional nature. Furthermore, they make the narrative's argument for itself clear through what amounts to a metaphorical language, ultimately underscoring their role as rhetorical devices for an aesthetic rhetoric. As with the insult and subsequent challenge, seconds demarcate boundaries of transformation and equilibrium, but also work further to express the narrative's deliberative stance that its form be accepted. Ultimately, this constitutes their role as rhetorically enabled narrative functionaries. The ability of seconds to speak or argue for the narrative lies in the emotive and metaphorical language that gives them their rhetorical quality.

### **The Metaphorical Foundation of Rhetoric**

The rhetorical language of seconds exists not through direct rhetorical appeals or as easily recognizable moments of logos, ethos, or pathos but through visual metaphor. This rhetorical language is a metaphorical language that informs exposition, symbolism, fabula construction, and, ultimately, the organization of the syuzhet or plot. Metaphor offers the emotive language necessary to bind the audience with the narrative. For example, the seconds of

*Colonel Blimp* are merely metaphorical representations of the narrative making its deliberative proposition that its form be accepted and the scars they present represent an emotive word. In true metaphorical fashion, and in following the primary function of seconds, they *stand in* for the narrative structure. Moreover, they are most believable as operating functions within plot; in other words, they are characters who enhance the believability of the story and continuously unfold exposition. Not only do they serve as metaphorical markers of the deliberative process, but also they serve as metaphors of persistent themes in the narrative. For instance, Feraud's second haunts d'Hubert at every turn in the story, and comes to represent d'Hubert's fear of death and his dread at returning to the dueling grounds. D'Hubert attempts to avoid him but finally admits, "If he wants me, he'll find me."

Ernesto Grassi argues for this type of metaphorical structure as the basis of rhetorical language. Essentially, he claims that in order to understand the governing principles of rationality one must understand the language of images it employs to articulate itself. Extended to narrative we might say that to understand its governing principles we must understand its language. This language, for Grassi, is metaphorical and thus rhetorical. Furthermore, if film is a narrative structure that desires to enunciate its own form, the visual metaphor is the way in which it achieves this end. If the governing principles of narrative could be approached directly there would be no need for it to express itself through visual metaphor as its form would be an *a priori* given. Consequently, Grassi's rhetorical language informs an understanding of seconds as rhetorical devices because it understands them as visual metaphors.

Grassi notes that the type of speech that expresses certain nondeductible first assertions is purely indicative rather than demonstrative. This is because these primary assertions rest at the basis of everyday knowing and speaking, but cannot be proven themselves because they are the



first assertions and thus cannot be reduced any further back.<sup>94</sup> In other words, by nature of being first principles they are irreducible and thus one cannot find something further back to explain them with, lest they begin a chain of infinite regression. Grassi is arguing that first assertions can essentially only be indicated and not deduced based on some other, more fundamental, premise (they *are* the fundamental premises).

In order to speak about these fundamental principles, in order to express the first assertions, Grassi argues for a speech based in images and that is not rational but rhetorical. Such a speech would be the only way to account for the first assertions because such a speech “provides the framework within which the proof can come into existence.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, rather than being purely rational or demonstrative the archai, or first principles, are indicative. Additionally, first assertions cannot be deduced rationally because as first principles they are nondeductible. The question arises as to how we can make sense or employ them at all. To this end, Grassi argues for their rhetorical character rather than rational character. If rhetoric is traditionally considered separate from the rational domain of philosophy, then it is what gives weight to the seemingly unreachable first principles. Grassi intends to bind rhetoric not with persuasion, but with rational thought:

If the image, the metaphor, belongs to rhetorical speech . . . we also are obliged to recognize that every original, former, “archaic” speech . . . cannot have a rational but only a rhetorical character. Thus the term “rhetoric” assumes a fundamentally new significance; “rhetoric” is not, nor can it be the art, the technique of an exterior persuasion; it is rather the speech which is the basis of the rational thought.<sup>96</sup>

This is not to argue that rhetoric does not deal with persuasion, but that it, as traditionally understood, deals with the image and metaphor and because every original or archaic speech is predicated on the indicative or visual in order to be uttered, then this original or archaic speech is



rhetorical and not rational. Thus rhetoric forms the basis of reason because it is closest in its character to being able to indicate the original, first assertions.

The foundation of Grassi's connection of rhetoric to the first premises is built on metaphor and images. Extending this line of thought, we begin to see how powerful the images of dueling are for disclosing the importance of story in a story versus narrative paradigm. At the most fundamental level, narrative is not an image or metaphor but a series of images and metaphors. This series of images and metaphor indicates the presence or existence of narrative. Thus one could say, borrowing slightly from Grassi, that this series of images and metaphors provide narrative with its rhetorical language. I alluded to this in the last section. Moreover, these images and metaphors are not isolated instances, nor are they individually meaningless. Rather, they have their own significance and importance in the overall narrative. In other words, they tell their own stories. The duel is such an instance of a metaphor that indicates the presence of narrative.

Rhetoric employs imaginative language, and the duel is rhetorical in its ability to communicate through images and ultimately indicate the presence of the narrative. This ability lets it transpose its symbolic positionality; that is to say, it allows the duel to arrest and facilitate narrative, call attention to itself, and break the ties that bind, allowing its position in relation to other subjects in narrative to become apparent and, perhaps, more important than the narrative which contains it. How else do specific points in the texts we consume stand out to us? Why do particular elements of the narrative stick out to us, or become more memorable than the narrative itself? Simply stated, because they carry significance that extends beyond the narrative. However, if narrative's goal is to use its functions and elements to articulate itself, it seems strange that these elements would have any place of importance above narrative.

## Seconds as a Rhetorical Language

The seconds bring attention to the metaphorical significance of weaponry in each film, as they are the individuals responsible for the maintenance of these tools. In *Barry Lyndon* there is a pronounced cinematographic as well as metaphoric relationship with pistols. When Redmond is robbed by highwaymen, he is seen to be literally and figuratively devoid of his masculinity (only allowed to keep his shoes so that he may walk with his shame to the next town) because his guns, horse, and money are stripped from him and he is left at the bandits' mercy. In order to recapture some semblance of his former self and to regain not only some fortune but also his masculinity, Redmond joins the British army, which offers a way of hiding from the authorities that may pay for his individual upkeep. This leads him to regaining his confidence and a sense of self that comes to fruition after his victorious fistfight with a fellow soldier. Redmond spends the rest of the story seeking out guns, horses, and money. The guns he finds are represented in his duels and army experience, the horse returns with the death of his son, and he is reacquainted with money when he marries Lady Lyndon (albeit far more than he ever had before the robbery).

Accordingly, weaponry symbolically positions Redmond within the narrative structure.

However, they are most direct when dealt with by his seconds in each dueling scene. At other times, they recede into the background mainly in his time as a soldier where they control

Redmond's destiny more than he controls them, as he does in each of his duels where they serve as tools of his success and expressions of his self.

Redmond's seconds represents Kubrick's most careful attention to weaponry and therefore call attention to their significance for Redmond. The very first duel Redmond partakes in (against Quin) highlights this point. In this scene, Kubrick employs reverse zoom not to introduce us to the duelists but rather to their weapons [FIGURE 3.5]:



FIGURE 3.5: Pistols and weaponry are metaphorically significant indicators of important narrative events.

The seconds denote opposition through the symmetrical arrangement and mannered loading and inspecting of the pistols. Here the audience is witness to the first instance in which the seconds will literally point out and demonstrate the workings of the narrative's form. While Redmond and Quin will ultimately maintain a dominant position in the scene in order to fulfill its function for the plot, the seconds command our attention in the opening shots to the weaponry, thereby acknowledging the importance they have not only for this individual scene, but for the narrative as a whole. The pistols enact a metaphorical significance because they create the "emotive framework which creates the tension within which . . . actions . . . acquire their passionate significance."<sup>97</sup> At their essence they are what Grassi terms emotive words that affect the audience through their directness.<sup>98</sup> Once again, this is laid out in plain sight by the seconds who draw spectatorial attention to the rhetorical language of the pistols. Although Redmond will out-duel Quin through these tools, they will eventually lead to his downfall and banishment. In addition, this rhetorical language infused with the emotive word elicits the ever-unfolding form

of the narrative, suggesting that the first rhetorical qualities of fiction belong in the secondary, denotative functions; in other words, the seconds of the duel, as it exists in these selected texts.

In Redmond's second duel (against Lord Bullingdon), seconds are pronounced witnesses to the event. Beginning with them being situated as background accompaniments to Bullingdon's challenge, they reflect audience attention on the event transpiring. [FIGURE 3.6] Presumably, the challenge is simply Bullingdon transgressing the boundaries of Redmond's existence and influence. However, as the challenge implies forthcoming gunfire, the seconds, as seen in Redmond's first duel, seem to bear witness to Bullingdon's transformation. Their presence, as in all scenes where they are witness, denotes a climactic point of progression within the narrative. Just as Redmond was thrown into the world and his adventure began, Bullingdon is ushering forth a dynamic shift. Seemingly, captive spectators, seconds serve to emphasize and punctuate these pivotal points in the text. And as they exist in the peripherals or background, they seem to stand-in for the audience's own perception of these events. In other words, they offer further exposition, and point out this exposition to the audience they reflect. Ultimately, the audience follows the trace of the seconds as they demarcate important points of meaning and significance.

