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# The Drama Of Collaborative Creativity: A Rhetorical Analysis Of Hollywood Film Making- Of Documentaries

Robert M. González Jr.  
*University of South Florida*

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The Drama Of Collaborative Creativity:  
A Rhetorical Analysis Of Hollywood Film Making-Of Documentaries

by

Robert M. González, Jr.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Communication  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Elizabeth Bell, Ph.D.  
Eric Eisenberg, Ph.D.  
David Payne, Ph.D.  
Donileen Loseke, Ph.D.

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To the three people who are everything to me:  
my father and mother, Robert and Cruz González,  
and my wife, Bobby Ann Loper.

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The Drama of Collaborative Creativity:  
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Robert M. González, Jr.

ABSTRACT

Current creativity research is dominated by attention to the individual, with increasingly less attention paid to creativity in its context, in groups, and in filmmaking as a collaboratively creative enterprise. This study answers the research call to explore filmmaking as an exemplar for collaborative creativity. Utilizing the stories told on DVD extras on special edition releases of feature films, this study analyzes how collaborative creativity is storied. In turn, these stories reveal specific communication forms, practices, and strategies that enrich theoretical conceptions of collaborative creativity. Following dramaturgic concepts elaborated by Kenneth Burke, this rhetorical analysis finds three emergent patterns of communication—mythic, historic, and symbolic—in the discourses of making-of-documentaries (MODs) that illuminate collaborative creativity.

As mythic patterns, MODs utilize the structure of the quest tale to organize the plot, drama, and rhetoric of collaborative creativity told in MODs. Audiences, then, are invited to re-experience the journey, and every MOD symbolically and ritually repeats and re-actualizes the cosmogony. As historic patterns, filmmakers converse in history with filmmaking predecessors, traditional industry practices, and present collaborators. Through

their various roles as fans, critics, and memorialists, filmmakers renovate and commemorate film history, offering creativity theory criteria by which novelty is evaluated. As symbolic patterns, MOD discourse spotlights the metaphors filmmakers use to create collaborative environments and to characterize directors' performances. Together these metaphors create a guiding and habitable ideology for production work that improves upon "vision" as one guiding metaphor for creativity.

This analysis enriches theoretical accounts of creativity by approaching collaborative creativity obliquely, as space-off, and rhetorically, as inducements to success stories in organizations. Taking communication as central to collaborative creativity, this study offers three counter-statements to traditional conceptions of creativity: creativity is shared, not possessed; collaborative creativity emerges within human drama; and collaborative creativity lives and finds its meaning in performance.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Leaning in to Listen:

#### Collaborative Creativity Narratives on Making-of Documentaries

Recall this iconic moment in movie history: the scene in *The Godfather* where Sonny is assassinated on the causeway. For what seems an eternity, his body is violently riddled with bullets from eight Thompson submachine guns; his arms and legs dance a macabre and pathetic syncopated jig as blood splatters and tatters his suit. Whenever I watch Sonny's assassination, however, I think of actor James Caan's story of being fitted with the miniature explosive devices right before the scene was shot.

How many takes? One. Yeah, I had 147 squibs on me (laughs). Just before we're about to go, he's wiring me and he goes, "I never put this many squibs on a guy in my life." I said, "I don't think it was necessary for you to tell me that *now*."

(Coppola and Werner, 1990)

Seeing and hearing Caan relate this behind-the-scenes anecdote, replete with his New York street accent, jovially macho demeanor, and mock fear facial expression hasn't destroyed the magic of the scene's effect on me. Rather, it has made me feel as if I am a part of it, as I imagine how I would have felt if the special effects guy was fitting *me* with those 147 squibs. It makes me feel as if James Caan is my buddy, telling me this story over dinner. In short, it puts me inside a world just outside of the fictional story of the

film – the real world of the film’s makers, a world that forms, informs, and frames that fictional world with its own unique ambience.

*The Godfather* is only one of more than 1,000 movies that, through DVD extras, invites me into their worlds. The Internet Movie Database lists over 1,100 films and videos with “making of” in the title, most of which are making-of-documentaries (MODs) of DVD feature film releases. Across all the MODs I have watched, there are several commonalities in form, no doubt created and shaped by the documentarians who edit the footage and craft the overall story line. First, there is an undeniable intimacy of tone in these interviews, inviting me to lean in to listen more closely. Second, most MODs are enhanced with cinema verité-style video footage that wanders through sound stages, foreign shooting locations, and pre-production design facilities, inviting me to wander along, too. Third, the professional film artists who speak on MODs – directors, designers, composers, crew members, and actors – share technical details of how specific scenes were designed, filmed, edited and scored, inviting me to be a part of the inside story.

As a communication researcher interested in collaborative creativity, however, I am invited to lean in, wander with, and be part of another, bigger storyline across MODs: the story of how a group of people worked together to create something new, important, and effective, and how communication strategies fostered their work. These stories deserve the attention of communication and creativity scholars alike.

MODs are richly valuable resources for studying, analyzing, and arguing the importance of communication in collaborative creativity. As resources for studying communication, they are stories of events told from multiple points of view; they draw

connections across individuals, communities, and history; they portray human interactivity as dramatic and engaging; they are stories shaped rhetorically by both tellers and documentarians. From a communication point of view, these are stories not just about how a film was made, but about how communication practices enabled the work of the group.

As resources for studying collaborative creativity, MODs are texts that answer the call for studying creativity in groups, in context, and in language. The texts are rich, multi-faceted, first-person accounts of creative processes, products, and human collaboration. From a creativity point of view, these are stories not just about how a film was made, but about how creativity is storied as a uniquely human endeavor.

And yet, no communication scholar to date has utilized these resources as primary texts for studying communication, and no creativity scholar has utilized these resources as primary texts for studying creativity. The stories told in and across MODs are richly detailed testaments to the phenomenon of group creative activity enacted in and through communication practices. MODs are collectively told tales of collaborative creativity. As *collectively told tales*, MODs relate a collection of perspectively diverse stories that dramatize the communicative interaction among a film production ensemble. As collectively told tales of *collaborative creativity*, MODs narrate and dramatize the collaborative processes involved in creating and evaluating novelty.

### Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to utilize the discourses of making-of-documentary films to understand how collaborative creativity is storied. In turn, these stories reveal specific communication forms, practices, and strategies that enrich theoretical

conceptions of collaborative creativity. This rhetorical analysis finds three emergent patterns of communication—mythic, historic, and symbolic—in the discourses of MODs that illuminate collaborative creativity.

First, the stories of collaborative creativity *enact a mythos* that follows the formulaic structure of quest tales. In this mythic pattern, MOD stories are a chorus of conquering heroes singing their collective victory song around the campfire. For audiences, this mythos organizes symbolic and cultural worldviews on creative acts. These tales are then collective resources for storying and experiencing creativity, templates for the dynamics of collaboration, and a mythos that recalls and reactivates the original creation story.

Second, the stories of collaborative creativity *constitute history* as resource and template for future works. In this historic pattern, MOD stories are a “never ending parlor conversation” between past and present creators. For filmmakers, these conversations commemorate and renovate the past; for creativity, these stories enrich theoretical accounts of creativity by demonstrating the dialectical tension of old and new, by articulating their *attitudes* toward the past as a constant set of resources for the present, and by adding the evaluation of creativity as “making history.”

Third, the stories of collaborative creativity *dramatize human interactions* in metaphors of character and environment. In this symbolic pattern, MOD stories are shop talk on the back lot, as filmmakers swap gossipy stories of the joys and challenges of working together. The metaphors depicting the director as a *character* are symbolic acts that language leadership as dramatic performances; the metaphors depicting the production *environment* as fictive worlds are symbolic acts that produce habitable and

guiding ideologies for collaboration. Together, these metaphors symbolically move beyond the overarching metaphor of a director's "vision" to capture the often overlooked *human* aspects of collaborative creative processes—interaction, relationships, emotion.

In this chapter, I introduce this dissertation's project in three major sections. First, I situate this study within the relevant creativity literature: its development from "lone genius" approaches, forays into creative contexts, the move to group creativity, to its calls for studying collaborative creativity in filmmaking. This extensive literature review is offered to make the case that this study diverges from and offers a counter-statement to current methods of studying creativity.

Second, I provide a brief overview of the making-of documentary genre and its rhetoric to introduce dramatism. With terminology provided by Kenneth Burke, the rhetoric of MODs is ripe for analysis that concentrates on drama, attitudes, and metaphors to better understand the discourses of collaborative creativity as always storied. This section briefly introduces Burke's key ideas that will be applied throughout this dissertation.

Third and finally, I outline the selection guidelines for my sample texts and list the MODs that provided the richest stories for analysis. I then preview the chapters to follow.

### Creativity Research

Contemporary creativity studies date back well over one half century. Although studied in the nineteenth century under its mystical synonym, "genius," by Francis Galton (1869), G. W. Bethune (1837), W. S. Jevons (1877), and William James (1880), most researchers date the burst of interest in creativity at 1950 when J. P. Guilford addressed

the American Psychological Association. Guilford proposed that “creativity could be studied in everyday subjects and with a psychometric approach, using paper-and-pencil tasks” already in use to measure intelligence (Sternberg and Lubart, 1999, p. 6).

Cognitive psychologists were energized by his ability to “specify the vague but intriguing notion of creativity according to distinct constructs that define individual creativity.

These constructs included fluency, flexibility, novelty, synthesis, analysis, reorganization and redefinition, complexity, and elaboration” (Kurtzberg & Amabile, 2000, p. 285).

As a consequence of Guilford’s call to paper-and-pencil-arms, the field of cognitive psychology leads all others in research on creativity. Following Guilford’s “choice of focus on the traits, motivations, and behaviors of the creative individual” (Kurtzberg & Amabile, 2000, p. 285), the bulk of research focuses on the individual creator—a legacy of the Enlightenment and Romantic movements.

### *The Legacy of the Lone Genius*

The rediscovery of the individual during the Enlightenment can be linked to the subsequent Romantic movement’s notion of the lone creative genius. Inheriting the Enlightenment’s championing of the individual but rebelling against its view of the supremacy of cool reason and empirical observation, Romanticism countered with its paradigm of “the world of the *deep interior*, lying beneath the veneer of conscious reason” (Gergen, 1991, p. 20, original emphasis). Furthermore, in the Romantic view,

Genius was ... [an] honored resident of the inner reaches. This was not the genius of the modern age, indicated merely by a point toward the end of the intelligence scale. Rather it was a capacity to “see to the heart” of things, to inspire voice, art,

music, and the like through one's insights: to impassion others with a sense of the sublime. (Gergen, p. 23)

Literary critic Harold Bloom (2002) continues to promulgate this Romantic notion of individual creative genius when he states, "For Emerson, genius was the God within, the self of 'Self-Reliance.' That self, in Emerson, therefore is not constituted by history, by society, by languages. It is aboriginal. I altogether agree" (p. 11). While Bloom continues to disseminate this narrower definition of genius, the history of the word tells more.

Historian Daniel J. Boorstin (1992) gives the wider perspective when he writes, "In ancient Roman religion, the 'genius' (Latin: the begetter) was the ruling spirit that perpetuated a *household* or a *family*. It came to mean the guardian spirit of a *guild*, a place, or an individual..." (p. 407, emphasis added). Moreover, psychologist Otto Rank (1932) asserts,

... the Roman idea of Genius contains from the beginning, in addition to the individual urge to reproduction, a collective element which points beyond the individual ... For this reason it was specially fitted to become a social conception of genius that should include both individual and collective elements." (p. 20)

Clearly, the overwhelming dominance of research attention to creativity as existing in the individual mind has been the result of philosophical blinders to the value of shared collective creativity, the terrain not only of the lone but also the group genius.

#### *Researching Creative Individuals in Their Contexts*

The works of Gruber (and Davis, 1988; and Wallace, 1989, 1999), Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996, 1999), Gardner (1993), Amabile (1996), and Simonton (1993, 1999, 2004) have made significant strides in expanding the scope of creativity

studies to wider dimensions, encompassing group, social, organizational, and political contexts. In what follows, I begin a discussion of their contributions by first comparing their definitions of creativity and then proceed to discuss their methods, subjects, and discoveries.

Gruber, Csikszentmihalyi, Gardner, Amabile, and Simonton fundamentally agree on the definition of creativity, with some variations of terms and additions of criteria. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) simply states, “Creativity ... is a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed” (p. 8). Examples of domains nested within a culture include theatre, filmmaking, mathematics, and biology. Elaborating on Csikszentmihalyi’s definition, Gardner (1993) defines the creative individual as “ a person who regularly solves problems, fashions products, or defines new questions in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting” (p. 35). “A product or response will be judged as creative,” Amabile (1996) claims more specifically, “to the extent that (a) it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand, and (b) the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic” (p. 35). Employing a Darwinian vocabulary regarding creativity, Simonton (1999a) contends that the creative product must be judged “original” and “adaptive” (workable). “Not only must others decide whether something seems original, but they are also the ultimate judges of whether that something appears workable” (p.6). Gruber and Wallace (1999) accept and extend the essence of the above definitions:

Like most definitions of creativity, ours includes novelty and value: The creative product must be new and must be given value according to some external criteria.