In this way, the seconds are important rhetorical indicators of narrative progression that serve the disclosure of its form and reflect the position of the spectator as a witness to the event. However, *Barry Lyndon* and *Colonel Blimp* reveal that not only do seconds exist as passive reflections on the audience's involvement with a text, but also they come to serve as proxies in a way similar to their duty as seconds on the dueling grounds and before. In *Barry Lyndon*, this occurs during the climatic duel between Bullingdon and Redmond wherein Bullingdon has grown up and gathered the courage to oust Redmond from Lady Lyndon's estate. Bullingdon challenges Redmond based on his public humiliation during a piano recital. After Bullingdon

finds Redmond drunk and asleep at a social club, he calls him out in front of the latter's peers (peers that appear as seconds in the subsequent duel).



FIGURE 3.6: As Lord Bullington issues challenge, the seconds silently observe.

In this duel, Kubrick parallels the narrative qualities of Redmond's first duel. However, the tone is markedly different. The first duel featured a reverse zoom that began with the loading of pistols and proceeded to establish the combatants neighboring a flowing river during a sunny afternoon. The tone of the scene is arguably adventurous and optimistic; the river represents movement and a sense of progression while the daylight offers a feeling of openness. In short, there is a feeling of romantic grandeur and an idyllic peace that negates thoughts of violence.<sup>99</sup> This scene is positioned in the beginning of the narrative; the openness of this is in stark contrast to the climactic final duel. As opposed to Redmond's first duel, the final duel occurs in an enclosed and isolated space, cordoning off the feeling of optimism and openness the first duel established. Furthermore, it occurs in an abandoned church occupied only by restless pigeons.

This foreboding symbol denotes finality and abandonment, the same abandonment Redmond will endure by the film's end. Therefore, Kubrick is keen to parallel feelings of optimism and romance with a generally enclosed and final tone. The scene establishes a clear difference in tone from the first and signals the close of the narrative. Where one duel was open, the other is closed. [FIGURES 3.7 and 3.8] And in both images the seconds preside, watching events unfold. The chronology suggests that this may be the end for Redmond, and the narrator and the intermission's brief quote support this claim. Kubrick allows the viewer to be an embedded witness to this event through the point of view of an imagined second. In contrast to the first duel, he creates a sense of immediacy by focusing the first shot at the visceral level of the gut, aligning the audience as another perspective. [FIGURE 3.9] The point of view, therefore, exists as one of an active witness rather than passive onlooker. The audience now flanks the shoulder of one of Redmond's seconds and watches as, once again, they manage the duel's weaponry. Ultimately, this creates the feeling of *being* a second, or functioning as a direct witness to the event, which was a significant role of the second historically. Thus, the seconds are narrative proxies for the audience.



FIGURE 3.7: Seconds perform the same function, even in duels that contrast in tone and meaning.





FIGURE 3.8: Seconds play the same role in different duels.

While the scene does not open with the same attention placed on the dueling pistols, they remain the centerpiece of the opening shots. In truth, the audience is at almost the same distance from the guns and the attention of all participants is firmly invested in their loading and inspecting. This attention is rhetorical because it is an elaboration of the importance of the pistols for the characters in the plot and for the disclosure and evolution of the narrative altogether. The seconds guide Redmond and Bullingdon through the procedure, thereby reminding the viewer of the importance of the selection of pistols and ordering of fire. Not only does this lend historical precision to Kubrick's imagining of a duel, but it also situates spectatorial understanding of the importance of this scene as it pertains to the overall narrative. Pistols are harbingers of death and finality. Thus, as the pistols (as part of the iconography of weaponry in the film) once represented Redmond's luck and rise they now mark his fall and the concluding scenes of the narrative, just as they marked the opening. The parallel in scope and narrative position, as well as the juxtaposition of tone is underscored by the presentation of the pistols to Redmond, where once he was at the mercy of his cousin's pistols and therefore more exposed to the tidings of fate and luck, he now has choice. His ability to choose is in contrast to his helplessness in the first duel, and the coin toss demarcates the final turn of luck. The seconds facilitate interpretation and

understanding of this scene and ultimately reflect Redmond's mercy to the hands of fate and his social order. In effect, the seconds are the narrators of the scene.



FIGURE 3.9: Similar to the deliberative scene in *Colonel Blimp*, the spectator positioned as a participant in the event.

### **Drawing Boundaries and Demarcating Rhetoric**

In this final duel, the rhetorical imperative of the seconds as narrative functionaries comes to a head when Bullingdon's second literally draws the boundaries of finality and opposition. Seconds bring to bear the implications of the scene through emphasizing symbolism, building tension, and directing audience awareness. For Chatman, the primary distinction of an "aesthetic rhetoric" is "whether it engages the implied reader more powerfully than does normal discourse."<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the question remains whether the seconds, as rhetorical devices, impose the fictive world more forcefully than traditional discourse or exposition. The recurrence of pistols, the framing of shots, and the emphasis placed on the seconds as arbiters of the scene all



suggest that they are intended to impress a greater emphasis on the audience than straightforward propositions of didactic narratives. For Chatman, “Nondidactic fictions . . . may or may not imply propositions . . . . But to ensure their own self-consistency, even they use an aesthetic rhetoric.”<sup>101</sup> Fundamentally, the seconds serve two roles simultaneously, that of plot device and rhetorical instrument. As Bullingdon’s second begins to mark the ten paces by walking through the church the tension of the scene grows, the audience *feels* and *sees* the inevitable through what amounts to a countdown. In addition, the second’s paces actualize the image of finality and further augment a sense of immediacy with which the scene opened. Bullingdon’s second reaches the end of the line, so to speak, and, with his cane, draws out in the dirt and hay the grounds for the duel. In rhetorical fashion with this act, he declares the boundaries of the scene and implores consideration of its importance to the narrative’s form. If, as Chatman asserts, the basis of an aesthetic rhetoric rests in its ability to persuade the audience that the form of narrative is most appropriate to its content, then the second’s role increases the effect of the scene and invites audience involvement with the form that is disclosed.<sup>102</sup> Ultimately, this is the fundamental role of any rhetoric. Thus, it is almost as if the second’s question; “Mr. Lyndon, will you take your ground?” aims not at Redmond, but at the spectator involved, through the seconds, with the scene. Here, the narrative declares an imperative to the audience. It asks whether we will accept the form offered, and if we are willing to stand within the narrative alongside the duelist.

## Chapter 4

### Combat as a Phenomenological Event

'Now march,' came the command. And readily,  
As if the two had never met,  
The erstwhile comrades slowly, steadily  
Advanced four steps, not aiming yet,  
Four fatal steps the two had taken.  
And then, advancing still, Onegin  
Raised by degrees his pistol first.  
Five further paces they traversed.  
And likewise Lensky calculated,  
Closed his left eye, as he took aim—  
But, with a sudden burst of flame,  
Onegin fired . . . the moment fated  
Had struck: the poet, with no sound,  
Let drop his pistol to the ground.

— Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*

In this thesis, I have broken the duel into its parts and discussed each as they elaborated upon different aspects of narrative and rhetoric. I attended to the challenge as an actualization of narrative equilibrium, and, as such, a device that divulged insight into the operative ideology of the narrative. In the previous chapter, I discussed the rhetorical implications of the seconds by examining their deliberative quality that argues for narrative form and warrants epideictic judgment of the text on the part of the audience. If the duel is a process, its signature is the combat. Typically the duel is acknowledged not so much for its introductory components (such as the challenge and arrangement) but for its combat. Essentially, I have argued that the duel is a unique experience. In this chapter, I will elaborate upon this claim by demarcating the duel through a phenomenological lens. In other words, this chapter seeks to understand the phenomenological underpinnings of the duel as an embodied experience within the filmic body as it extends toward the viewing subject.

Indeed, in one way or another *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *Barry Lyndon*, and *The Duellists* display combat as the binding element of their plots. In *Barry Lyndon*, Redmond's two pistol duels respectively begin and end his adventure (even his rapier duels over gambling debts serve as transitions between Act I and Act II in that they bring him from a hapless youth to a wealthy gentleman, ultimately changing his character between the two acts). *The Duellists* features scene after scene of saber combat and culminates in the climactic pistol duel that frees d'Hubert of Feraud's terror. The only times we are not witnessing a duel between the two are scenes when d'Hubert is avoiding Feraud and his seconds, or contemplating what their dispute of honor is doing to his humanity or psychology. Unsurprisingly a film titled *The Duellists* orbits around the duel as a combat experience, but one that features all components of this experience (that is the challenge and seconds). Finally, *Colonel Blimp* begins by introducing combat through a few brief exchanges of saber blows but fades it into the background, instead favoring the after-effects and the friendship that developed from the shared wounds and spilled blood of the event. In this text, the duel as combat foregrounds the rest of the narrative, dictating understanding of the military career of Candy as he traverses multiple wars, his love interests, and a friendship with an enemy officer. Similar to Redmond in *Barry Lyndon*, Candy is presented with moments of combat that transition him into new modes of understanding, and eventually trigger his awakening to the realities of modern warfare. In all three films, the duels are important features of narrative-disclosure.