But we add a third criterion, purpose – creative products are the result of

purposeful behavior – and a fourth, duration – creative people take on hard projects lasting a long time. (p. 94)

While reaching a general consensus on novelty and value in the definition of creativity, these researchers differ more widely on methods, subjects, and discoveries.

Csikszentmihalyi's systems model locates creativity in the interaction among three components: the creative *individual*, the *domain* – or complex of symbols, traditions, and received knowledge – within which he works, and the *field* of accomplished practitioners of the domain, who serve as “gatekeepers” charged with evaluating the work as worthy or not of being included in the domain (1996, pp. 27, 28). In his largest study (1996), Csikszentmihalyi interviewed ninety one “exceptional individuals,” usually at least sixty years old, people who “made a difference to a major domain of culture – one of the sciences, the arts, business, government, or human well-being in general” (p. 12). Some of his subjects included writer Madeleine L'Engle, Chemist Linus Pauling, literary critic Wayne Booth, and physicist Freeman Dyson. A major discovery of Csikszentmihalyi is a set of ten pairs of contrasting personality traits – such as playfulness and discipline, humility and pride in their work, intelligence and naivete – found in most of his subjects.

Gruber's evolving systems approach employs in-depth biographical case studies of eminent individual creators such as Darwin, van Gogh, and Freud. Gruber's studies have revealed that creative work is founded on five “attitudes.” First, creative work is *developmental* and *systemic*: it evolves over long periods of time and is purposeful, while still involving a constant interplay among purpose, play, and chance. Second, it is *pluralistic*: the creator exploits many insights, metaphors, social relationships, projects,

and heuristics. Third, it is *constructionist*: the creator chooses and shapes his or her work environment. Fourth, it is *interactive*: the creator works alone and with others. Finally, it is *experientially sensitive*: the creator is a person, aware of the relations of his or her work to the world's work (1989, pp. 4, 5).

Gardner's *Creating Minds* (1993) mixes Gruber's case study approach and Csikszentmihalyi's systems model with his own theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner analyzes the creative lives of his choice of seven exemplars of creative accomplishment in the modern era, notably Einstein, Freud, Martha Graham, and Gandhi. Among other findings, his work revealed two major themes. First, creators received the unconditional support of one or more confidants at the time of creative breakthrough. Second, creators enter into what Gardner terms "a Faustian bargain" in exchange for their creative life, usually involving the sacrifice of normal personal relationships in order to continue creative work.

Amabile's (1996) research has employed a wide spectrum of psychological testing using children, adults, art teachers, psychologists, and artists to investigate the generation of art and its evaluation. Her major findings include the superiority of intrinsic to extrinsic motivation in creative work, the negative effect of evaluation on creativity, and the view of creative performance as comprised of three components: 1) *domain-relevant skills*, including knowledge of the domain, technical skills, and special talent; 2) *creativity relevant skills*, including an appropriate cognitive style, knowledge of heuristics for generating novel ideas, and conducive work style; and 3) *task motivation*.

Simonton (1993, 1999, 2004) employs the historiometric case study method, which measures large biographical data sample sizes sometimes approaching the thousands and

seeks to “discover general laws or statistical relationships that transcend the particulars of the historical record.” Simonton confines his subjects to “names that have ‘gone down in history’ – names like Newton, Descartes, Tolstoy, Leonardo da Vinci, and Beethoven” (1999, p. 116-7). Simonton’s quantitative approach has allowed him to discover what he terms the four categories of “massive and impersonal influences from the Zeitgeist or Ortgeist”: cultural, societal, economic, and political (1999, p. 124-5).

These studies have taken the location of creativity out of the individual mind and distributed it among the environment surrounding the creator. Creativity, in this new light, is equally dependent on the support of colleagues and significant others as well as on the evaluation of appropriate members of society and especially the relevant domain of the creation. As well, contingencies of situations and circumstances such as the observing presence of others or the motives of external rewards are seen to influence creativity.

All of these contextual conceptions, however, while broadening the scope and location of creative work, still attribute the most *generative* power to the solo creator, thereby ignoring group creativity, the mutually dynamic creative interactions in the *actual making processes*, rather than only in the supportive and evaluative stages.

### *Researching Creative Groups*

Contemporary research on group creativity – creative projects that depend on the interaction of a number of creators in order to be realized – comes from organizational scholars, as well as from Vera John-Steiner (2000), and R. Keith Sawyer (2003, 2006, 2007). Organizational creativity researchers – most notably Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (1993); Drazin, Glynn, and Kazanjian (1999); and Michael A. West (2003) –

study team creativity within corporate settings. For this section, I begin by considering useful definitions of group creativity and then survey the methods, subjects, and discoveries of these researchers.

Woodman et al. (1993) define organizational creativity in a way that accepts the fundamental premises of novelty and value put forward in social creativity research while adapting it to an entire group: “Organizational creativity is the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system” (p. 293). Drazin et al. (1999) see creativity as

the process of engagement in creative acts, regardless whether the resultant outcomes are novel, useful, or creative. This orientation focuses our inquiry on how individuals attempt to orient themselves to, and take creative action in, situations or events that are complex, ambiguous, and ill defined. In other words, this is an issue of how individuals engage in sensemaking in organizations. (p. 287)

In organizational literature, creativity is often referred to as “innovation.” Thus for West (2003), “Innovation is the introduction of new and improved ways of doing things” (p. 246). In the first two definitions, group creativity is applied to a number of ends while in the last definition, innovation applies only to organizational change.

The research of Woodman et al. (1993) and Drazin et al. (1999) are both surveys of organizational research and theory to the end of articulating levels of analysis for individual, group, and organizational creativity in the corporate setting. Both studies provide a detailed process model of the interaction of factors relevant to each level – Woodman et al. in a general conceptual view and Drazin et al. in relation to a single project considered over time. Woodman et al. identify individual characteristics as

cognitive abilities/style, personality, intrinsic motivation, and knowledge. Group characteristics include norms, cohesiveness, size, diversity, and roles. Organizational characteristics include culture, resources, rewards, and strategy. They propose an input/output process model where creative persons, group, and organization provide the input; transformation occurs through creative process and situation; and this results in the output of a creative product. The sensemaking process model of Drazin et al. represents the emergence of a negotiated order between a project management staff and a technical staff followed by crises of technical functionality alternating with crises of time and budget over time.

From results of his longitudinal and quantitative questionnaire surveys of health care professionals, and work teams in postal service and manufacturing, West (2003), argues for more research into “understanding the factors that promote the implementation of ideas into practice and action” (p. 245). To this end, he devised an input-process-output model of work group innovation. He divides inputs into team and organizational contexts: the task, the team members, their diversity and tenure (history as a team) comprises the team context; the culture/climate for innovation and the external demands comprises the organizational context. The team processes include shared objectives, participation, support for innovation, reflexivity, safety, and leadership. Team outputs are comprised of the quantity and quality of innovations, the latter consisting of four criteria: radicalness, magnitude, novelty, and effectiveness.

Terminologically, the “input/output” view of creative processes connotes computers, machinery, and factory-line production. While Woodman et al. wisely consider the interaction of individual, group, and organizational levels and West rightly

argues for as much attention to be paid to implementation as ideation, the models they choose – not uncommon in organizational literature – have the effect of reducing humans to microchips, machines, and drones.

Collaborative creativity studies outside of the business world easily avoid the mechanistic metaphors and instead find more humanistic concepts and terms. John-Steiner's (2000) biographical case studies and questionnaire survey methods mostly focus on collaborative creativity in duo partnerships – such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, Marie and Pierre Curie, and Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath – but also include some studies of small collectives such as the Group Theater and the four authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1997). Most in line with this study is her concept of “thought communities,” joint endeavors where “participants engage in the co-construction of knowledge as interdependent intellectual and emotional processes.” Her model of collaboration identifies patterns that are integrative and complementary; roles that are fluid, braided, informal and voluntary or with a clear division of labor; values such as similar interests, and visionary commitment; and working methods that are at times spontaneous and responsive, at others discipline-based, and at others transformatively co-constructed (pp. 196-7).

Employing a combination of interview and interactional semiotics approaches, Sawyer (2003) has contributed important studies of live artistic group creativity in the performance domains of Chicago small jazz ensembles and improvisational theatre groups. While acknowledging that group creativity is found in all groups, Sawyer focuses on group *improvisation* “because it exaggerates the key characteristics of all group

creativity: process, unpredictability, intersubjectivity, complex communication, and emergence” (p. 5).

While cognitive psychology and even social psychology have lagged seriously behind in studying group creativity, organizational creativity has led the way. These studies *explicitly* argue that many creative processes need the group and the organization, rather than only the individual, to occur. Furthermore, John-Steiner and Sawyer, in similarly relocating creativity from the individual mind to the group, have introduced terms and concepts that imply and highlight communication – such as “co-construction,” “interdependent,” “intersubjectivity” – and thereby provide entrance to study from a communication perspective.

#### *Calls to Study the Collaborative Creativity of Filmmaking*

Embedded across recent creativity research are calls to move past individual-centered, lone-genius claims about creativity to explore creativity as synergetic. Kurtzberg and Amabile (2001) point out, “Relatively little attention has been paid to team-level creative synergy, in which creative ideas are generated by groups instead of being generated by one mind” (p. 285).

Indeed, most previous theory and research on creativity has not distinguished between ideas created in an individual mind and ideas arising from creative synergy, in which ideas are formed, shared, adapted, and inspired simultaneously by more than one person. Central to the notion of creative synergy is the idea that *a group of people has produced something that no one would have been able to do alone.* (Kurtzberg and Amabile, p. 289, emphasis added)

In their article, “Deconstructing the Lone Genius Myth: Toward a Contextual View of Creativity,” Montuori and Purser point to areas of research ripe for collaborative creativity.

We believe an important avenue for creativity research will be the study of creative groups where creativity is an emergent property of the collective, such as jazz ensembles, the theater, moviemaking, creative teams in organizations, R&D labs, community projects, and so forth....A truly humanistic perspective on creativity must include a discussion of human relationships. (1995, 105-6)

R. Keith Sawyer, whose creativity research features jazz ensembles and theatre, also advocates the study of filmmaking as a worthy site for creative activity, and explains why this area has not been studied for its insights in the phenomenon before.

Movies don't fit in with our cultural conceptions of creativity for several reasons. First, they are created by large teams of people, each with specialized skills, who have to work together collaboratively to generate the final product. Film scholars have occasionally attempted to impose the lone-genius myth onto movie creation, attributing creativity to the director. But although the director has a unique creative position, unlike the painter, he or she cannot create a movie without a large support staff. The collaborative nature of movie production can't be explained with individualist approaches. (Sawyer, 2006, p. 197)

Sawyer's call to study filmmaking as *collaborative* creativity is complemented by Montuori and Purser's call to think of collaborative *creativity* as generative of voices and stories about creativity itself.

... creativity must not be viewed as purely self-assertive and self-expressive, but

it must, in fact, also fertilize the soil of creation for others, rather than being a cancerous ego expansion. It must do this by opening up possibilities, empowering others, and making them aware of their own creativity, in short by providing a context for it.... The creation of a context for creativity does not rely merely upon the creation of a narrative style with which one may find a voice. Rather it creates the *ground* from which a plurality of narratives can emerge. (1995, p, 104, original emphasis)

These calls—for studies of collaborative creativity in filmmaking that generate a plurality of narratives—are answered in this study. The stories told in the discourses of making-of-documentaries are narrative accounts of the collaborative creativity that is filmmaking—grounded in human communication that, indeed, “creates the ground from which a plurality of narratives can emerge.”

Organizational creativity research, as outlined above, focuses primarily on two things: 1) on innovation – change to the organization itself, or 2) on creativity injected into the workplace as an adjunct ingredient to enhance a company’s main endeavor, such as selling copiers. Moreover, present studies of artistic group creativity mostly consist of live performances. This study centers on an artistic organization – filmmaking – where creativity is the *sine qua non* of its existence, a large group producing performances in fixed form. As such, this study fills the lacuna between organizational creativity and live artistic creativity research.

This study moves beyond creativity research that still restricts itself to social science and biographical methods, conceptions of individuals as repositories of sole creative power or aboriginal “genius,” systems models that still posit solo creativity

within larger contexts or conditions, and organizational production models of input/output. This study is creativity research that begins with a different method—dramatism; that offers a different conception of individuals in groups—storytellers; that nests creativity in a larger frame—communication; and that sees production not as input/output, but as language use that seeks to create spaces of cooperative interaction.

#### A Dramatistic Analysis:

##### History, Audience, and Kenneth Burke

A communication perspective is necessary to the study of collaborative creativity because language not only serves to create the product during the creative event but also to structure, historicize, and dramatize the creative event in retrospect. The discourses of collaborative creativity are always storied – in form, time, and symbols. That is, all that remains of the creative experience itself is the story. The product is, so to speak, the death of the creative process, but the process is inscribed and relived in the story. MODs, as exemplars of a plurality of creator narratives, call for attention to creative processes as many intertwining and interdependent stories. As stories of human purposes in mutual pursuit of common goals, collaborative creativity calls for the dramatistic method, based on the terminology and perspective of ritual drama rather than that of biology, machines, or computers.

This section introduces a brief history of MODs and their rhetorical appeals for audiences. It then introduces the key terms of Kenneth Burke that will be utilized throughout this rhetorical analysis of MOD discourse.

## *A Brief History of Making-of Documentaries*

*Making Motion Pictures: A Day in the Vitagraph Studios* was the first Hollywood “making of” documentary, released in 1908 (Behlmer and Thomas). In 1912, the Edison Company released a fifteen-minute film entitled *How Motion Pictures Are Made and Shown* (p. 97). Studio-created featurettes abounded from the 1930’s to the 1960’s and “intended to plug upcoming releases, introduce new stars, or show off technological innovations such as color” (Arthur, 2004, p. 39). With the demise of the “Old Hollywood” studio system run by autocratic moguls like Jack Warner (Warner Brothers), Daryl Zanuck (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox), and Louis B. Mayer (MGM), studios were purchased by corporate entities having no knowledge whatsoever about filmmaking. Clueless studio heads, in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, handed young, radical filmmakers the keys to the kingdom in hopes of capturing the youth market (Biskind, 1998). It was during this period of Hollywood’s economic and artistic upheaval that MODs as we know them today were born.

As the young generation of filmmakers, fresh out of University of Southern California and University of California at Los Angeles film schools, rebelled against the old studio system, they found an interest, perhaps a need, to document and publish the stories of how and why they made movies their way. While still overseen by modern day studios – which have regrouped and now function as financing and distribution entities (Biskind, 1998) – the modern MOD differs from the Old Hollywood behind-the-scenes featurettes by revealing much more of filmmaker information and attitudes.

George Lucas, with 16mm camera in hand and later to be the subject of a few MODs himself, filmed the first New Hollywood MOD when he accompanied his friend

and mentor, Francis Ford Coppola, across the United States as the latter filmed *The Rain People* (Leva, 2004a). As industry consensus credits Lucas with artistic and technological innovations that have “revolutionized” how films are made, it is perhaps not insignificant that Lucas’s *The Making of The Rain People* (1969) spearheaded the modern MOD.

While some MODs, such as *The Making of a Legend: Gone With the Wind*, David Hinton’s 124-minute 1988 MOD, were broadcast on television and later released on videocassette, the packaging of MODs as crest jewels of special edition sets of DVD extras owes its origin to The Criterion Collection. This manufacturer and distributor of, according to their mission statement, “important classic and contemporary films,” started the practice of including a collection of supplements to the films – director commentary, trailers, MODs, and additional documentaries and interviews. Criterion president Peter Becker refers to these as “a film school in a box” – first on laser disc and then on DVD (Ulaby, 2004, June 12). Soon the special edition DVD, complete with supplements mirroring the Criterion Collection, began to proliferate the market and are now standard fare.

### *The Audience Appeal of MODs*

It’s a good bet that MODs are not beginning to flood the pop culture landscape exclusively as analytical bait for eager creativity researchers like me. Nor, I would venture to guess, are MODs eagerly viewed for their “film school in a box” opportunity—despite the low tuition. Only a few media studies (Arthur, 2004; Hight, 2005; Skopal, 2007) have focused on MODs, and no studies have addressed them outside of that discipline. Instead, I approach MODs as collaborative creations in their own right

whose rhetoric deserves an introduction here. MODs appeal to audiences for at least four reasons.

First, they are great storytelling. MODs are filled with humorous, touching, thrilling, and inspiring anecdotes illustrated with skillfully edited film clips, production stills, and behind-the-scenes footage. For example, actor Alfred Molina, having been covered with real tarantulas while filming *Raiders of the Lost Ark* with director Steven Spielberg, recalls, “These spiders, they’re running and they’re dropping and they’re fighting and they’re running over my face, and Steven’s going “Shoot! Shoot!” Like this (snapping fingers). And he’s going, “Alfred, Alfred, look scared!” I’m going, “I’m scared! I’m scared!” (Bouzereau, 2003)

Second, MODs offer fans a continuation of and privileged behind-the-scenes access to the story world of films they love. In his article, ““The Adventure Continues on DVD:’ Franchise Movies as Home Video,” Pavel Skopal (2007) claims that special edition DVDs, including MODs and other supplements, are intended

...to construct an “insider” to the film industry.... Two different registers of experience are offered at the same time: one consists of the extension of the experience of the diegetic world; the other involves a promise of emotional participation, mediation of collectivity, sharing the experience of the crew members ... (p. 190)

On MODs, fans are invited backstage to listen to celebrities tell stories and to meet the people they work with everyday. *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, lives on in over eighteen hours of documentary “tours,” extending and enhancing our stay in Middle

Earth, and inviting us to see the fantastical creatures created on paper, in clay, and on computer screens.

Third, MODs offer specific, technical information – sometimes sketchy, sometimes in-depth – on how films are made, fulfilling the promise in the genre’s name. From Superman’s first flight to the crushing of the Terminator, MODs include juicy secrets of movie making magic. Unlike magicians, however, MODs willingly reveal at least some of their secrets.

Fourth, MODs follow the conventions of most documentary film, and savvy audiences understand these conventions and types. According to The American Film Institute Desk Reference, documentary films “use real people to tell a nonfiction story ... with no performers except the real people who are interviewed or filmed going about their business” (Corey & Ochoa, 2002, p. 148). And MODs take their place with other documentary sub-genres: travelogues, exposés, biographies, instruction, propaganda, and poetic celebrations of the medium’s capabilities (Barnouw, 1993).

The making-of documentary relies on the convention of the interview, a feature that sometimes earns them the pejorative nickname “talkumentaries” (Hampe, 2007, p. 13). A narrative or story line in MODs is created indirectly through editing the interviews together, or scripted narration may be performed by an on-camera or voice-over performer. When employed, the omniscient, “voice of God” narration functions as a way to give the documentarians their own voice, to fill in facts omitted by speakers, and to make smoother transitions from one part of the MOD to another.

Nevertheless, MODs rely heavily on the personal storytelling styles, casual demeanor, and undisguised sincerity displayed by the key film artists’ interviews to

provide instant emotional appeal. Like James Caan's story at the beginning of this chapter, Mark Hamill's story of horseplay on the set of *Star Wars* is much more than information, but is a rich account of lived experience through story:

[Director George Lucas thought our horseplay] was really inappropriate humor at the time because I'm sure he's in the zone and he's seeing what he wants to do and we're just, like, actors trying to stave off boredom because, you know, we've been *in the trash compactor all morning*. (Becker and Burns, 2004)

The audience appeal of MODs as great stories, privileged access, insider secrets, familiar film form, and lived experience is part and parcel of their rhetorical appeal as persuasive, informative, and entertaining texts. The discourses within these texts, the stories themselves and the way they are told, make them ripe for dramatistic analysis.

*Dramatism: Kenneth Burke's Method of Rhetorical Analysis*

For Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is “rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (1962, p. 567). Rhetoric, for Burke is “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other agents.” Likening the purpose of rhetoric to a call for help, Burke claims that it “is not merely descriptive, it is *hortatory*. It is not just trying to tell how things are, in strictly ‘scenic’ terms; it is trying to *move people*” (1962, p. 565, original emphasis). Indeed, the discourses of MODs are first person accounts of “trying to move people”—audiences watching DVD extras, filmmakers situating themselves in the history of filmmaking, and artists inducing cooperation on the set through metaphor.

Specifically, I use a complex of critical concepts devised by Burke – cooperative competition, perspective by incongruity, language as symbolic action, form as creation and satisfaction of appetite in the audience, and more – all of which can be taken as part of the overall calculus he calls *dramatism*. As Burke explains, dramatism is “[a] technique of analysis of language and thought as basically modes of action rather than as a means of conveying information” (1966, 54). Dramatism “invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action” (1962, p. xxiv). Specifically, dramatism addresses the question, “What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (1962, p. xvii). Through dramatism and Burke’s critical vocabulary, I analyze the discourses of MODs to answer those questions and offer a better, more nuanced, language-centered account of collaborative creativity.

To date there are almost no salient studies of creativity, much less collaborative creativity, from strictly a communication point of view, although Sawyer’s excellent use of interactional semiotics to model group creativity in live theatrical improvisation and jazz ensembles is a great beginning. Both Gardner and Gruber, two theorists very much aligned with this study, certainly are sensitive to language and human interaction in their case study method as well, although communication is not at the center of their approach.

I take a dramaturgical perspective in approaching the creativity talk of MODs in order to counterbalance the overwhelming plethora of scientific views that have shaped the study of creativity to date. Psychometric and experimental methods – involving quantification, control, and decontextualization – still dominate the literature, isolating creation not only from the group, but from appropriate work environments as well

(Sternberg and Lubart, 1999; Mayer, 1999). The bulk of the remaining methods favor modeling human thought on computer programs, assessing biological functions during problem solving tests, and other forms of quantification and artificial manipulation that ignore environmental and communicative factors involved in creativity and tend to reduce people to animalistic or mechanistic functions. By choosing to see collaborative creativity first and foremost as human interactive choice, this study follows Burke's behest that

People are neither animals nor machines (to be analyzed by the migration of metaphors from biology or mechanics), but actors and acters. They establish identity by relation to groups ... If you would avoid the antitheses of supernaturalism and naturalism, you must develop the coordinates of socialism – which gets us to cooperation, participation, man in society, man in drama. (1973, p. 311)

As this dissertation deals with group, or collaborative, creativity, the humanistic perspective Burke promotes through his dramatistic method of rhetorical criticism is most fitting and necessary. Through Burke's dramatistic lens, I focus on how creativity is languaged, storied, and dramatized; that is, I concentrate on the terminologies, tropes, actions, characters, themes, sights, and sounds employed to depict, explain, justify, and account for creativity by MOD speakers and documentarians. By this approach, this study seeks to help restore the human will in action, with all its attendant socialization and symbolicity, to a prominent position in contemporary creativity research.

## Sample Selection:

### Guidelines and Choices of MODs In This Study

Out of hundreds of available feature film releases on DVD with making-of documentaries, I have chosen eighteen to analyze, twelve of which are part of trilogies. The remaining six are stand-alone films that may or may not have had sequels. These choices are by no means a random sample, nor do I claim to have chosen the most common examples of MODs in all cases.

I have chosen MODs according to these guidelines: 1) The MOD itself has to include enough interview screen time for speakers to relate their collaborative creative processes; in other words, I chose MODs with very rich accounts of both collaboration and creativity. 2) The MOD's fiction film has to be significant, having received critical and/or audience acclaim. This guideline increased the chance that readers of this study have seen the films discussed, allowing me to make ready connections between the stories and theories of collaborative creativity. 3) The MOD's fiction film must be regarded by the industry as having made advances in content or style. If one of the criteria for something to be deemed "creative" is that it is recognized as such by gatekeepers and evaluators, then these films are—from the get-go—creative. 4) The MOD must include interviews with at least five production company members, including the director. This final guideline allowed me to listen for stories of interaction, from multiple viewpoints, and for varieties of language use.

Obviously, these guidelines pertain to many other MODs not included in this study, and I would have loved to have included them. (I originally wanted to analyze one hundred MODs.) However, favoring a qualitative rather than a quantitative method, depth

over breadth, and wishing to finish in this lifetime, I leave the other eighty-two for a later study.

I have included MODs of small, independent films alongside ones of large, studio blockbusters, and I have avoided including two works by the same director, with the exception of the trilogies. I have included the MODs of all films in the four trilogies analyzed either because one MOD documented all three films of that trilogy (*The Godfather*, *The Indiana Jones Trilogy*) or because the three films were initially conceived as a trilogy (*Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*). Thus, although both *Superman* and *The Terminator* have sequels, the MODs of those sequels do not fit my self-imposed guidelines for choosing MODs in this study.

Counting the trilogies as one film, this sample divides evenly into five fantasy/science fiction films where plot and special effects play a significant role in the story and five dramas where character development forms the central thrust of the film. Most films from other genres did not fit the guidelines, and films by women directors, alas, are also not a part of this study, as they still make up an infinitesimal percentage of Hollywood directors.

The films documented span the time period of 1971 to 2003. The eighteen films documented by MODs in this study are *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Star Wars: The Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Superman* (1978), *The Terminator* (1984), *The Godfather* (1972), *The Godfather*,

*Part II* (1974), *The Godfather*, *Part III* (1990), *Raging Bull* (1980), *Short Cuts* (1993), *Platoon* (1986), and *Malcolm X* (1993).

### Preview of Chapters

The three central chapters of this study approach collaborative creativity from three distinct but interdependent patterns of communication: myth, history, and metaphor. Both language and drama provide the backbone to these three approaches.

Chapter two, *Campfire Victory Songs: Collaborative Creativity Structured as Mythos*, argues that ancient forms of storytelling structure audience expectation of and participation in the vicarious experience of creativity in MODs. MODs are analyzed for their story form, as a narrative genre in their own right. Aristotle, Northrup Frye, Kenneth Burke, and Joseph Campbell provide the theoretical framework to support an exegesis of MOD “plots” as romance and hero tales. Specifically, the “monomyth” of Campbell is used to articulate the central structural motifs of MODs and frame collaborative creativity as the success story of an ensemble of heroes. Finally, the theories of Mircea Eliade provide a link to MODs as creation myths.