Because the duel exists as a highly governed ritual, it dictates its own terms of disclosure. In other words, rendering the duel cinematically means following its hidebound aesthetic. The duel sets its own terms and the consistency of its presentation in each film underscores this notion. As a diacritical narrative event, the duel, even if it must be rigidly staged, offers the

viewer a point of entry into the narrative and, conversely, it offers narrative a suasive gesture toward the viewer. This dichotomous relationship is predicated upon the intentionality of both viewing subjects. As I will show, the duel serves film (and by extension its narrative) by reflecting its intentions as a viewing subject. Chiefly, this occurs at the level of framing. The duel, seemingly, reveals itself in two distinct and primary ways, both of which equally bespeak the intention of film as viewing subject. The consistent portrayal of the duel, as dictated by the duel, is captured at the level of mirrored-gazes and symmetry. This analysis relies exclusively on Vivian Sobchack's *Address of the Eye: A phenomenology of film experience* and borrows in part from Christian Metz's *Film Language*. These approaches to understanding the experience of cinema as immediately present guide my study's understanding of the duel's visual demands. In addition, Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* provides useful vocabulary to describe the effect of the duel's visual demand as it pertains to the phenomenological subjects outlined by Sobchack.

### **The Duel Intending Toward the Audience**

The notion of intentionality foregrounds any discussion of the phenomenological activity of consciousness. Moreover, it encapsulates the duelist's experience succinctly. When one pictures the duelist and his adversary (another duelist) presented immediately is the idea that these two entities inevitably "reach out" toward the other. In addition, their aim is both literal and figurative in that they must position their sword or pistol in order to stand their ground and, presumably, overcome the other. Thus, at the literal level they aim for the physical presence of the other with the hopes of survival. Figuratively, however, their attention is (or should be) focused on the other, conscious only of their presence as the tension builds toward the act.

Therefore, both duelists' intentionality is fixed on the phenomenon that is the other. Vivian Sobchack explains Edmund Husserl's notion of intentionality:

For Husserl, then, *intentionality* was a term that described the invariant directedness of consciousness, its always correlational character or structure. That is, the phenomena of our experience (the *noema*, or intentional objects of consciousness) are always correlated with the mode of our experience (the *noesis*, or intentional acts of consciousness). Intentionality is the invariant correlation that structures and directs our experience and, from the first, infuses it with meaning.<sup>103</sup>

This means that our intentionality is always attentive to some other object, we are always conscious of something else. Husserl maintained that consciousness was always consciousness of something. When the duelist stands his ground, his consciousness is therefore aimed at the opposing duelist, the stake of honor and blood forces this level of attention.

The Latin prefix *duo*, the prefix of *duellum* or the modern duel, denotes the activity of two. Despite the presence of seconds and the social implications of dueling, the actual act of the duel does not vary from the dichotomy implied by its root prefix. In effect, the duel is a closed experience or sequence. Moreover, the duel, as the twofold aim of intentionality, is also a discourse of intentionality. To be sure, the fact that the duel is based in honor and served as the measure of one's willingness to stand for their honor in society argues for this point. The duelist stands in opposition in order to make a claim. By tending toward the other, the duelist discursively proclaims their honor. And just as the narrative is a discourse between author and audience, the duel experience is a discourse between its combatants. Furthermore, the duel exists through the exhortations and demands of its participants. It is a social narrative by nature of it being proposed by those who attend to honor. Christian Metz argues that discourse, rather than being a "natural" phenomenon, is *created* and bears the imprint of human experience. As Metz states, "What distinguishes a discourse from the rest of the world, and by the same token contrasts it with the 'real world', is the fact that a discourse must necessarily be made by

someone . . . whereas one of the characteristics of the world is that it is uttered by no one.”<sup>104</sup> By pressing a demand for satisfaction, the duelist creates the duel. The act of demanding is the act of uttering a discourse, or its first stage. There is an intentional link between the individuals that forms discourse, and the duel is this discourse in action.

The temporal nature of the duel as it progresses from insult to challenge and, ultimately, to combat and resolution suggests that the duel is a narrative. As a definitively marked out event within the text, but still existing under the wider pretexts of honor and social implications which render its origins and presence as open, the duel exists as “not a sequence of closed events but a closed sequence of events.”<sup>105</sup> This is what Metz offers as the basis of a narrative. Therefore, the duel is a type of narrative. Strangely enough, this narrative exists as part of a story, as a piece of the fabula arranged in order to fulfill a narrative end. From this perspective, the duel seems to be a narrative within a narrative, rather than a story within a narrative. However, the duel is only a narrative in that it progressively enacts the intentionality of its two participants. Simultaneously, it is akin to but different from the narrative within which it is enclosed. The narrative as a whole is authored, while the duel is issued from the authors and through the characters of the fabula. The distinction, therefore, is one of direct authorship and indirect authorship, wherein the author creates the world in which the duel occurs. Yet Metz engages the narrative process as it exists in reality than with any notion of authorship, “But one should not hastily assume an author, for the notion of authorship is simply one of the forms, culturally bound and conditioned, of a far more universal process, which, for that reason, should be called the ‘narrative process.’”<sup>106</sup> Thus, the duel is not a relationship of intention between audience and author, rather, it is between the experience of cinema as the dichotomous relationship between viewing subjects: film and

spectator. The concern is for the experience of what might be called a closed sequence of events, the entity that exists on the screen, in the case of film, and that utters a temporal sequence.<sup>107</sup>

The duel as closed sequence extends outward to the audience through symmetry and mirroring. As I previously mentioned, the duel dictates its terms of disclosure. The stylistic tendencies of symmetry and mirrored-gazes are consistent through each of my case studies. Furthermore, these tendencies, as they reflect the duel's demand, offer the necessary tools for the film-body to extend metaphorically its intention outward toward the viewing subject. In short, the film's correlational intentionality is directed at the spectator as much as the spectator's intentionality is directed at the duel. By configuring the "aim" of its discourse at the audience, the duel, therefore, comes to reflect the film-body's own intention. This constitutes the first phenomenological understanding of the duel experience.

### **Mirrored-gaze and Close-up**

Put another way, the on-screen duelist is a projection of intention toward the audience. As Sobchack argues,

Thus, the lived-body serves to animate the static reversibility of the transcendental structure of consciousness into a *directed trajectory*. This trajectory and its movement as a directed choice of consciousness functions to diacritically mark and distinguish an origin and destination as the boundary conditions of an *intentional act*, and to mark off poles of that act in an *intentional object* and an *intending subject*.<sup>108</sup>

In other words, the lived-body acts *toward* something and this constitutes the boundaries of an existential relationship between the subject and object. Each film accomplishes this through imaging of reflection and symmetry. Reflection is largely borne out of the mirror images of shots constituting facial expression. That is to say, each filmmaker frames their combatants through close-ups in one way or another. Predominantly, the close-ups that occur in concert with the duel

scenes are caught in passive stances, meaning the duelists are chosen for their stance rather than for their action. In other words, the “stare-down” which occurs between duelists before the duel is the primary way of building up the tension that will foreground the drama of combat. In short, this is the mirroring-effect. Moreover, this mirroring effect (or reflection) is also at the heart of the filmic experience. It forms a diacritical moment when the experience of film can directly reach out to the viewing subject. Thus, it forms a subject to subject (viewer to film) relationship that defines the essential meaning of the duel experience in its cinematically fictional rendering. This viewing stance at the heart of the duel and expressed through mirroring and reflection best situates the duel as a unique phenomenological experience that explains its overall importance for the narrative in which it is contained.

Symmetry produces a similar effect by nature of its striking relevance for cinematic depictions of the duel. As a presentation of identical reflections, symmetry is a useful way of conceptualizing the heart of the duel experience in which two sides, practically reflecting one another, stand apart while simultaneously coming together. Moreover, symmetry aids spectatorial understanding of film’s intentionality. The manner by which it frames the scene inevitably directs our attention to certain experiences within the frame. The symmetrical framing of the duel provides the “*synoptic center* of the film’s experience of the world it sees; it functions for the film as the field of our bodies does for us.”<sup>109</sup> Symmetry provides a visual vocabulary from which to understand opposition as it exists as the basis for dueling. This opposition is refined and highly mannered. It could be argued that symmetry exists at two levels in each of the films. This division would be based in *pure symmetry* and *reflexive symmetry*. As it pertains to dueling, pure symmetry is the exact, geometric mirroring of an image. Unless the director duplicates an image and poses it in opposition to itself, there is no exact symmetry, meaning the



viewer is never offered any pure geometrical figures that perfectly and exactly match on another. However, when the duel presents the two sides of the contest in opposition to one another it could be called a symmetrical arrangement. Conversely, we find reflexive symmetry at any point in which the existential or emotional experience of the duelist is opposed through shot-to-shot composition of facial expressions. Even this shot-to-shot composition reflexively indicates the duel as the camera exchanges “fire” back and forth, from one shot depicting the duelist to a mirroring shot depicting the adversary. Both pure symmetry (the inexact pure symmetry that cinema offers) and reflexive symmetry persist through each film and act as indicators of the duel’s presentational demand.