Moving from the narrative structure of MODs to the level of conversation between speakers, chapter three, *Parlor Conversations: Collaborative Creativity Constituted in History*, argues that history is commemorated by filmmakers as they offer tributes to their predecessors and appropriate their filmic motifs. In turn, history is then renovated to story collaborative creativity as a dialogue between past and present creation. Employing Kenneth Burke’s theories on attitudes toward history and Hayden White’s theories of historical emplotment, this chapter presents MODs as information of

and attitudes toward techniques and predecessors, descriptions of process and attribution of creative contributions.

Chapter four, *Back Lot Shop Talk: Collaborative Creativity Dramatized through Metaphor*, moves to an even closer view of MODs discourse via language and argues that the metaphors employed by MOD speakers do the rhetorical work of dramatizing collaborative creativity through character and environments. Employing Burke's view of metaphor as "perspectives by incongruity," language as symbolic action, and ideology as motivator, as well as Lakoff and Johnson's theories of metaphor as central to human thought, this chapter analyzes how metaphors dramatize leadership styles of directors and create habitable ideologies for the work of the production ensemble. This chapter also critiques the overriding metaphor of the director's "vision."

Finally, the fifth and final chapter, *Off-Screen and In Between Inferences: The Human Dimension of Collaborative Creativity*, moves to larger answers of how collaborative creativity is storied in MODs, how this study has enriched the theoretical conceptions of collaborative creativity, and how collaborative creativity might be differently valued in future creativity research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Campfire Victory Songs:

#### Collaborative Creativity Structured as Mythos

Bill Witliff, producer of the television mini-series *Lonesome Dove*, took photographs on the expansive, central Texas “sets” during the filming of the series. These photos have been collected in a new book, not so cleverly titled *A Book of Photographs From Lonesome Dove* (2007). Actors Robert Duvall and Tommy Lee Jones are transformed in these photographs into typical cow hands driving cattle to market, into pastoral figures of an often longed for imaginary history. Stephen Harrigan writes of the hall of mirrors created through photographs that *seem* to capture iconic moments from the Western frontier in 1870.

These are not just pictures from *Lonesome Dove*; they are documentary images of something that seems to have really happened. The movie of *Lonesome Dove* exists on one plane, these photographs exist on another. They record an enterprise that is, like all movies, an elaborate attempt to trick us into believing that something is true when it is demonstrably not. But at the same time, they seem to be turning up an unexpected layer of authenticity. Fictional movies require a suspension of disbelief; photographs typically do not. . . . There is a frank and vibrant paradox in all of these photographs: The artifice itself is what makes them so credible. (p. 183)

Making-of-documentaries exhibit this same “frank and vibrant paradox:” between fiction and fact, between art and actuality, between drama and document.

MODs are nonfiction videos telling of and showing the making of a fictional film. The story narrated and illustrated purports to represent events that really occurred. In this sense, the MOD reports history, “turning up an unexpected layer of authenticity.” To follow Harrigan’s analogy above, fictional movies require a suspension of disbelief; MODs typically do not. The artifice—the careful shaping, selecting, and narrating of the tale—is what makes these documentaries credible and entertaining. As dramatic stories, MODs are structured in a way that creates and satisfies audience expectations. According to Kenneth Burke, this creation and satisfaction of audience expectation is the essence of form in art and renders great art infinitely repeatable (1968).

This chapter locates and explicates the making-of-documentary as a collectively told tale of collaborative creativity. The MOD is a hybrid form that contains elements of history, in that it narrates events that really occurred; drama, in that it narrates human action and conflict within a certain situation; and myth, in that it narrates a successful heroic quest in a contemporary version of classic oral mythmaking. Indeed, in this chapter, MOD discourse is a chorus of conquering heroes singing their collective victory song around the campfire for all to hear.

Novelist, poet, and essayist Ursula LeGuin (1980) asks these pertinent questions and then answers them with a rhetorical question:

Why are we huddling about the campfire? Why do we tell tales, or tales about tales – why do we bear witness, true or false? ...Is it because we are so organized as to take actions that prevent our dissolution into the surroundings? (p. 198)

We tell and listen to tales, and tales about tales, as symbolic acts of asserting ourselves, of marking our existence as noteworthy, of saying “we were there and we did these things.” Whenever we bear witness, we do so in story form: we fictionalize “facts,” we arrange memorable actualities into credible scenarios, we organize lived experience into mythos.

Mythos is the organizing principle for this chapter, for the word operates on many useful levels: as plot and conflict, the organization and agon of story events; as a specific set of steps in a journey quest that elaborates and ensures a victory over chaos; as symbolic representation of the “act” of creation itself. The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the mythic structure of MODs to reveal how they function in storying collaborative creativity for an audience. Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, and Northrup Frye provide the broad strokes for the operations of these tales as plot and as conflict; Joseph Campbell’s three-part monomyth cycle and seventeen stage structure provide a framework for explicating the movement from the ordinary to the extraordinary in these adventures in poesis. Mircea Eliade opens the mythos of MODs to questions of cosmogony, cosmology, and creativity. Indeed, *making the mythos of collaborative creativity* is what MODs are all about.

#### Mythos as Plot and Agon of the “Success Story”

The MOD is organized in story form. This “organization of events” into a logical sequence with a beginning, middle, and end is termed by Aristotle the *mythos*, or *plot*, which he deems the “soul” or main purpose of tragedy (1996, pp. 11, 13). Specifically, Aristotle states,

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. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles. (p. 11)

While Aristotle is referring specifically to tragedy, the term *mythos* as plot is applicable in the broader sense to all story forms.

Norman Friedman (1967) delineates plots into three types: plots of fortune, plots of character, and plots of thought. All of these kinds of plot ask and answer “what happens next?” for protagonist and audience alike. “What happens next?” comprises the essence of suspense in any story, often manifested in the form of a mystery aroused at the story’s beginning, unfolding with surprise twists and turns along its middle, and resolving at its end. The *outcome* of the MOD, however, is not a mystery. Like the fifth century Athenian citizens who attended the premieres of plays competing at the Festival of Dionysus, the audience of the MOD knows what will happen in the end: the film will have gotten made. The drama then becomes *how* the film got made; the mystery and suspense are created by dramatizing those close calls, trials and tribulations, and crises where the production is threatened. Thus, while the *outcome* of the MOD is not a mystery, the events *leading toward* that outcome most definitely are.

As a good mystery story begins with the fact of the deceased individual, so the MOD begins with the fact of the completed film. The MOD then traces the history of how the film came into being. Further, it holds the interest of the audience by dramatizing

the struggles between the protagonist and the antagonist, the forces of creation versus the forces of chaos. And, as we know from the beginning, the forces of creation, embodied by the ensemble of heroes of the production company, will defeat or outwit the forces of chaos, embodied by a fluid variety of ever-shape-shifting powers.

In this way, all MODs are success stories, following the mythic form Northrop Frye terms a *romance*. According to Frye,

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the critical struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero.

We may call these three stages respectively, using Greek terms, the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict. (Frye 1957, p. 187)

The MOD follows Northrop Frye's romance myth in this fashion. First (the *agon*): the production company, the ensemble protagonist representing the creative principle, sets out on the perilous journey of bringing a feature-length fiction motion picture into existence, a journey fraught with preliminary struggles that involve finding financing, enduring a grueling filming schedule, and solving seemingly endless production problems. Second (the *pathos*): the production company engages in a down-to-the-wire struggle with the chaotic principle in the form of any and all obstacles that would prevent the film from finally coming together and meeting the deadline to the premiere date. Finally (the *anagnorisis*): the movie premieres and the production company, if not

exalted for great box office and/or critical success, at least enjoys the satisfaction of having successfully completed the journey and bringing a new work into existence.

It is tempting, out of convenience, to try to designate the director as the sole protagonist. Most myth, drama, and fiction prefers a solitary protagonist, perhaps because this choice tends to better focus and organize the story. And the choice holds some logic: the director, after all, is the generally acknowledged sole “vision” holder, who guides the rest of the production company with it. The MOD romance of the successful quest, however, is more akin to the epic tale of charismatic Jason leading his fellow Argonauts in pursuit of the Golden Fleece than, say, that of the solitary artificer Daedalus designing the labyrinth. The director of the film, as the leader of creative decision making, oversees a team of fellow artists on their quest. And all quests involve battles.

Dramatism as a method, “a calculus – a vocabulary, a set of coordinates,” sees all of its subjects as dramas or human strategies appropriate to a social situation, and focuses on the main action – the conflict, or *agon* – the active manifestation of the dialectical engagement of two opposing principles. At one side of the *agon* stands the protagonist, embodying the principle advocated by the author of the drama, and on the other stands the antagonist, embodying the principle opposed to the protagonist’s (p. 76). In using the term “principle,” Burke connects “drama” with “dialectic,” citing the view that “Plato’s dialectic was appropriately written in the form of ritual drama.” Additionally, he introduces the concept of “cooperative competition” as a means of developing an idea. Through cooperative competition, where the action of drama and dialectic converge, an assertion is allowed the “opportunity to mature through ‘agonistic’ development,” eventually being refined in the heated alembic of the competing principles. In a sense,

then, Burke sees protagonist and antagonist as complementary opposites, each needing the other to form a greater whole.

The stories told in MODs are a drama of opposing forces, the filmmaking team embodies a “creative principle,” and all the obstacles thrown in their paths are an antagonistic “chaotic principle.” In Burke’s view, these competing principles cooperate with each other, their agonistic engagement shaping the ultimate form of the creation, or poesis. The characters performing in MODs line up on either side of these forces, with one or more of them leading the way.

#### Mythos as the Rhetoric of the Monomythic Cycle

I attribute most of the success to the psychological underpinnings which had been around for thousands of years and people still react the same way to the stories as they always had. – George Lucas on the *Star Wars* trilogy in *Empire of Dreams*

From Aristotle’s “beginning, middle, and end;” Frye’s romance myth of agon, pathos, and anagnorisis; to Burke’s drama of cooperative competition between protagonist and antagonist, all rely on the tripartite structure of the home-away-return also utilized by comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell. Borrowing the term “monomyth” from James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, Campbell formulated this fundamental framework which he sees underlying all mythic tales:

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth: *A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back*

*from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.*

(Campbell 1968, p. 30)

While his “monomyth” formula significantly enhances the tripartite structures of Aristotle and Frye, Campbell’s next step proves even more useful to this project. In a series of motifs delineating seventeen possible stages of the hero’s adventure, Campbell has provided a more elaborate analytical framework that can enrich any analysis of mythic story. While all MODs do not exemplify every stage, many of them contain smaller or greater manifestations of them. For this study, these stages not only delineate the creative ensemble of heroes’ journey, they also organize the plot, drama, and rhetoric of collaborative creativity told in MODs. Moreover, the manner of presentation recalls classic oral mythmaking: MODs consist of a chorus of conquering heroes singing their collective victory song for all to hear. These tales – beginning with dreams, moving through struggle, and ending in celebration – are understandably devoid of dirty laundry and cynicism. The nature of the genre demands it. MODs are a special blend of creation myth (aetiological or origin story), comedy (ensemble of fallible human heroes, happy ending) and romance (hero tale). As Northrop Frye further clarifies the third ingredient,

Myth, then, is one extreme of literary design, naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance, using that term to mean ... the tendency ... to displace myth in a human direction and yet, in contrast to “realism,” to conventionalize content in an idealized direction. (Frye 1957, p. 136-137)

In order to illustrate how I view MODs as their own unique genre, I will take you on the creative ensemble of heroes’ journey. Using examples drawn from the MODs I have analyzed, I will compare them to the most relevant motifs of Campbell’s seventeen stages

in the monomythic cycle. These are 1) the call to adventure, 2) the refusal of the call, 3) supernatural aid, 4) crossing the first threshold, 5) road of trials, 6) the ultimate boon, 7) magic flight, 8) rescue from without, and 9) freedom to live.

*The Call to Adventure: Conception and “Gathering of Troops”*

This first stage of the mythological journey – which we have designated the “call to adventure” – signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown.... it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight. The hero can go forth of his own volition to accomplish the adventure ... or he may be carried or sent abroad by some benign or malignant agent.... (Campbell 1968, p. 58)

Most all MODs begin with Campbell’s “call to adventure” as a story of the conception of the film. Sometimes the call to adventure comes from within, a true conception, as when Oliver Stone felt compelled to write the script for his 1986 Academy Award winning Vietnam war film: “I wrote the *Platoon* script in 1976 in New York City in a few weeks primarily because I reached a place in my life where I felt like if I didn’t write it at that point in time I would forget what had happened in the war” (Kiselyak, 2001).

Peter Jackson expected and waited for someone to make a live action film of *The Lord of the Rings* and when no one did so, he decided to make it himself (Pellerin, 2002). Director Robert Altman emerged from a transatlantic flight having finished a collection of short stories by Raymond Carver, convinced that he could and would translate them to

film (Kaplan & Dorr, 1993). James Cameron conceived of the primal image for *The Terminator* in a dream:

I had this recurrent image of this machine figure.... and I began doing some drawings of it and I saw that it was a robot design that could be split in half and still pursue its victims in classic 70's slasher style – a knife-wielding robot cut in half crawling over the ground after some poor, female victim. That was sort of the nucleus for the story. (Ling, 2001)

At other times, the heroic team member is *literally* called, as when Richard Donner received a phone call from producer Alexander Salkind “in an unlikely position.” Donner recalls,

I was sitting on the toilet on a Sunday morning and the phone rang and this strange Hungarian voice said, “This is Alexander Salkind.” And he said, “I’m making Superman.” And I said, “Well, that’s great.” He said, “I would like you to direct it.” He said, “I’ll pay you a million dollars.” I said, “Hey, how are ya? Where do you live and how do I get to ya?” I said, “You’ll pay me a million dollars?” He said, “I’ll pay ya a *million* dollars.” He said, “It’s two pictures.”

Aha! Still... I was making \$100,000, if that. “I have Gene Hackman and Marlon Brando set.” And so overnight my life turned around. (Thau, 2001)

The call for director Spike Lee came when he read of prospective production plans for *Malcolm X*: “I read in the paper that Norman Jewison was gonna direct this film. I said, ‘Oh-ooh, I don’t know about this.’” Feeling that this was a project he was most qualified to direct, he “answered the call” and lobbied to get the job (Leva, 2005).

In all cases, it is the hero first called who goes forth “of his own volition to accomplish the adventure,” but in two cases he is also “carried or sent abroad by a benign” agent who also serves as an essential part of the ensemble. Producer George Lucas called director Steven Spielberg to the adventure of directing a movie about a whip-cracking academic. On vacation in Hawaii, George Lucas asked the director what he wanted to direct next. In Spielberg’s words,

And I said, “You know I’ve always wanted to direct a James Bond picture.” And George said, “I got that beat.” And I said, “What do you mean?” And he said, “I have a better idea. It’s called *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.”

Lucas continues the story, “And so I sat down and kinda told him the story about this archeologist and how it was like a Saturday matinee serial and he got in one mess after another and he just said, ‘Fantastic. Let’s do this’” (Bouzerau, 2003). Spielberg answered the call immediately.

The “call to adventure” sets the stage in MODs for just that: an adventure. The hero has been chosen by forces larger than himself to engage in a quest. Through this motif – which says, in effect, “you come, too” – the audience has been invited vicariously to join in the experience of the adventure recounted in the collective tale of the ensemble of heroes, the multiple members of the production company.

#### *Refusal of the Call: Struggling with Self-Interest*

Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or “culture,” the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved....the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one’s own interest. (Campbell, p. 59, 60)

Campbell's motif of the refusal of the call serves as an alternative to the hero who immediately answers the call. In these MODs, the one clear example comes from *Raging Bull: Before the Fight* (Bouzereau 2004). Despite the persistent attempts made by actor Robert De Niro to enlist director Martin Scorsese into the project to make a film biography from the life of boxer Jake La Motta, Scorsese continually evaded his call. As Scorsese reflexively explains,

He [De Niro] was still being serious about *Raging Bull* but by that point I was changing my mind. I was no longer really interested. See, I never really understood sports – baseball, football, boxing. I like music more, so by the time I was finishing *New York, New York*, I was working on *The Last Waltz* with Robbie Robertson. In any event, we had never quite settled on what it was, how we were gonna approach the project. ... In any event, I still hadn't found my connection to the material. I was also in a great destructive state and I wasn't satisfied with the work I was doing on *New York, New York* and a couple of other things and I felt I was losing something from the passion that produced *Taxi Driver*. And I certainly was losing connection with the passion that produced *Mean Streets*. And that was my concern, my fear: could I ever feel strongly about something again? And it went back and forth, back and forth. And so it reached a point where, I think it was September of '78, I was hospitalized. I felt like, well, I had somehow hit a certain bottom in a way, many different ways. I was just in this room for ten or twelve days. I didn't go out of the room. I just felt that whatever I had been railing against (humorless laugh) had run its course, in a way, and now, *now* I wake up and I'm still there. So, now what am I gonna do? And when De Niro came to visit

me – a number of people came – and De Niro pointed out, he just was very concerned ‘cause he said, “Look, you’d be so great at this material, etc., etc., etc., and as he was speaking, I said “OK.” But I still wasn’t quite sure I wanted to make it. I really didn’t know that world. I mean, I knew the world but I didn’t know the ring. I didn’t understand what the ring was and is (Bouzereau 2004).

According to Scorsese’s brutally honest self-assessment, he vacillated for years about the project, alternately agreeing to direct it and then weaseling out of the agreement. While not stated explicitly, it is clearly possible that refusing the call brought on the artistic crisis which landed him in the (mental) hospital and made him at that point what Campbell calls “a victim to be saved,” whom Robert De Niro, the driving force of the project, succeeded in doing.

For Campbell, refusal of the call “is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one’s own interest” (p. 60). Scorsese’s struggle and ultimate embrace of the call becomes “a kind of total strike, or rejection of the offered terms of life, as a result of which some power of transformation carries the problem to a plane of new magnitudes, where it is suddenly and finally resolved” (p. 65). In Burke’s terms, “it is inevitable that all initial feelings undergo some transformation when being converted into the mechanism of art” (1968, p. 54). Just as any conflict increases an audience’s interest in any story, Scorsese’s psychological struggle both heightens the importance of the call and invites the audience to invest in the beginning of the journey.

*Supernatural Aid: Studio Executives as Destiny*

For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure ... who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass. (Campbell, p. 69)

Once the hero has accepted the call, he sets foot on his journey of adventure. In MODs, this corresponds to the need to get the film project funded, which usually means approaching a major motion picture studio and striking a deal. Peter Jackson, after partially developing *The Lord of the Rings* with Miramax but reaching a standstill, went in search of a new studio. According to producer Barrie Osbourne, “Peter trotted off to Hollywood and he went to many of the studios and called upon his old friend Mark Ordesky, who was an executive at New Line [Cinema] and Mark set up a meeting with [CEO] Bob Shaye” (Pellerin, 2002).

*Star Wars* writer/director/producer George Lucas found an ally in Alan Ladd, Jr., an executive at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. Lucas recalls,

He understood what talent was, he respected talent and he was able to say, “I think this guy’s talented. I think we’re gonna invest in him.” So Alan Ladd, Jr. invested in *me*. He did *not* invest in the movie. And it paid off. (Becker & Burns 2004)

Gale Anne Hurd, producer of *The Terminator*, recalls the higher connection that helped that motion picture to be realized: “... we did have one connection to Orion pictures. [Producer] Barbara Boyle and Frances Dole, who’d worked for Roger Corman

at New World Pictures, were both employed by [producer] Mike Metavoy and we slipped the script to them and they *loved* it” (Ling 2001).

In these MODs, the “supernatural aid,” i.e., the help situated in a beneficent agent of power, comes from executives within the system of a major motion picture studio. In traditional mythologies, Campbell maintains that this beneficent agent “represents the benign, protecting power of destiny” (p. 71). Retold and recast in MODs, studio executives recall the roles played by the Greek gods of Mount Olympus whose favors must be curried and whose loyalties are often fickle. Superseding the wills of these gods, “destiny” or fate is a higher force yet. Because these tales are comic romances and not Oedipus’s tragedy, however, the “power of destiny” is always a successful driving force. Nevertheless, the helper cannot do the deed for the hero; the hero must pass the test alone, by his own creative powers.

*The Crossing of the First Threshold: Greenlight*

With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance to the zone of magnified power.... Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe. (Campbell, p. 77-78)

In MOD terms, the “threshold guardian” becomes the executive of a major motion picture studio, the entity which, since the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, functions primarily as a marketing and distribution agency for films (Biskind, 1998). Nevertheless, despite their demise as filmmaking entities, film studios are still the richest source of

financial resources for funding productions. Ultimately, the production company must seek financing for their project, which entails presenting the film idea to studio executives with the power of approval. If the studio is convinced of the profit potential behind the promised film, it will “greenlight” it, meaning that it will negotiate a budget or other financial arrangement to fund production costs.

For out of fashion or previously unheard-of project ideas proposed by relative unknowns with no track record, getting a studio to greenlight a film is extremely difficult. A common refrain in these MODs tells of nearly universal rejection as the project is shopped around to major Hollywood studios before finally being greenlit. For instance, director Peter Jackson and New Line Cinema executive Mark Ordesky had to convince Bob Shaye, one of the CEO’s of the company. A number of *The Lord of the Rings* company members tell this story, beginning with producer Mark Ordesky, who says,

Bob is impossible to read. He’s completely inscrutable ... and you can’t really tell how well you’re doing. So Peter and [co-writer/wife] Fran made the presentation, showed a lot of mockups, showed the tape, played the tape. Lights came up, couldn’t read the situation at all.

Barrie Osbourne continues, “Bob looked at Peter and said, ‘Now Peter, why would anybody in their right mind make two movies?’ Christopher Lee concludes the episode, “Which shattered them both because they didn’t know quite what he meant. He [Shaye] said, ‘This is *three* films.’ Well, thank God for *that* decision” (Pellerin, 2002).

Director Spike Lee’s threshold guardian was producer Marvin Worth, who had already hired director Norman Jewison to direct a film based on the life of civil rights activist Malcolm X. According to Lee’s version of the episode, when he heard of this

decision, he let the industry press know of his desire to direct the film himself. In Lee's words,

Marvin Worth called me up, said "Spike, why are you saying these statements?" and I expressed my feelings. He understood what I was saying and he arranged a meeting between myself and Norman Jewison. And I expressed to both of them why I felt I was the right director for this film. I was very respectful. I liked many of Norman's films but at the same time, to be honest, I felt that *this* one – he should sit this one out.... Norman heard what I said and he graciously bowed out and I was the director for the film. (Leva, 2005)

Difficulty in getting a studio's green light, however, is not always limited to petitioners with short experiential track records, but also to projects that seem inconceivable to the powers that be. George Lucas, even after having produced two box-office smash hits in a row in the first two installments of the Star Wars trilogy, still experienced resistance in trying to get funding for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. As he tells it,

I had to get the film financed. (laughs) Small detail. And the film did get turned down by everybody in town. Nobody would do it because everybody looked at this really gargantuan movie, with lots of action and lots of stuff and I was saying "I think we can do this for twenty million dollars," and everybody was saying, "We don't believe you. We just – that's impossible." But I had talked to Steven [Spielberg] about the fact that we really need to do this like a TV show, like the actual serials were shot, quick and dirty, use old-fashioned tricks, and not spend a lot of time on it and he said, "Great. That's the way I want to make it." And, finally, we got Paramount to say they would do the film. (Bouzereau, 2003)

In traditional mythologies, the hero must prevail *physically* over this threshold guardian. Herakles defeating Cerberus, the three-headed dog at the gates of Hades, is an often-cited example. In the fairy-tale MOD story, the hero must prevail *rhetorically* – making a case for the journey’s true beginning. Spike Lee’s claim, “I was very respectful,” speaks to the racially and rhetorically charged situation of a *black* director petitioning a *green* light from a *white* producer to direct a film about a *black* cultural icon.

The symbol of the “green light” exemplifies Burke’s concept that the artist channels emotions into a symbol: “This symbol becomes a generative force, a relationship to be repeated in varying details, and thus makes one aspect of technical form” (1968, p. 61). “Green light” is both emotionally and logically consistent in the quest tales of MODs as a symbol of the hero’s rhetorical conquest of the threshold’s guardian and the now-open territory to be traveled.

*The Road of Trials: The Many Obstacles of Pre-Production and Production*

Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. ...

The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage. (Campbell, p. 97)

Having successfully accomplished separation from the mundane world, the hero then moves into the second phase of Campbell’s monomyth: the initiation rite of passage. This stage also corresponds to the first section of Frye’s romantic hero cycle, the *agon*.

The *agon*, or conflict, in whatever form it takes, is the heart of any story. The conflict is what keeps an audience's interest above all else; whatever else we like seeing, we like seeing a good fight best of all. It articulates the argument of the story as a discursive text. As Burke has stated, the conflict delineates the opposing forces, the dialectic of the story (1973, p.76).

In this central road of trials section of MODs, the ensemble of heroes, the creative forces of the production company, engage in their major struggle with the forces of chaos. The entrance into the land of trials represents the beginning of a long and truly perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. The opposing chaotic forces can take the form of inclement weather, natural disasters (sometime known as “acts of God”), accidents, random paroxysms of events, or external and internal human conflicts. For Campbell, “Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed – again, and again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land” (p. 109).

Natural disasters plagued the first two films in the *Star Wars* trilogy. While shooting *Star Wars* in Tunisia, the desert location suffered its worst rainstorm in fifty years. Production coordinator Robert Watts recalls seeing the rain pouring sideways across the drenched desert before he called off shooting. When *The Empire Strikes Back* began shooting on a glacier in Norway, that location experienced the worst snowstorm they had endured also in fifty years. One wonders if this was some supernatural message (Becker & Burns, 2004). Filming for *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* was sidetracked to an improvised indoor shooting location in a hotel squash court when Queenstown flooded badly (Pellerin, 2002). An Edsa revolution of 1986 that unseated

Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos erupted as the cast and crew of *Platoon* arrived there (Kiselyak, 2001).