### **Reflexive Symmetry**

The ability of the duelist *to look* pronounces his importance for the cinematic experience of the duel and represents the type of reflexive symmetry consistent with the duel experience. Reflexive symmetry, moreover, is depicted through the act of viewing in each film. Additionally, the mutual locked gaze connotes a close temporal sequence and indicates the discursive measure of the duel. This discourse is aimed at the spectator as viewing subject from the film as viewing subject and the language of this discourse is the image as *seen* from both sides. This mirrored-viewing that is characteristic of cinematic duels succinctly elucidates what Sobchack ascribes to the film apparatus in general,

For it is only in the act of viewing that the film is given to our experience as meaningful, and it is only in the act of viewing that the film possesses existence for itself as well as for us. A film can’t be seen outside *our* act of viewing it, and a film can’t *be* outside of *its own* act of viewing . . . . Therefore, it is the act of viewing that links the spectator *of* a film and the film *as* spectator.<sup>110</sup>

Sobchack means to explain film as a spectator by analyzing the film apparatus as a lived body that engages the world. For Sobchack, the act of viewing between these two subjects best explains the unique relationship between film and viewer. Subsequently, the onscreen duelist presents an eloquent rendering of this viewing relationship. It presents a striking example of film's ability to view out toward the audience thus becoming its own viewing subject. In other words, the filmic duelist enacts a gaze that reaches out (intends) toward the viewer as a reflection of the filmic body's own tendency to extend out and view the viewing subject.

Reflexive symmetry is simply the mirroring of this active viewing, or the shot-to-shot cinematic exchange of the duelists mutual gazes as they aim toward each other. In this way, the duelists come to metaphorically represent the relationship film has to the spectator and the spectator has to film. What is more, the reflexivity of the duelist indicates that his role for the film apparatus is the same as the challenge was to the narrative's equilibrium and fabula construction and the seconds were to narrative's rhetorical implications. Taken this way, Sobchack's claim that, "Seeing presents itself as the seen, it points to the seen, and it represents the seen to and for an other who sees"<sup>111</sup> resonates with the notion of the viewing duelist as he reflects the viewing film. As the duelist exists on screen to be seen, he represents the seen and directs what will be seen and who is intended to see. This "pointing out" is not the same as the second's deliberative pointing out (but neither is it in opposition to this action), rather it exists closer to the level of filmic experience than narrative intent.

The distinguishing feature of the act of seeing (active seeing) is caught in the stare and counter-stare of the duelists as they brace for blood. Take for instance the first duel between Quin and Redmond in *Barry Lyndon*. The first close-up shot of a duelist captures best the intentional structure of seeing and defines our understanding of the scene as the embodiment of a

seeing object. [FIGURES 4.1 and 4.2] After Redmond refuses a brief appeal by his second, Grogan, to reconsider the fight and take a small stipend from Quin in exchange for an apology, the camera proceeds to the establish, and focus on, the duelists' views. Quin momentarily escapes the nerves that seem to plague him and promises an honorable and bloodless resolution if Redmond apologizes. However, upon Redmond's refusal he transforms back into his original anxious countenance. From here, the camera establishes the view as it intends toward Redmond and the audience. Quin's gaze implies an organizing principle, and it structures the film's gaze within (Quin toward Redmond) and outward (film toward spectator). Sobchack argues this implicit act constitutes what might be called the personal or filmic "touch" intention has with the world as it delimits perceptions of existence,

However, what is usually invisible to us as spectators and to the film's own vision (both usually intent on constituting the visible image), is the *coming into being* of visual organization, the *structuring activity* of our vision engaged with a world. This is a vision as an inflection of existence, as a personal description of our contingent intentions toward that world.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, Quin's active view is representative of the ontological nature of the duelist in cinema. Through his gaze, one finds that what is usually invisible and implied becomes visible and explicit. However, Quin's stature is not directly correlated to the filmic apparatus, as a fictional accoutrement within narrative his active view is at best a metaphorical rendering of what film aspires to do. Thus, through close-up of the act of viewing the film's intending toward the spectator is made manifest, and the duelist offers the visual language to understand the fundamental relationship between film apparatus and spectator. Ultimately, the film argues for its own position as spectator by revealing its intentions toward an object (spectator) through use of the duelist.



FIGURES 4.1 and 4.2: Quin's comportment shifts and articulates a filmic expression.

Complicating matters a bit more, we find Quin's view as insignificant when left alone. As I previously suggested, there must be an element of counter-view. Alone, Quin's view establishes the tone of the scene, but in tandem with his adversary, they coauthor the phenomenological (perhaps ontological) significance of the scene. Thus, the counter-views are evidence for the scene's metaphorical importance. Similar to Quin, the camera establishes Redmond as viewing subject with a mid-level close-up that shifts into a more immediate close-up. [FIGURE 4.3] As Redmond's cousin (presumably serving as Quin's second) gives the orders to cock, aim, and fire the pistols the camera exchanges shots, figuratively hinting toward the pending drama. Moreover, there is a marked transformation in Redmond's comportment, as he evolves from trepid youth to a confident, emboldened gentleman. The pensive and nervous Redmond transforms into an active viewing subject with absolute direction—a trait altogether fitting for the victorious side. As Redmond grows from impetuous youth, Quin erodes into a shell of his military self, his wracked nerves fully divulged through close-up. As if performing and staging a cinematographic "duel," Kubrick exchanges shots of facial expression and direction as his duelists exchange fire. Their pistols literally reach out to us through extreme close-up, thus demarcating the dueling experience as something that demands to be extraordinarily immediate to the viewing experience. [FIGURES 4.4 and 4.5]



FIGURE 4.3: Redmond readies himself, transforming from nervous youth to confident man.



FIGURES 4.4 and 4.5: The duelists reach out and take aim, extending toward each other and seemingly beyond the filmic body.

What this framing entails is the intentional direction of the duelists not only toward each other but out toward another viewing object. Essentially, they aim both at one another and at the

audience, metaphorically “reaching out” or “taking aim” as a reflection of the film’s outward intention.

The single duel in *Colonel Blimp* accentuates the effect of synchronic viewership. This act of viewing from both sides of the screen is another noteworthy example of reflexive symmetry. Remarkably similar to Kubrick’s exchange of shots, Powell and Pressburger shift between mutual glances. In addition, they employ shot establishing the stature of the duelists redolent of Redmond before he looks down his sight and takes aim at Quin. Yet, the duel here differs from the one seen in *Barry Lyndon* for the weapon of choice is the saber as was fashionable for German mensur. [FIGURES 4.6 and 4.7] With sabers, the duelists literally reach out for one another and exchange blows. The lead-in shots, composed as medium long-shots, reveal the attention given to hearing the rules, but the duelists seem more intent on their opponent than on the mediator—the outside voice cannot transgress the correlated act. Powell and Pressburger’s framing of the scene coincides with the correlated nature of intentionality, as if the duelists’ locked gazes are metaphorically representative of consciousness as it extends toward some “other.” Reflective of the active view, Candy gives a wry smile and Schuldorff responds nonplussed. [FIGURES 4.8 and 4.9] Because intention cannot be without activity (the act of extending consciousness toward an object signals some kind of act), this brief exchange actualizes the correlated gaze by capturing mutual acknowledgement:



FIGURES 4.6 and 4.7: The duelists are framed as central figures.





FIGURES 4.8. and 4.9: Close-ups of the duelists interlocking gazes. Candy offers a smile, breaking the tension and confusing Schuldorff.

These are active, intentional views. As Sobchack argued, their vision is an inflection of their existence within the film, they are forced by the nature of dueling to engage one another, and, furthermore, their views reflect the tonal implications of the scene, giving it drama and tension. Close-ups of the interlocked duelists bring the audience closer to the expressions and intentions of the film as viewing subject. This emphasizes a relationship of proxemics as much as visual effect, and implies that film is embodied through its gazes rather than being a transcendent purveyor of images. Sobchack makes this point clear by arguing,

Whether human or cinematic, vision is informed and charged by other modes of perception, and thus it always implicates a *sighted body* rather than merely transcendental eyes. What is seen on the screen by the seeing that is the film has a texture and solidity . . . . It not only understands the world haptically but also proxemically, that is, in terms of a spatiality that is lived as intimacy or distance in relation to the objects of its intentions.<sup>113</sup>

The object of film's intention is the audience. Further, as this analysis reveals, film has the unique ability to capture its own viewing gaze. The camera literally points out and directs the object of film's intention to the act of intentionality, to the extension of filmic gazing as it tends toward the audience. Sobchack insists that film is a lived-body always enacting this phenomenological role. However, the signature or diacritical moments of this lived experience

are best captured through the individual functions of the cinematic experience, the scenes and images themselves offer moments of revelation. The duel and duelists signify a relationship between viewer and object. In short, the fundamental comportment of the duelist as the need to fixate their view in order to reach out and “aim” reflects the film’s own lived and intentional activity. Moreover, it signifies the type of relationship it has with its object of view, the spectator as she reaches out towards film.