These brief setbacks did not challenge production as much as some others. Francis Ford Coppola remembers the pressure and adversity he endured from not only lack of studio support but outright conflict with them about many of his choices in casting and filming *The Godfather*. According to Coppola, “Generally, making *The Godfather*, the first *Godfather*, was just, like, non-stop anxiety and wondering when I was gonna get fired.” His wife, Eleanor, adds, “We had two kids and I was pregnant with the third and it was kind of a horrifying time because it seemed like at any moment the whole thing would collapse.” Actor Robert Duvall paints a more detailed picture:

During the first few weeks of *Godfather* one, I gained a great deal of respect for him, for what he had to go through, with what Paramount was putting him through with – not a second *unit* director – a second *director* following him around in case he was fired (snap fingers), you’re out, this guy goes right in. And that’s a fact. (Coppola and Werner 1990)

Richard Donner and cast had as much or more difficulty on the set of *Superman*. According to creative consultant Tom Mankiewicz,

Dick never, in the course of the picture, got a budget. He never got a schedule. He was constantly told that he was over schedule, way over budget, but nobody told him what that budget was or how much he was over that budget and at one point he said, “Why don’t you just schedule the rest of the film for two days and I’ll be nine months over?” (Thau, 2001)

In addition to the flack Donner was getting from the producers, the actual demands of filming were extremely punishing. Mankiewicz adds, “The long, grueling shoot was worse on Dick Donner than anybody because as a director you have to be there every day.” Donner confirms,

It was at times very difficult to keep your energy up on this picture. Very difficult to keep *my* energy up and if I didn’t have *my* energy up, it would be really rough because I’d have to bring in a lot of false energy to people that didn’t have it, both actors or crews – and it got to be a bitch. (Thau, 2001)

Actress Margot Kidder relates how she and actor Christopher Reeve not only suffered their fair share of adversity on the set, but also how Donner succeeded in getting her through it,

The most grueling part of it [was], obviously for Christopher and I, the flying scenes which were physically *so* uncomfortable and often downright painful and tedious and take after take after take.... You’d finish your fourteen, fifiteen hour day, the driver’d drive you back to London. That would take an hour. You’d just get 40 winks practically and it was time to get up again and stagger back on the set. The only thing, again, that made them tolerable was knowing that Donner was working twice as hard as you were and getting even less sleep, if that was possible, and keeping you laughing. (Thau, 2001)

Perhaps an even more dramatically related setback is reported on *Other Voices*, the MOD for *The Terminator*. Right when shooting was scheduled to start in the summer of 1983 in Toronto, Canada, after director James Cameron says he had “spent a *significant* amount of time up there identifying locations... chopping our way with a

machete through that red tape,” producer Dino deLaurentis decided to pre-empt Arnold to star in the sequel to *Conan the Barbarian*. According to *Terminator* producer Gale Anne Hurd, “... we had to shift our shooting schedule to spring – March 1984 in Los Angeles.”

Cameron reports,

We wound up in a one year holding pattern, during which I practically starved to death. My mom was sending me coupons in the mail that allowed me to buy two Big Macs for the price of one so that I could survive and then I'd get two and have one one day and have one the next day. Using cost-saving techniques like this, which proved beneficial once we started making the film, I was able to survive long enough to begin production.

Of course, it was the production company's *choice* to hold production until Arnold was back. According to Hurd,

Arnold was so essential to making this film that everyone was willing and quite happy to put the film on hold until March. If it had been another cast person who wasn't as essential to the identity of the film, I don't think we would have waited. (Ling 2001)

Hurd's comment points out that creative will is always involved in the struggle to bring a dream project to fruition and that, consequently, certain difficulties are worth enduring.

The road of trials in these MODs does not always consist of external difficulties; in some cases, the adversity is self-inflicted. *Platoon* director Oliver Stone states this about the agreement made with his actors,

We made clear up front before they left the United States that we were not interested in them working on this film unless they were willing to undergo two

weeks of rehearsal training as light infantry, and that was the condition.

(Kiselyak, 2001)

According to drill instructor and actor Dale Dye, that two-week rehearsal/boot camp experience the cast of *Platoon* suffered “was rigorous. Rugged. Tough. *Designed* that way.” The actors were not only immersed in the culture of the times but followed, according to actor Tom Berenger, “basic infantry and advanced infantry training – things in a two week period that’s ordinarily done in nine, ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen weeks.” The various cast members detailed the adversities. Charlie Sheen recalls, “We didn’t shower, we didn’t bathe, we didn’t have any access to those facilities.” John McGinty elaborates,

You couldn’t shit, so for four or five days you couldn’t take a shit and finally you do and it’s fuckin’ nirvana. My biggest fear was that while you were taking a shit, a cobra was gonna crawl up your ass and eat your colon. (Kiselyak, 2001)

To indicate the extent of the suffering and the parallels to actual military life, Charlie Sheen reports that, since the film was shot sequentially, he was the last actor to leave the Philippines. He told his father, “Dad, I’m gonna kiss the ground at LAX [airport], and I did. I kissed the ground. I didn’t think I was gonna make it outta there alive at one point” (Kiselyak, 2001).

MODs work as *stories* precisely because the conflicts, this road of trials, are dramatized—as both physical journeys and psychological ones. For Campbell, the hero “undertakes for himself the perilous journey into the darkness by descending, either intentionally or unintentionally, into the crooked lanes of his own spiritual labyrinth . . .” (p. 101). More than any single motif, the road of trials works on multiple levels. For the

ensemble of protagonists in MODs, overcoming adversity is a physically and spiritually rigorous labyrinthine trek that works to both humanize and elevate status. By enduring and overcoming the repeated blows of the forces of chaos, the forces that would prevent the project from coalescing and coming into being, the wielders of the creative force succeed in becoming the ensemble of heroes. Through their *suffering* of the obstacles to their worthy goal, they demonstrate their *humanity*, and through their *conquering* of their opposition, they demonstrate their heroic natures. By virtue of these demonstrations on the road of trials, the MOD audience taps into their own dreams and reservoir of story-listening experience and vicariously joins the ensemble of heroes in their labyrinthine journey, living in their minds and hearts the conflict and its successful resolution.

*The Ultimate Boon: The Film's in the Can*

Despite all the obstacles and adversities that the forces of chaos could throw at the production company, the film, in movie-making lingo, is “in the can.” The ensemble of heroes have gained the golden fleece, the “ultimate boon,” in Campbell’s terms, an “elixir of Imperishable Being” (Campbell, pp. 173, 181). They can now begin the journey home of editing the film footage and preparing it for release. In the case of filmmaking, the parallel with imperishability is close. Compared to live performance of any kind, film is a more permanent medium, and the work of filmmakers has the potential of reaching much further into posterity than any live production. Robert Duvall, who played Tom Hagen in *The Godfather* and *The Godfather, Part II*, relates a story illustrating this feeling of permanently capturing a moment of excellent acting:

...in that scene where I had to tell Brando that Sonny’s dead. We’d done one, two, and three takes and I usually like to do one or two and that’s it. But Francis said,

“Maybe – let’s just try another one: take four.” And the others were fine. I would have been satisfied, but take four – boom! was the thing that worked for me, that nobody can take it away from me now that it’s in print, you know, on film.

(Coppola and Werner 1990)

Capturing this fleeting moment of nuanced emotion in facial expression, gesture, and tone of voice, one only subtly but significantly superior to other moments before it, and then capturing countless other fleeting moments like it, becomes the filmic equivalent of capturing the golden fleece. Once the entire collection of these moments – in the form of shots, sequences, and scenes – are captured on film and sound, it is time for the company to begin the journey home. The journey home in this case is post-production, where the raw footage of filming is assembled and combined with music and sound effects to become the final film.

#### *The Magic Flight: Rush to Finish Line*

At this stage, it is the time for the hero “to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society...This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion. (Campbell, pp. 196-7)

In several MODs of this study, post-production becomes a race against time with the deadline in swift pursuit. The term “deadline” conjures the image of a finish line toward which one runs. The image of that deadline pursuing someone, however, recreates the better reality and is one that at least one filmmaker chose to use. Brad Fiedel, composer of the score of *The Terminator*, personifies the deadline as the title character of the film he is scoring. “It’s the feeling of Terminator. You gotta keep going, he’s after us, ... The schedule is after us. The deadline is after us.” Fiedel’s personal flight was indeed

magical since, according to producer Gale Anne Hurd, “he had no time, he had no money, and we were adding shots all the time in post-production as we’d get them in and it didn’t phase him a bit” (Ling, 2001).

*Superman* composer John Williams confirms the intensity of the scoring stage. “The last act went not adagio but super-prestissimo. Very quick, and I do recall that sort of rush to the finish line.” Yes, Williams uses the image of the finish line, but it is the deadline in relentless, ruthless pursuit that prompts the rush to that finish line; the finish line and the deadline are two different things. Director Donner adds, “To deliver the film for Christmas 1978, we were down to the wire.” According to Tom Mankiewicz, “The film was done in... such haste, because we were on such deadlines. We never had a preview. *Superman* was *never* previewed” (Thau, 2001).

Director Martin Scorsese’s drive for excellence – one might venture to say neurotic *perfectionism* – made post-production on *Raging Bull*, according to producer Irwin Winkler, “probably the longest mix that I’ve ever been involved with.” Winkler tells the story this way:

We were on the stage for months and months and months and months. From eight o’clock in the morning to eight o’clock at night, seven days a week. Marty had a trailer pulled up to the back door of the sound stage where he basically slept. And one night I said to Marty, “We’re gonna open Friday in New York and Los Angeles and Toronto and we have to get a print up to Toronto by Thursday to get it shown to the censors up there. So we basically have to finish Sunday night so we can get into a lab.” He said, “Fine.” And I said, “We’re gonna wrap at midnight. That’s gonna be it.” Well, at midnight I said, “OK, Marty, we’re gonna

wrap.” And he said, “Oh, no, no, no. We’re doing the scene in the Copa” and Marty said, “I can’t hear him say Cutty Sark.” And I said, “You’re right. Nobody could hear him. We’ve been here for months and months and months, seven days a week. It’s Sunday night. The guys are falling asleep at the mixing board. I can’t hear anything. You can’t hear anything, but it’s gonna be and that’s it. We’re gonna wrap.” And he got very upset. He said, “Well, in that case, take my name off the film. It’s no longer a Martin Scorsese film.”

The most harrowing tale of a deadline photo finish, however, comes from the post-production phase of *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*. Editor Annie Collins describes it this way: “*Return of the King* was about as close to the wire as you would ever want to go. We actually went beyond the wire.” Weta Digital, the company’s animation studio, was in charge of completing the film’s computer graphics special effects shots. As they would complete the hundreds of shots on their list, they would notice the list had become *longer*! Director Peter Jackson was adding shots to the list by the hundreds. The crew began living at the studio and the odor in the workrooms became pungent with the smell of unwashed animators. Many feared they would never make the deadline.

Ultimately, with all working at a wide-eyed, panicky, feverish pace, the last shot, appropriately illustrating the ring being dissolved in the river of molten metal, was finished. Director Peter Jackson argues,

For some reason, there’s this sort of fear, especially in the studio, that I’m gonna not finish cutting until after the film’s supposed to be released. Therefore it’s gonna be late. But of course I’m not gonna do that because it’s not responsible

filmmaking to do that. You have to deliver your movie on time. But you just have to deliver the movie *just* in time. That's the trick, you see. (Pellerin, 2004).

Executive Music Producer Paul Broucek recounts, "Someone used the analogy that Peter was the pilot on this one and he knew how much fuel he had in his tanks and he landed that baby at the last final minute." One would be hard-pressed to find a better example of a contemporary, technological version of the mythological "magic flight." Producer Rick Porras speculated, "I'm sure there was some guy blowdrying the prints as they were being put into the boxes and shipped out. I mean, it was definitely that tight" (Pellerin, 2004).

In the MODs that feature this mad dash to the finish line, the mythical magic flight, it seems that regardless of the amount of time allotted, the filmmakers always push it to the limit. Both *Star Wars* and *Superman* pushed back their original release dates and still worked right up to the revised deadline. In each case the agenda seemed to be to continue perfecting the film as much as possible until the deadline was upon them. Numerous artists working on *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* repeatedly state that despite the practically unbearable stress of the situation, they all refused to settle for easy solutions and committed themselves to crafting the most excellent film they possibly could before being overtaken by the juggernaut of their deadline. As Peter Jackson concludes, "Nothing's ever perfect. You just run out of time" (Pellerin, 2003).

#### *Rescue from Without: Financial First-Aid*

The hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him.