Thus, the reflection of the duelist and the cinematic situating of their view allow film’s existence as a lived, viewing body to be seen by the other, namely the audience: “This viewer is not transcendently located, however invisible it is in vision. It is only through *reflection* that the viewer can be ‘seen,’ that is, intended as an object of vision.”<sup>114</sup> Therefore, the mutual exchange of gazes between duelists demarcates the audience as the object of vision by reflecting the role of film as viewer extending toward an object. Moreover, this mirroring effect sets the tone of the scene and establishes interpretive grounds. As a reflection of the viewer (film) the scene likewise reflects what the film intends the viewer to see, it frames itself and elaborates its narrative. In both *Barry Lyndon* and *Colonel Blimp* the duel is consistently framed through mirrored images wherein the duelists mirror each other in anticipation of their fight. The final duel of *Barry Lyndon* demonstrates once more, what can be seen when viewing the duel’s views. Redmond (now styled Barry Lyndon) prepares to stand his ground against Bullingdon’s fire.

[FIGURE 4.10]





FIGURE 4.10: Redmond can only watch as Bullingdon takes his turn to fire. He offers his gaze toward the other.

However, the reflexive moment of Bullingdon's own counter-gaze is undone by Bullingdon's ineptitude with his pistol. Bullingdon misfires and misses his chance at the first shot. Essentially, because of this misfire Redmond's active view becomes the permanent tonal marker of the scene. Redmond becomes the scene's arbiter and looks upon Bullingdon with pity after Bullingdon vomits out of fear knowing he must now stand his own ground. [FIGURES 4.11 and 4.12]



FIGURES 4.11 and 4.12: Redmond articulates a pitiful vision toward Bullingdon, who now stands his ground.

Redmond's look is notably different in this shot, but is framed in exactly the same manner as the first shot. This unique framing enacts "the *premises* for perception as expressed experience."<sup>115</sup> Redmond's emotive glances reflect how the film wants to be seen and establishes the tonal implications of the narrative. Reflexive symmetry as a framing device elucidates how the spectator experiences the active view of film. In many ways, it sets the terms of the affective nature of narrative, making the filmic body a body attuned to narrative implications of its viewing body. Finally, Bullingdon has no choice but to look away. He cannot meet Redmond's gaze because he is a coward. Figuratively, he cannot match the affective resonance of the film's gaze as it brings to light the dramatic implications of the narrative. Redmond establishes the tone of the scene, and is in the position of setting the terms. Thus, out of pity he fires into the ground in order to spare his stepson. Bullingdon takes full advantage of Redmond's mercy and takes his satisfaction by firing on the now utterly hapless Redmond. Once the consummate opportunist, Redmond is wounded, his leg amputated, and he is cast into exile as a debilitated shell of his former self. Bullingdon's rise to manhood is predicated upon questionable honor (after Redmond purposefully fired away) but he is left in the position of victor. The scene indicates that the active view intends toward an object when it sets the terms for the act of viewing. Redmond has the upper hand and forces his gaze on Bullingdon, but after he purposefully misfires, Bullingdon seems to gain the edge, looks excitedly down his pistol sight, and vanquishes Redmond. The framing remains the same, but the reflexivity of the scene's expressed experience fluctuates between duelists, ultimately culminating in one clear winner.

### **Consubstantiality, Identification, and Pure Symmetry**

While the reflexive gaze of the duelists metaphorically render the dichotomous relationship of active viewing between film body and spectatorial body, the manner by which the film frames its view signifies a relationship between film and spectator through pure symmetry. Sobchack argues that the film's frame translates film's view from consciousness into conscious experience. It dictates a level of deliberation by encapsulating how things will look:

Finally, the frame—that “invisible” trace of the activity of the film's seeing—actualizes both the film's operational and deliberative desire to see and to show, to perceive and express—at its “highest level,” actualizing the reflective vision or deliberative intentionality that transforms the operative and signifying experience of consciousness into the signification of conscious experience.<sup>116</sup>

While reflexive symmetry captures the act between correlated objects of intention, pure symmetry frames an appeal to the audience based on a direct depiction of being towards the other. The purely symmetrical frame, in one shot, captures both sides of the duel. No longer are the duelists depicted from one shot to the next, rather they appear as entities extending toward each other in a single shot. Similar to reflexive symmetry, pure symmetry extends intention to the audience but in a manner less direct. The film does not rely on the looks of the duelist as they seem to look past the film, or at each other. Instead, the intention of the filmic body to create a sense of identification occurs through symmetrical presentation of both sides at once as they are configured together and at the same time in dyadic opposition. The use of symmetry in both cases brings the spectator closer to the intention of film. The method differs, however. Moreover, as symmetrically framed, the duel calls attention to its ontological state of opposition. From opposition, the frame, as it captures pure symmetry, configures the audience's understanding of the filmic body. Consequently, the symmetrical portrayal of acting together as the duelists raise

their weapons and prepare to fight reflects mutual intentionality of both viewing subjects, and thereby delineates the relationship between viewer and film through identification.

Kenneth Burke argues that the act of two disparate entities' interests joining on some mutual ground constitutes identification.<sup>117</sup> The notion of finding "ground" is the vital prerequisite for identification. Arguably, the dueling grounds set the visual metaphor for the mutual grounds necessary for identification. As reflexive symmetry is unable to capture this in entirety, relying instead on the shot-to-shot composition of facial exchanges as they reflect and extend outward, pure symmetry offers the framework for visualizing grounds. Furthermore, if as Burke argues, "In being identified with B, A is 'substantially one' with a person other than himself"<sup>118</sup> then the duelist appears to play to this end, his common ground is the dueling ground. His opponent even appears in similar garb and with the same weapons. In *Colonel Blimp*, for instance, the duelists are made to dress identically, and in *The Duellists* they must be of the same rank and social position. With this in mind, the duel seems to manifest a wide range of inherent identifications. Moreover, framing it through pure symmetry operates similarly in that it frames these identifications as they appear together, positioning them to be witnessed in direct opposition. In this way, pure symmetry reaches out to the audience with intent akin to reflexive symmetry; it depicts identification through opposition in order to identify with the audience.

Pure symmetry is prevalent in each film because the duel demands this manner of representation. By its nature, the duel is a mandate of one upon another, an oppositional force that demands resolution. To stand one's ground entails doing so against some other individual. Framing the duel in terms of its symmetry is also an effective way of communicating a level of identification with the audience. The act of viewing is critical to understanding how the audience relates to film and how film relates to audience. Sobchack makes this point clear, writing,

“Indeed, what I am suggesting here is that the power of the medium and its ability to communicate the experience of embodied and enworlded vision resides in the experience *common* to both film and spectator: the *act of viewing as experienced from within*.”<sup>119</sup> An audience must be made witness to the act of viewing as experienced from their position. In a word, viewing must be made accessible through view/views. And this occurs at the level of framing and shot selection because these mechanisms establish the common grounds from which the film-body can identify with its viewing object, the spectator. Thus, the film-body posits symmetry as a means of communicating the act of viewing metaphorically, and mirroring the relationship between film and audience as one of oppositional gazes.

Film then recognizes the existence of an outside active viewer extrapolating the mutual act of viewing. Sobchack refers to this as a kind of replication wherein film duplicates the structure and activity of the spectator’s vision.<sup>120</sup> The cinematic text seems to put on display the type of viewership it seems to want to attract (the reflexive gaze of the duelists, their mutual oppositional presence flanking the sides of purely symmetrical shots), and pure symmetry is the means of framing and making the relationship between spectator and film consubstantial. It seems as if film, therefore, acts with the spectator in order to create a unique relationship where both are individually present and intending towards the other. In the progression of shots, the duelists act together, raising their pistols or sabers and awaiting the command or first blow. As Burke notes, the outcome of acting-together inevitably precipitates mutual experiences, “A doctrine of *consubstantiality*, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial.”<sup>121</sup> If the experience of film and spectator are identical in that they both *intend* to

view and realize each other through active viewing, then they act together to reach these ends and are therefore consubstantial. Pure symmetry, therefore, is the framing of identification. In the shots of pure symmetry, the duelists act together and gesture, on behalf of film, toward the idea of a consubstantial relationship based in viewership. Ultimately, this serves the purpose of resolving terms of recognition so that the film can approach the spectator, and the spectator approach the film. Identification through consubstantiality allows this mutual recognition.

Pure symmetry underscores the spectatorial engagement with the film body, and frames the active view of the duel. As previously mentioned, the duel demands this type of presentation. Arguably, the very nature of symmetry, as two sides reflecting one another, implies the relationship from film to spectator. Pure symmetry allows both a mutual language from which to understand each other. In addition, pure symmetry frames the aesthetic resonance of the scene where reflexive symmetry draws out the emotional resonance. In the two prior examples, Quin devolved into a nerve-wracked mess while Redmond seemingly “grew up” or became emboldened by his love. Moreover, Candy flew a smile at Schuldorff, a gesture that recognized the absurdity of the moment and foreshadowed their lifelong friendship, however subtly. This emotional resonance indicative of reflexive symmetry along with the aesthetic resonance of pure symmetry helps buttress the duel’s place in the film as viewing subject as well as it as a text that delivers a compelling narrative. As I argued in the previous chapter, there is a degree of openness inherent in Redmond’s first duel. The tidy organization of this feeling is framed with pure symmetry in the following image: [FIGURE 4.13]

In opposition to this, Kubrick “bookmarks” his use of pure symmetry at both ends of the text. In the church image, the duelist’s are never quite as perfectly positioned as reflecting images. Instead, the walls of the abandoned and overbearing church weigh down on the

participants as if signifying a bad omen. [FIGURE 4.14] In this shot, the film and spectator seem to look down into some sort of tunnel with a faint light at the end. This of course is Redmond's fate, he will not die but he will not really ever live again.



FIGURE 4.13: Redmond's first duel captures a pure, but imperfect, symmetrical arrangement.



FIGURE 4.14: The church is arranged in pure symmetry.



Perhaps the most revealing point of pure symmetry in all the duels of each film occurs in *The Duellists*. Scott is able to capture the essence of extension not through reflexive symmetry, which calls for the glances as they reach out, and “look” at the audience and one another, but through pure symmetry. More cunningly, he frames extension through swordplay. [FIGURE 4.15] The duelists nearly meld into one entity, their sabers close to touching and positioned in opposing angles.



FIGURE 4.15: The duelists size each other up, becoming consubstantial as they await the reaction of the other.

The scene is quickly paced and has a starkly apprehensive tone. The music builds and adds to this tone, ultimately culminating with the woman in the background viciously attacking and scarring d’Hubert. The aesthetic resonance of pure symmetry adds to the tonal qualities of each duel. Furthermore, pure symmetry comes to frame our understanding of oppositional views



and begets the recognition of the inherent identification at the heart of the spectator to film relationship. Much like the frightened viewer in the background, the audience witnesses a degree of consubstantiality that this striking visual offers. Their blades form together as a measure of their intentionality toward each other. They await a strike and plan their own, reflecting interpretive and spectatorial tendencies of the viewing subject as it extends toward the filmic body. Finally, the filmic body matches this exchange, and reflects the relationship with its own view, as captured through the cinematic lens.

Through the duel, each film extends toward the viewing subject that is the spectator or audience. Likewise, as an audience we reach out to understand the visions of the film. The duel comes to reflect this relationship through intentionality and symmetrical arrangement. In many ways, the intentionality of film is captured metaphorically through the duel. The camera lens “captures” the duelist just as much as the viewing subject does. This intentionality evolves into recognition and this recognition is literally and figuratively embodied in the duelists through varying symmetrical renditions. Symmetry, therefore, actualizes much of the film experience and translates the visual resonance to the realm of identification.

## Chapter 5

### The Duel's Fundamental Challenge

What happens if your young companion  
Is slaughtered by your pistol shot  
For some presumptuous glance, opinion  
Or repartee worth not a jot,  
Insulting you while out drinking,  
Or if, in fiery pique, not thinking,  
He calls you proudly to a duel,  
Tell me the feelings that would rule  
Your soul, when without motion lying  
In front of you upon the earth,  
Upon his brow the hue of death,  
He slowly stiffens, ossifying,  
When to your desperate appeal  
He is insensitive and still?

— Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*

In each of my case studies—*The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *Barry Lyndon* (1975), and *The Duellists* (1977)—the duel features as a prominent story-telling device. In addition to being an important aspect in the development of plot, the duel resolves critical elements of the cinematic text. Furthermore, because of its procedural nature the duel can be analyzed by its parts. Each part of the procedure contributes to the evolution of the narrative and the communicative ability of the film. My analysis began with the insult and challenge, wherein the challenge “calls out” equilibrium by visually actualizing the central laws of narrative progression, as developed by Todorov. Upon issuing a challenge, both parties proceed to resolve how the duel will play out. Subsequently, this duty falls to the seconds, and my focus shifts to ascertaining their relevance in the narrative. Secondary to their primaries, seconds facilitate and establish the rules and terms of engagement. In fiction, they serve a similar role as narrative functionaries, meaning they facilitate audience engagement with the text by rhetorically directing

and elaborating the *form* of narrative. Once the protocols and terms have been established, combat ensues. I argue that this point of the duel brings the audience into immediate attention with the filmic body through the framing of the duelist's active view. In these scenes, it is as if the film reaches out to the viewer. Metaphorically speaking, the duelists extend themselves outward toward the audience, reflecting the film body's gaze, and ultimately framing the spectatorial experience. In each phase of the duel, the language employed is metaphorical in that parts or functions of narrative "speak" through the duel.

Each aspect of the duel contributes a fundamental role to the narrative. Establishing the film experience, they argue for a way of understanding the structural whole through its parts. In other words, as the duel exists as one part of a whole, it contributes a logic all its own. The duel often dictates its own terms; simultaneously, however, it is simply another piece of the fabula to be arranged and fit into a plot as the narrative demands. Fittingly, the duel exists as a duality because it seems to operate on two levels: dictating terms of narrative disclosure and being dictated by narrative. In what follows, I will distinguish the duel as an individual function of narrative and film that forms its own logic as a part within a whole. Furthermore, I will offer some broad implications for the further research and study of film and narrative based on the observations I have made concerning the duel in these few texts.

Jacques Derrida points toward a way of understanding the duel's logic by posing narrative as a demand, stating:

What is judiciously called the question-of-narrative covers, with a certain modesty, a demand for narrative, a violent putting-to-the-question, an instrument of torture working to wring the narrative out of one as if it were a terrible secret, in ways that can go from the most archaic police methods to refinements for making . . . one talk that are unsurpassed in neutrality and politeness.<sup>122</sup>

Arguably, Derrida implies the “one” who endures this terrible torture is the text itself. Certainly, this interpretation makes sense when considering the engagement an individual has with any text that offers the prospect of narrative. The viewing/reading subject makes a demand on the text to divulge its narrative simply in the act of reading or viewing. The narrative is put to question, governed by the terms of the reader/viewer. Happily, the individual raises a question of narrative, one to be resolved, seemingly, on the narrative’s own terms. However, the individual’s stance toward narrative is disingenuous because the narrative is disclosed on the terms of the reader/viewer. This relationship posits duel-themed terminology wherein the individual, as challenger, makes a demand of narrative. Thus, the individual questions (or “challenges”) the narrative and, according to Derrida, the narrative has no recourse but to answer this call.

The audience forces a demand for narrative. But a narrative expresses itself through its own demands. These demands are made on its parts, or elements, the demand presses fabula and syuzhet into the service of narrative. These parts, or elements, render a narrative complete and give it significance and meaning. Consequently, the narrative puts these elements of full display to be meaningful. The duel in these cinematic texts is one such element, and it calls attention to itself through its forceful symbolic position within the narrative structure. Thus, the narratives attempt to make their own demand on their parts, in order to overshadow them. The duel is significant because it forces awareness of itself. Arguably, it serves as its own story within the narrative, calling attention to its role in narrative, and imbued with its own significance. In other words, the duel in these texts is memorable.

At times individual elements, distinct scenes, characters, and dialogue overshadow the totality of the narrative. Yet these individual elements still reside in a narrative whole, and each one is dependent on the other. The individual elements make sense, work fluidly when in

position with each other and when clearly articulated and developed. Essentially, this development is the role of any narrative, to bring the parts into cohesion with each other. Derrida remarks on this relationship in terms of a mutual comprehension and recognition: “Each includes the other, comprehends the other, which is to say that neither comprehends the other. Each ‘story’ (and each occurrence of the word ‘story’, each ‘story’ in the story is part of the other, makes the other a part (of itself).”<sup>123</sup> The “other” being narrative, the two enjoin audience involvement with a text by fluidly developing each other. Nonetheless, there remain memorable points in the narrative that seem to supersede their place within the structure. The duel, for example, works by a logic all its own, founded in history and depicted in fiction. It is a story separate from the structures that depict it, yet it constitutes a vital part of the narrative while simultaneously being tied to it for its own revelation. In short, the duel-story is told in each narrative and conversely lends itself to the narrative’s self disclosure.