... This brings us to the final crisis ... the paradoxical, supremely difficult threshold crossing of the hero's return from the mystic realm into the land of common day. Whether rescued from without, driven from within, or gently carried along by the guiding divinities, he has yet to re-enter with his boon...He has yet to confront society with his ego-shattering, life-redeeming elixir, and take the return blow of reasonable queries, hard resentment, and good people at a loss to comprehend. (Campbell, pp. 207, 216)

A poignant and important example of "rescue from without" is told by Spike Lee. Warner Brothers Studio hired a bond company, which, in the words of ex-Warner's executive Lucy Fisher functions as a "watch dog on set." Because of the production company's budget overages, the bond company shut down post-production of *Malcolm X*, firing the entire crew, while editing was still in progress, leaving director Spike Lee scrambling to find a way to finish the film. He turned to African-Americans who, as he puts it, have "bank – disposable income":

And I made the list, but it took something like two weeks before I called anybody. It was a hard thing to do 'cause I was begging. I could not say it was a tax write-off because that would be a lie. I could not say that they'd get participation in the film because there was no participation. All that I asked them for was a gift so that the film that we envisioned could be realized. The first person I called was Bill Cosby. I called Bill up, said, "Bill ..." And he must have heard by the tone of my voice because before I could finish, he said, "Spike, how much you need?" I told him. He said, "Where you want me to send it?" (Leva, 2005)

He continued down his list until all the money needed had been raised. He concludes, “And so it was with those donations from those prominent African Americans that understood the importance of Malcolm X that we were able to continue” (Leva, 2005). When the priceless boon of the golden fleece, the elixir of imperishable being, has been attained and yet the hero is stranded at sea, it is fitting and proper for that hero to call for help and for the world to rescue him.

*Freedom to Live: The Film's Release*

The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he *is*.(Campbell, p. 243)

Most MODs of this study follow their story through to the release of the film, finishing with the reflections of the company members on the response of the audience to the film. This particular motif corresponds closely the third phase of Frye's model of the romance: the recognition of the hero. This segment is the welcome payoff of the rigors and sufferings endured during their road of trials, as necessary to the satisfaction of the MOD's audience as the dénouement, or final “wrap up,” of any story. As the MOD audience suffers with the filmmakers through the obstacles and chaotic forces that almost were the undoing of the film, so they rejoice with the filmmakers when they relive with them the satisfied exuberance they feel in the final episode where the film is completed and delivered to the public.

While not always exalted like the fictional characters of *Star Wars* or *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, the filmmakers (or some of them) nevertheless receive the response of the critics and the general public to the boon they bring on their return. Responses reported by the MOD speakers vary from overwhelming acceptance, to

disappointment, to rejection followed by later praise. The five fantasy films (*Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones*, *Terminator*, and *Superman*) all received great praise from critics and the general public and documentarians allow the speakers on these MODs ample screen time to bask in the glory of their accomplishment. *Superman* director Richard Donner answers the inevitable question about film success with an allusion to the film's title character: "What's the feeling when a film opens and it goes through the roof? You're part of it. You're going right up through the roof with it."

Creative consultant Tom Mankiewicz invokes the creation-as-childbirth metaphor when he puts it this way: "If you're part of something that's successful, then it is kind of your kid and you go and you watch people line up for it" (Thau, 2001). A very special audience was able to rejoice in the success of *Platoon*, and the inclusion of their voice on the MOD made the connection with the MOD audience and the importance of the film resonate even more profoundly. One of the Vietnam veterans who were invited to view a preview of the film expresses his experience of the success of the film and its director in this manner: "When Oliver Stone shines, all Vietnam veterans shine" (Kiselyak, 2001).

Company members reported that *Malcolm X* did not do well at the box office, but that they and director Spike Lee felt a sense of accomplishment in having properly told the activist's story for a new generation. Commentator Reverend Al Sharpton recounts,

Kids that were born after Malcolm's death were going around with "X" hats on. I called Spike one day and said, "You know what? A whole generation will remember Malcolm that didn't even know Malcolm. I'm talking about *my* kids now are talking about Malcolm X and if that was your purpose, you more than achieved it." He said, "That was the purpose." (Leva, 2005)

Film editor Thelma Schoonmaker and producers Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler tell how *Raging Bull* was vehemently rejected by critics and was disappointing at the box office when it opened. But those same critics eventually went on to call it one the best films, if not the best film, of the 1980s.

The effect of time on a finished film is a motif most appropriate to the retrospective nature of the MOD. Just as the bulk of the MOD's story is the process of collaborative creativity over time, the causal sequence of actions that shape the final product, so the dénouement that recounts the legacy of the film on its audience is the story of the effect of time on that film's audience. While becoming an artifact, a fixed finished product, the film – a successful film, especially in this day of low cost replication for home viewing – is a living thing in its relationship to its audience. Future generations who never saw the film in theaters can discover it in their homes and, through repeated viewings, continually receive the boon bestowed by the filmmakers. The fact that a film can be preserved and reproduced in a form closely or exactly resembling its original production makes it, unlike a live theatre performance and like a book, capable of surviving a possibly harsh initial audience and living to find a more welcoming one in the future.

*Categorical Expectations: Telling It Again and Again*

MOD documentarians have succeeded in helping the filmmaking ensemble of heroes sing their rousing victory song around the campfire because they have followed traditional story form. Aristotle, Northrop Frye, Kenneth Burke, and Joseph Campbell have provided theories – tripartite sequences of actions, thematic ingredients, story motifs – to give entrance to the common structural underpinnings that MODs share with classic

fairy tales, romances, legends, and myths. The best MOD story forms all used Aristotle's beginning, middle, and end; Frye's agon (conflict), pathos (death-struggle), and anagnorisis (discovery); Burke's dramatic/dialectical conflict and cooperative competition; Campbell's monomyth and nine hero tale motifs.

Campbell's nine motifs divided evenly into the three part structures. The beginning, leaving home: call to adventure (film project conception), refusal of the call (optional), and supernatural aid (studio executive help); the middle (away from home): crossing the threshold (greenlight), road of trials (the agon-struggle of both Frye and Burke; adversity of production), attaining the ultimate boon (film's in the can); the end (the return home): magic flight (Frye's pathos, or death-struggle, post-production race to meet the deadline to deliver the film), rescue (if necessary), freedom to live (Frye's anagnorisis, or discovery; film is released and heroes exalted).

Much has been said about the emotional appeal of the story form in MODs. But someone might ask what that has to do with a serious study about collaborative creativity. Why is audience appeal – the emotional pleasure viewers take in experiencing a story – important to analyzing facts about this phenomenon? In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud (1961) writes

... if a child has been told a nice story, he will insist on hearing it over and over again rather than a new one; and he will remorselessly stipulate that the repetition shall be an identical one and will correct any alterations of which the narrator may be guilty – though they may actually have been made in the hope of gaining fresh approval. (p. 29)

Although adults are not so monomaniacally insistent as children in having the exact same story repeated in exactly the same version, Kenneth Burke (1968) does point out that audiences have certain “categorical expectations” that the storyteller must meet, that “the human mind is prone to feel beginnings and endings *as such*” (p. 138). Audiences expect and need traditional story forms to give *order* to the information that the story contains. These beginnings and ends that they are “prone to feel” allow them to organize the characters, events, and themes in a way that makes sense to them. As an essential aesthetic dimension, story form provides logical understanding *through feeling*. Like a child’s need to hear a story over and over exactly as he or she heard it before, an adult audience needs to feel the basic forms they have come to expect from all the previous stories they have heard, basic forms explicitly articulated by Aristotle, Frye, Burke, and Campbell.

### MODs as Creation Myths

This chapter has argued that the structure of MODs fulfill functions of the romance (successful hero quest) and the comedy (ensemble of heroes, happy ending) to organize the experiences and expectations of the audience. But what of the third ingredient in the narrative structure of this unique dramatic hybrid: the creation myth? At first glance, it might seem out of place to mingle creation stories with the dramatic vicissitudes of mythic hero quests and comedies. After all, creation myths usually involve one or more deities working their magic effortlessly in time ahistorical and space unearthly. The Judeo-Christian deity speaks and the formless void separates into heaven and earth, light appears, and in succession, all forms of life come into being on the planet. In the ancient Greek myth, Mother Earth (Gaia) and Father Sky (Uranos) mate, begetting

the first living beings, the Titans. Nevertheless, MODs are stories of the creation of things, feature length narrative motion pictures, and as such, clearly bear at least a superficial relation to creation myths.

Philosopher and historian of religion Mircea Eliade defines myth in a way that emphasizes and deepens this relation:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the “beginnings.” In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a “creation”; it relates how something was produced, began to be. (1963, pp. 5-6)

It does not immediately follow that if all myths are accounts of a “creation,” then all accounts of a creation are myths. However, because MODs are creation stories, albeit ones where the creators are human and the scene of the creation is in recognizable time and space, they can easily be seen to reflect, at least in part, the significance of creation myths that feature supernatural beings in primordial space-time, much as the moon reflects the light of the sun. MODs, like creation myths, begin “in the beginning,” before the existence of something that has come to be because of the actions taken narrated in the story. These factual accounts of the making of specific not general, local not universal, human not divine, collective not solo creations of motion pictures serve as vital origin myths for the culture or “tribe” to which they are addressed: cinephiles and technophiles. Lovers of film and of technology (or any student of how things are made)

may look to MODs as texts that inspire their devotion to film, motivate their desire to create, and create in them a vicarious experience of creativity upon each viewing.

As Eliade further claims, “Every mythical account of the *origin* of anything presupposes and continues the cosmogony. From the structural point of view, origin myths can be homologized with the cosmogonic myth” (1963, p. 21, original emphasis). The word *cosmogony*, meaning a myth of how the universe came to be, derives from the Greek word *kosmos*, order. Creation is the act of ordering and structuring. The creative force embodied in the ensemble of heroes, by virtue of their minds and hands, working in cooperation – sometimes harmonious, sometimes competitive – and fighting the adversary of chaos, harnesses the tributary streams of past creations, current technologies, and future visions to coalesce and shape an orderly, original thing. By this fact as well, MODs reflect primordial creation myths. Eliade postulates more specifically:

The cosmogony is the exemplary model for every kind of “doing”: not only because the Cosmos is at once the ideal archetype for every creative situation and of every creation but also because the Cosmos is a divine work; hence it is sanctified even in its structure. By extension, whatever is perfect, “full,” harmonious, fertile – in short, whatever is “cosmicized,” whatever resembles a Cosmos – is sacred. To do something well, to work, construct, create, structure, give form, in-form, form – all this comes down to bringing something into existence, giving it “life,” and, in the last analysis, making it like the pre-eminently harmonious organism, the Cosmos. (1963, pp. 32-33)

In this profoundly meaningful sense, then, MODs, as stories of finite human creations, symbolically reenact the original act of creation: the cosmogony. Beyond this,

as stories of the creation of other stories (the narrative fictional films they document), MODs invoke the cosmogony twice over: the fiction film is “cosmicized” by the filmmakers as the making of the fiction film is cosmicized by the MOD documentarians.

In other words, the fiction filmmakers create “the world of the film,” its own special “universe,” and the MOD documentarians make a cohesive, entertaining, artistic video account of how that fictional universe was made. The MOD, however, explicitly invokes the cosmogony even further because of its specific creation story form. Because of this, MODs answer a need in the audience far beyond those four more immediate appeals mentioned in the previous chapter: great storytelling, behind-the-scenes privileged access to the film’s story world, movie making magic secrets, and traditional documentary form.

In narrating and dramatizing a new creation, that is, in fashioning the factual events of the creation of a film into an appealing, entertaining, dramatically structured, documentary work of art, every MOD symbolically and ritually repeats and re-actualizes the cosmogony. In other words, the MOD itself is a *ritual*, as is any work of art where a community participates through it in the shared values that undergird their world view; and the ritual of the MOD is one that perpetuates the myth of creation. Joseph Campbell (1972) summarizes the relation of myth to ritual thus: “Myths are the mental supports of rites; rites, the physical enactments of myths” (p. 45). As symbolic dramatizations of a local and finite myth of creation, MODs function as rites of the creative cycle, as concrete examples of a process related to all other creation sagas and ultimately to the first creation of the Cosmos itself through the classic law of correspondences. This law of correspondences, according to poet and aesthetic theorist Juan Circlot (1962), in his A

*Dictionary of Symbols*, states that “Nothing is meaningless or neutral: everything is significant”; that “Nothing is independent, everything is in some way related to something else”; that “Everything is serial”; and that “Series are related one to another as to position, and the components of each series are related as to meaning” (p. xxxvi).

In other words, meaning itself is the result of correspondence, of relation through similarity and connection. Audiences, through the act of viewing MODs attentively, symbolically participate in its ritual of creation by close identification with the people and events of these verbally and visually enacted dramas. Following this symbolic, ritualistic participation, these tales are then available to them as resources for storying and experiencing creativity, as templates for the dynamics of collaboration, as exhortatory sagas in the positive, and, most importantly, as a mythos that recalls and reactivates the original creation story.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Parlor Conversations:

#### Collaborative Creativity Constituted in History

Albert Einstein purportedly said, “The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources.” The same might be said for hiding your *resources*, especially those in the form of collaborators. Einstein clearly didn’t deal with production departments, craft unions, or writer’s guilds vying for space on the credit crawl at the end of contemporary films. In “Who Was That Food Stylist? Film Credits Roll On,” *New York Times* writer Randy Kennedy (2004) laments the length of credits, the hundreds of names, and “completely inscrutable titles like ‘wrangler manager’ and ‘compositing inferno artist’” that have now added up to ten minutes to the length of feature films. The set masseuse, helicopter pilots, horse trainers, and “the guy that unfolds the craft table” at lunch are “immortalized” in film credits.