Through the distinction of story versus narrative, the duel stands out in each text as a viable way of understanding their narratives. In effect, the texts come to be “duel-texts,” or narratives as dependent on one particular element as to be dictated and semantically driven by this element. The duel gives the text meaning. For example, the coming-of-age story necessarily denotes certain story aspects that make it recognizable as such. A youth is thrown into the world in order to overcome challenges and learn something about himself or herself, a process that generally leads to a transformation. In addition, love stories in their many forms employ definitive elements that give them their narrative resonance. The universe seems to bring two lovers together through many recognizable forces: friends, family, dire situations, a chance encounter, and so forth. In these stories the matchmaker, existing in multifarious forms

(personal, divine, or inanimate), serves an elementary role as a Derridean “story” within narrative that brings the latter together and forms its recognizable qualities.

In many ways, the duel serves a similar function in all three films. In *Colonel Blimp*, the duel precipitates the friendship between Candy and Schuldorff, and this friendship undergirds the tumultuous geopolitical situation that both officers will endure throughout their lives. Ultimately, their oppositional relationship as dueling adversaries compels them into friendship. Through physical combat, they recognize a point of identification—even the discourse surrounding their scars indicates this. *Barry Lyndon* places the duel as a means of the individual challenging the governing social order. Interestingly, this means that a piece of that social order (the duel) is used to facilitate the individual’s maneuvering and challenging of that order. Redmond never challenges or upsets the order, but rather attempts to enter it and fully assimilate by pursuing wealth and titles. Through the duel, he succeeds and fails. The social order he enters into proves too large for his ambition and stymies his hubris. Symbolically speaking, this social order is dictated by “fate” and the duel is a tool used to challenge that fate. Thus, while the duel offers a positive change to Candy in *Colonel Blimp* by giving him a friend that will help him come to terms with his own misunderstandings and place within a changing world, the duel in *Barry Lyndon* proves to support a pessimistic tone. Ultimately, Redmond cannot exceed his place in the social order and Lord Bullingdon (holding the gentry title Redmond pursued) wounds him. Finally, the many duels of *The Duellists* complicate notions of honor with individual freedom. D’Hubert struggles with the angst wrought by Feraud’s constant assailing. Feraud cannot move beyond the limits of honor and insult. He is fully controlled and governed by the duel, in much the same way, as the narrative is recognizable as a narrative only through duels. As the duel controls Feraud, d’Hubert attempts escape and finally uses the logic of honor and the duel to end

Feraud's oppression over his life. As such, *The Duellists* puts forth a kind of "discussion" about honor and the self. In each film, the duel lends meaning to the narrative and forms the governing themes of the latter in support of a story-based logic as opposed to the overall narrative structure.

### **Implications**

This study argues that the duel is a formative event within these texts. Furthermore, breaking down the duel into its procedural and constitutive units—the challenge, seconds, and combat—can lead to greater insight into the various ways it operates. If the duel exists as a singular element within narrative that forces consideration of itself, then so too must the individual procedures that make up the duel force the same consideration. To be sure, each aspect of the duel resides in the narrative as a piece of the fabula. The insults and challenges consistently operate to break the status quo, upset the equilibrium as it exists at the beginning of the narrative, and force events along in order to form a plot. The seconds often reside in the background of narrative events, passively spectating as events unfold or reminding the protagonists of their duty. Finally, the combat is framed in such a way as to reach out and engage its audience directly as a reflection of the way duelists engage one another. In these scenes, the text comes closest to affecting the spectator-body. In rhetorical terms, the combat seems to be a direct pathos appeal based in a mutual affirmation of duelist and witness (audience).

The significance of the insults and challenges within each text is how effectively such events can actualize narratological necessities. Every narrative begins with an established norm that can be visualized as a scale in perfect balance; once the scale is tipped, the norm is destabilized and a plot arises that must be resolved. In each film, the challenge is simply the visualization and actualization of this destabilization. The insult tends to bring to light the

potential of disrupting the status quo and the challenge enacts this potential. As with the historical duel, once a challenge is issued, there is no going back. It must be resolved through cowardice or honor, and either route leaves an indelible mark on the participants. Thus, it could be argued the challenge of the duel, or of any significant elements within a narrative, is to speak through a metaphorical language that the audience can grasp, and to visualize each aspect of narrative progression so that the spectator finds the narrative believable and edifying. The challenge exists as one such instance. It is necessary for there to be duel, but it finds itself in every narrative as those events that introduce problems that need resolution, that disrupt the narrative's status quo.

As background spectators, seconds mimic audience engagement, even standing in as proxies within the narrative for the audience. Therefore, they are seconds for not only the principals within the story but for the outside spectators. They also play a pivotal role in the progression of the plot as minor characters that assist and direct the primary antagonists. Outside of the dueling grounds, they hold the same burden. They guide the primaries along, give advice, and comment on the progression of events. Describing the terms of engagement is only one direct instance of the role they play in narrative. At any time they are present they serve a secondary role similar to their responsibilities in a duel. In short, their role as functionaries can be found in almost any narrative when considering the secondary elements that lend meaning to what are casually termed main events or primary characters. They lend the narrative its most direct rhetorical tools. As secondary elements, they exist to establish symbolic indicators and to intimate the importance of the primary functions of narrative.

Finally, combat serves as the most direct expression of the duel to the audience. Each film frames their combat in ways that are made to resonate. Moreover, the duel seems to elicit



two distinct ways of being viewed. In a manner of speaking, the duel reflects the eye of the camera as it extends outward to the spectator. Inviting the spectator in, the eye directs its guest to its own viewing nature. Thus, the duelists are consistently poised against one another as a reflection of the cinematic text's ability to look and engage its audience. The duelists facing one another in shot-to-shot composition is a way of communicating mutual attention to the audience on the metaphorical level. The duelists represent the filmic body's own viewing nature. When captured in totality, the duelists are positioned on extreme flanks of the frame. In this rendering, they embody a closed sequence. As if reflecting the binary relationship of audience to film, they face off against one another. Their stance implies pending violence, and the subsequent action communicates the tenuous relationship of spectator to film. At times, the spectator is engrossed, sees what the film sees, and therefore understands that the film is pointing toward what it wants to be seen. At other times, the spectator is violently worked upon, even repelled, moved away from the filmic experience. Combat signifies the type of relationship an audience has toward film. While engaged with the medium they are bound in a closed sequence, unless they choose to look away. However, within this closed sequence they are constantly in a state of reconciling with the film. In this "struggle" the audience negotiates the filmic body's contours and comes to understand the film as a viewing body. Eventually, this brings the viewing subject in relation to the film's expression, which is ultimately the narrative, or whatever the film expresses. Any filmic experience directs the spectator toward its own expressions, which brings the audience into immediate involvement with the functions and elements of the text. These, in turn, allow the audience a language with which to understand the text, its filmic and narrative qualities, completing the cycle.

Each aspect of the duel is representative of almost any aspect of narrative. In short, the duel experience within cinema aides spectatorial involvement with the text and forms the underlying means of understanding the filmic experience. These types of elements can be found in any cinematic text that features a narrative. Every narrative text contains elements that help establish and disclose itself for an audience. The duel is simply one compelling example of this function. Because the duel is so mannered and rigidly ritualistic, it entreats a more facile way of making sense of these elements. The logic of honor and dueling forms a straightforward, readily available means of making sense. The duel, therefore, can be taken as a methodology that reveals fundamental ways a text operates. In this study, I have focused on three aspects of cinema: the narratological, rhetorical, and phenomenological. In effect, I have borrowed historical terminology and fictional depictions of the duel in order to gain insight into how these specific texts operate. Ultimately, my aim has not been to understand the ways in which the duel works, but to understand the ways in which it reveals greater truth(s) about the films that employ it. As I implied earlier, understanding the individual parts lends greater understanding to the whole that depends on them. Thus, the duel is a means of understanding the text, and, perhaps, the text can be used to understand the duel. We might understand it as a duel that sees the parts against the whole, individual elements against a totality, and the story against the narrative. Satisfaction arises not out of the nature of these oppositions, as it did not arise out of combat or death, but rather it comes forth out of the simple act of standing one's ground, an act that can be put in theoretical terms: satisfaction comes about through taking up the challenge of any text and standing one's ground as it manifests through the act of analysis and criticism. Suggesting, at last, that a duel of sorts is at the heart of theory and thinking.

## **The Rhetoric of Spilt Blood and Satisfaction**

D'Hubert is desperate to avoid Feraud, but ultimately cannot and endures a lifetime of wounds. Redmond fires away from Lord Bullingdon and is subsequently forced to endure the young Lord's wrath. Candy hides his scarring and therefore fails to understand the implications of the event in which he participated. His adversary is scarred but wears these and comes to an understanding. In all instances, the duelist is forced to spill blood, to give something in order to be resolved. D'Hubert frees himself of Feraud through the duel. The young Redmond who threw himself at the world is humbled and forced into a conclusion by the very means he used to make his challenge. Candy stares into a fountain and sees his scars figuratively; in this act, he comes to an awakening, a realization of how he misunderstood his self and his world. The duelist gives all in order to be honorably blessed.

Ultimately, the spilling of blood, or the implication of this act, is the affective means of the completing the image of the duelist. Likewise, as characters within a story, spilling blood completes some aspect of their role in the narrative. Through the tearing of body, the duelist manifests a tearing of the text. At this point, the witness is allowed in and made privy to the gruesome details and inner workings of the text, and the audience invited in to fill a void with their interpretation. The romanticized duelist is brought down to a visceral reality and the imagined spectator realizes the illusion of this romanticism. Blood works to disclose in the gravest manner. D'Hubert is struck in a split second, and as quick as he is impaled the duel dissipates, becomes untenable, it must be resolved another day. [FIGURES 5.1 and 5.2] Equally, at the point one ascertains a "truth" of the text, resolution is pushed back. Like honor and dueling, critical analysis seems to spill more blood, to wound and delay, and to bring up some other point of honor and demand resolution. The work is never finished, honor never fully

resolved, only upheld, maintained, and perhaps heightened. D'Hubert finds resolution, not in overcoming honor or the duel, and not in beating Feraud's demand, but by making his own. At the end of *The Duellists*, he figuratively wounds Feraud by taking away Feraud's initiative.

Ultimately, critical work may be resolved by similar means. In a sense, the critic demands that the ineffable reveal itself and stand its ground. In a quick exchange one or the other is left bleeding, and forced to be resolved another day. Nevertheless, in making the demand, the critic gains ground and comes closer to understanding. The critic strives to figure out the ways he or she can make the demand, force the ineffable to his or her own terms. Thus, the rhetoric of blood is tenuous and always in flux. It reflects the critic's work and simultaneously provides meaning to the texts that house it. Spilling blood offers the chance of seeking completion. In this way, spilled blood is an expressive paradigm that enjoins the critic to the text and the audience to the narrative experience.



FIGURE 5.1: Feraud strikes d'Hubert and draws his blood.



FIGURE 5.2: D'Hubert spills blood to acknowledge his pursuit of honor.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The late modern duel is defined as the duels of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, before the First World War effectively extinguished it from Europe.

<sup>2</sup> *Mensur* was a uniquely German “sport” with roots in French and Italian fencing traditions. In the film, it is the means by which they decide to resolve Candy’s insult of the German Imperial Army. However, mensur was widely practiced throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by German university students as a sport, as well as a measure of masculinity and social standing—facial scars were lauded and considered as marks of prestige. Unlike the sport made popular universities, the combatants in the film’s duel wear no protective gear, and are there to settle an insult.

<sup>3</sup> Merriam-Webster Online, s.v. “cornerstone,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cornerstone>.

<sup>4</sup> Honor is an important concept in many non-European traditions, as well. However, this analysis concentrates on the duel as presented in strictly European traditions.

<sup>5</sup> Robert P. Warren and Cleanth Brooks, *Understanding Fiction*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), 274.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>7</sup> Duelists were expected to stand their ground, victory or defeat was, largely, meaningless. One’s honor was upheld by simply “showing up” and behaving honorably was enough, death was often just a result.

<sup>8</sup> Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A study in method*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 131.

<sup>9</sup> Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The humanist tradition*, trans. John Michael Krois and Azizeh Azodi (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 33.

<sup>10</sup> The alchemical aspect of the clash of swords cannot be ignored here. The scene evokes the most primordial or elemental of tensions.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. George Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Extending the comparison further, the duelist attempts to “test and maintain an argument” as well, as Aristotle links this to dialectic. The argument is their honor and standing in society.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>14</sup> Ryan Chamberlain, *Pistols, Politics, and the Press: Dueling in 19<sup>th</sup> century American journalism*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2009), 17-22.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Holland, *Gentlemen's Blood: A history of dueling from swords at dawn to pistols at dusk*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 173-181.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>17</sup> V. G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History: Honour and the reign of aristocracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 155.

<sup>18</sup> The duel moves beyond the aristocracy and into the bourgeois sphere as its history progresses. The accessibility of pistols opened the duel to social classes previously excluded.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas W. and Clyde G. Reed, "The Duel of Honor: Screening for unobservable social capital," *American Law and Economics Review* 8 (2006): 5, accessed October 1, 2011: <http://www.sfu.ca/~allen/duelingaler.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Holland, *Gentlemen's Blood*, 23-35.

<sup>22</sup> There were countless written codes over the course of history, and were often based in a country of origin. The history points to the idea of codified rules as originating in Italy in about the fifteenth century. However, these codes spread and countries modified them to their own purposes or needs, such that a countless number of them proliferated by the time of the duel's "extinction" in the 20th century. This implies the fact that even though the duel shared a common character, or ontology, throughout Europe, it also varied by country in its fashion, rules, and manners.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin McAleer, *Dueling: The cult of honor in fin-de-siècle Germany*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 45.

<sup>24</sup> Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, politeness, and honour*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 41.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 41-43.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Low, *Manhood and the Duel: Masculinity in early modern drama and culture*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 17.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Hughes, *Politics of the Sword: Dueling, honor, and masculinity in modern Italy*, (Columbus, The Ohio State University Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 13.

<sup>31</sup> James Landale, *The Last Duel: A true story of death and honour*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2005), 164.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-273.

<sup>33</sup> Dick Steward, *Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 168-170.

<sup>34</sup> Irina Reyfman, *Ritualized Violence Russian Style: The duel in Russian culture and literature*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Kiernan, *The Duel in European History*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> Reyfman, *Ritualized Violence Russian Style*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Sean Gaston, "Conrad and the Asymmetrical Duel," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 15 (2010): 39.

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen Liecht, "Dialogue and Duelling in Restoration Comedy," *Studies in Philology* 104 (2007): 267.

<sup>39</sup> Gaston, "Conrad and the Asymmetrical Duel," 40.

<sup>40</sup> Kiernan, *The Duel in European History*, 67.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 29.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. S.H. Butcher, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911), 31.

<sup>45</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, (Baltimore: Port City Press, 1968), 19-24.



<sup>46</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 29.

<sup>47</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), 115.

<sup>48</sup> Gerald Prince, "Narratology and Narrative Analysis," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7 (1997): 30.

<sup>49</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheeman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 4-5.

<sup>50</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative structure in fiction and film*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 97-98.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Harold Bloom et al., *Deconstruction and Criticism*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 94.

<sup>53</sup> Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 20.

<sup>54</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 91.

<sup>55</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheeman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>57</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27-38.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>61</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 6-8.

<sup>62</sup> Noël Carroll, *Interpreting the Moving Image*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 181.

<sup>63</sup> Thus film's audible qualities are intertwined with its visual qualities. They do not always exist together but are not mutually exclusive.

<sup>64</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. George Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 218.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 222

<sup>66</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. S.H. Butcher, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911), 31.

<sup>67</sup> The fact that multiple challenges exist in *Barry Lyndon* does not undermine its nature as introductory. In *Barry Lyndon*, Redmond partakes in two pistol duels that feature both a challenge, combat, and aftermath. In other words, he undertakes two complete duels. The first described previously sets him on his course through Europe and begins his odyssey. The last completes his story and the narrative itself. Yet, this last duel still shapes an introduction, but it is the introduction to the conclusion and thus the introduction to the reestablishment of equilibrium (Redmond is ousted and his fortune seeking ends). Thus, his last duel is merely positioned as the introduction to the conclusion. This latter challenge serves as a reconceptualization or restatement of the introduction found earlier in the film.

<sup>68</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 223.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 30

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>74</sup> Action can be inaction. Cowardice is a type of inaction.

<sup>75</sup> Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> A.L. Kennedy, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, (London: Brith Film Institute, 1977), 43.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>78</sup> Chris P. Pliatska, "The Shape of Man," in *The philosophy of Stanley Kubrick*, ed. Jerold J. Abrams (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 184-185.

<sup>79</sup> Roderick Davis, "Conrad Cinematized: *The Duellists*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 8 (1980): 132.

<sup>80</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" in *Desert Islands and other Texts: 1953-1974*, (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2004), 174.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>82</sup> George A. Kennedy, trans., *On Rhetoric: a theory of civic discourse*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>83</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 35.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>85</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 188.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 189

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 189

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>89</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 53.

<sup>90</sup> Kennedy, *On Rhetoric*, 37

<sup>91</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> Deleuze, *Structuralism*, 174.

<sup>93</sup> Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The humanist tradition*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980) 19.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>99</sup> Arguably, the music of the sense creates the tension that reminds the viewer that a duel is unfolding and contrasts the picturesque setting.

<sup>100</sup> Chatman, *Coming to Terms*, 189.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>103</sup> Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A phenomenology of film experience*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 34.

<sup>104</sup> Christian Metz, *Film Language: A semiotics of the cinema*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-24

<sup>108</sup> Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 67.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 129

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 132

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>117</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>119</sup> Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, 135-136.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>121</sup> Burke, *Motives*, 21.

<sup>122</sup> Derrida, 94.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.