As historical records, film credits serve as necessary raw data for any account of how a film was made. But as Hayden White observes, “histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles” (1986, p. 397). For Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, “From the materials of the simple chronicle, as a series of events, a set of facts, the historian provides explanations only by providing formal coherence: the story, that is to say, is never simply there in facts but must be

created” (1986, p. 394). MODs are histories: they story the “facts,” uncover the sources, credit the resources, and, recalling Einstein, can offer some “secrets to creativity.”

If the story told in the previous chapter was a choral monologue sung around the campfire, the formulaic victory song of the successful quest of an ensemble of heroes, then this chapter is an “unending conversation” among speakers in a made-for-video parlor. History itself is the dramatic material for this conversation: the speakers reveal their knowledge of the history of their craft and align themselves with historical “giants” and practices in filmmaking; they justify their present choices in terms of embracing or rejecting historical precedents in filmmaking, revealing a set of attitudes toward film history; and, together, they create a community of consent that evaluates the importance of film history to their own work. Over and over, these speakers readily admit that they do not create alone, that they are nourished by influences. These stories offer a more complex – and possibly a more nuanced and accountable – story of creative processes and collaborations than previous accounts of creative activity. More importantly, storying attribution recalls and enacts history, placing the complex of creative acts in a literal historical moment.

On a figurative level, these same stories constitute an “unending conversation” about collaborative creativity itself. MODs as historical narratives “are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements . . . Viewed in a purely formal way, a historical narrative is not only a *reproduction* of the events reported in it, but also a *complex of symbols* which give us directions . . .” (White 1986, p. 400). When Kenneth Burke argues in *Attitudes Toward History* that his emphasis is on *attitudes*, rather than history, he explains history as “man’s life in political communities” and the

book's focus on "characteristic responses of people in their forming and reforming of congregations." Communities and congregations open the door for how these MOD narratives construct, not just the history of film, but attitudes toward collaboration in creative work.

In this chapter, I argue that filmmakers both commemorate and renovate the creative history of filmmaking by collectively storying creativity as a conversation between past innovation and present renovation. Filmmakers commemorate and renovate creative history both practically and rhetorically. They *commemorate* creative history *practically* by first incorporating past elements of film history into current work, and then *rhetorically* by praising and acknowledging the sources of those elements in their stories. Filmmakers *renovate* creative history *practically* by first adapting past film elements to the context of their current work, and then *rhetorically* by detailing those changes in their stories. These stories, then, edited into "conversations" among collaborators, place the tellers and their films in the lineage of motion picture history by looking back to the past and ahead to the future through their storying in the present. As well, these stories enrich theoretical accounts of creativity by demonstrating the dialectical tension of old and new, by articulating their *attitudes* toward the past as a constant set of resources for the present, and by adding the evaluation of creativity as "making history."

In the first section, I introduce the theoretical frames for engaging history as a literal and figurative concept for MODs and creativity. Then I move to analyze the discourses of the MODs that shape creative history as tribute, presenting filmmakers as fans, their work as homage, and the films that inspired them as templates for their own work. The third section addresses history as a creative resource for languaging

filmmakers' attitudes about collaboration itself. I devote the fourth section to the phenomenon of present filmmakers making history, focusing on their creations' legacies, and the interplay of creativity theory with the concept of "making" history.

"Storying" History, Participating in Its "Unending Conversation,"  
and Constituting Creativity

Historian Hayden White and polymath Kenneth Burke provide the theoretical frames for engaging the discourses of MODs as salient and revelatory accounts of collaborative creativity in historical moments. In "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," Hayden White (1986) radically departed from conventional wisdom in historiography when he argued that history is *story*. For White,

One of the marks of a good professional historian is the consistency with which he reminds his readers of the purely provisional nature of his characterizations of events, agents, and agencies found in the always incomplete historical record. . . . But in general there has been a reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented as found* . . . (p. 396, original emphasis)

White argues that traditional literary modes – tragedy, comedy, romance, and satire, to name a few – structure all histories by an operation he calls "emplotment": . . . "the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as specific *kinds* of plot structures" (1986, p. 397, original emphasis). In other words, the bare "facts" of the chronicle (the list of events in chronological order) are endowed with values and meanings as soon as they are arranged in accord with any of these "pregeneric plot structures." White claims,

“the encodation of events in terms of such plot structures is one of the ways that a culture has of making sense of both personal and public pasts” (p. 398).

MODs are film history, highly constructed “verbal fictions” that weave personal anecdotes and accounts into a cohesive version of the overall narrative, enhanced with visuals to illustrate the words. The way in which filmmakers relate themselves to their predecessors, asserting their place in the historical line of filmic creation, is as much a form of emplotment as that employed by the documentarians who edit the interviews. Moreover, as these filmmakers make sense of “both personal and public pasts,” they invite us, a general public audience, to share their values and meanings.

As the analysis in this chapter will show, filmmakers in the MODs I studied went to great lengths to acknowledge and offer credit to their historical predecessors and their contemporary collaborators. In other words, the *literal* discourse of the MOD speakers, appearing somewhat as a conversation via video editing, reenacts and historicizes the *figurative* “conversation” of all the cumulative collaborative creative acts that have made filmmaking what it is today.

Kenneth Burke’s often-quoted metaphor of the “unending conversation” is dramatized in MODs as an important account of historical moments in which collaborative creativity is storied in dramatic and compelling fashion. In its original context, Burke uses this metaphor to illustrate his view of history as “a ‘dramatic’ process, involving dialectical oppositions” (1973, p. 109). This unending conversation, which one enters necessarily ignorant of its originating premises, provides the materials for the drama:

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (1973, pp. 110-1)

In this study, the dramatic materials are both the visual and verbal enactments inscribed on MOD video, which, in turn, tell the history of creative acts accumulated throughout the decades of filmmaking. Burke asserts that “every document bequeathed to us by history must be treated as a *strategy for encompassing a situation*,” and that we must not consider, for example, a document like the American Constitution “in isolation, but as the *answer or rejoinder* to assertions current in the situation in which it arose” (1973, p. 109, emphasis in original).

During the actual historical events of making their films, collaborative filmmakers enter an ongoing “conversation” of creative acts that has been engaged at least since the invention of the motion picture camera. In filmmaking, each creative act, emerging as it

does from a dialectic crucible of past resources encountering present needs, depends on the dynamic ideational, verbal, and manual interaction of its co-creators to give it life. The discourse of MOD speakers answers current assertions about the nature, role, method, and motive of making their films and, by extension, about creative processes in general. The speakers in the MODs tell stories that are helpful and rich accounts of creativity itself, recalling the concepts introduced in chapter one. Gordon's definition of creativity as the "synectic ('joining together') process," involves both "making the familiar strange" and "making the strange familiar" (1961, p. 33). As physicist David Böhm points out, "creativity ... is always founded on the sensitive perception of what is new and different from what is inferred from previous knowledge" (1998, p. 6). As the new creation becomes more accepted and incorporated in the existing heritage of knowledge, its strangeness becomes familiar.

This sequence of emergence and acceptance is articulated in Howard Gardner's definition of the creative individual as one "who regularly solves problems, fashions products, or defines new questions in a domain in a way that is initially considered novel but that ultimately becomes accepted in a particular cultural setting" (1993, p. 35). This progression nicely represents creativity's progression in history: past/old creation prepares the way for the emergence of present/new creation, which it then incorporates into itself. The formerly present/new creation (now part of the past/old creation) then prepares the way for the emergence of the next new creation and the cycle repeats itself ad infinitum.

Amabile's (1996) consensual definition of creativity states, "A product or response is creative to the extent that appropriate observers independently agree it is

creative. Appropriate observers are those familiar with the domain in which the product was created or the response articulated” (p. 33). In short, creativity is always evaluated by how successfully a product sets itself apart from past work, while still retaining a meaningful connection with it. In this sense, the historical heritage of past creation serves as the foundation and background which supports and foregrounds new creation and its evaluation.

Like Sir Isaac Newton claimed to do with his predecessors, film artists, as collaborative creators, “stand on the shoulders” of the past giants of the industry. As well, those creators stand *shoulder to shoulder* with their contemporary colleagues, volleying ideas and actions back and forth in a progressive stream of evolving mental imagery and physical artifacts toward an envisioned final form. As contemporary filmmakers draw from the creative resources of past filmmakers, so their creations, including their MOD “conversations” in which they story their creative acts within the dramatic background of their predecessors’ creative acts, will serve as resources for future filmmakers.

#### Collaborating with History:

##### Influence and Tribute as Commemoration and Renovation

The etymology of the word “influence” paints a vivid picture of the collaborative view of creativity. Derived from the Latin word for “a flowing in,” the word “influence” suggests the image of smaller, tributary streams flowing into a river, which in turn eventually flows into the ocean. Acknowledging past influences testifies that one is nourished by the contributions of others who preceded one in history and that one carries the synthesis of their contributions further downstream to other destinations. The tribute

theme, flowing into distributions and contributions, into donations and sharings, has its source in the word “influence.”

The cognate word “tribute” simultaneously reveals that the concept of attribution is also an economic metaphor. To attribute a quality or action to another is to credit that person, to bestow upon them that which they formerly lacked or was formerly unacknowledged. Thus, the attributions of creative participation that can be traced in the texts of these MODs constitute a treasury of weighted linguistic transactions between members of each different production company.

Filmmakers in these MODs have been quick, and even proud, to identify their past influences. Filmmaking is *explicitly* collaborative in that a film cannot be made by one person alone. When speakers eulogize the films and filmmakers who have preceded them, they reveal the *implicit* collaboration provided by past creations and their place in the artistic film heritage that prepared the way for their work. In Burke’s “unending conversation,” filmmakers drop their oars in the parlor by adopting three roles in the dramatic conversation with film history. 1) They speak as adoring fans worshipping past filmmaking luminaries; 2) as film critics, enlightened through their own practical filmmaking experience; 3) and as memorialists paying homage to and finding templates in past styles, motifs, and moments.

These MOD stories, then, are the vivid accounts of how specific elements of past creative works nourished and inspired their own productions. The rhetorically created roles—fans, critics, and memorialists – are bridges that enable the speakers to cross film history, creativity theory, and audiences.

*Fandom: Blown Away*

Filmmaking's history is prominently dramatized when accomplished filmmakers regress to childlike hero worship as they speak in glowing terms about the great talents that preceded and inspired them. Director Steven Spielberg together with *Malcolm X* director and cinematographer Spike Lee and Ernest Dickerson all linguistically bow to legendary director David Lean when they acknowledge his influence on their films.

About *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, Spielberg gushes,

We built a village in Sri Lanka just outside of a small town call Kandi, right in the area where David Lean shot many scenes from *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. I'm such a film fanatic for certain kinds of movies that I just wanted to go *near* where he shot his great epic. (Bouzereau 2003)

Elevating his fanaticism into the language of religious worship through pilgrimage (appropriately enough), Spielberg, commenting on *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, again testifies to his awe of the British director thus:

Well, it was great to shoot in Jordan. David Lean had shot *Lawrence of Arabia* in Jordan ... and even though we couldn't, like we did in *Temple of Doom*, walk in Sir David's footsteps, we were able to shoot at Petra... (Bouzereau 2003)

*Malcolm X*'s Lee and Dickerson, specifically describe Lean's stylistic influence on their approach to filming their historical biopic. Dickerson relates,

When Spike and I were first discussing the photography of the film, the restored version of *Lawrence of Arabia* was released. And I remember we went to see it at the Zeigfeld and we were totally blown away, but what blew *me* away wasn't the landscapes. What blew me away were the close-ups. Lawrence's close-ups. You

felt like he was right there in front of you and that's what we wanted to do with Malcolm. (Leva, 2005)

Lee iterates their motive:

It was intended for the opening shot of the film to be big. We had to really instill in the audiences that this was a big movie. This is not no Okie-doke roody-poop stuff. This is some David Lean shit here. (laughs) Or, this is what we aspire to be. (Leva, 2005)

Director Peter Jackson situates himself historically when he acknowledges a technique his animation department inherited from a past film giant. Describing the technique of *rotoscoping* used to create the character of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Jackson gives the nod to Walt Disney:

This is not a new technique, I mean, this has been around since *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Disney often shot live-action performers and then had his animators basically use them as a reference. All the high-tech stuff and the motion capture and everything else that's surrounding us [notwithstanding], just that simple live-action stuff that Disney found so helpful fifty, sixty years ago, was also a really great way to go for us. (Pellerin 2003)

Jackson correctly positions his and his teams' place in the creative line downstream of the originators.

This awareness of creative heredity is a common refrain among MOD speakers. Francis Ford Coppola credits a succession of historical influences as inspiration for how he chose to film Sonny's assassination in *The Godfather*:

For me, the tollbooth scene is inspired by Dean Tavoularis and Arthur Penn's work in *Bonnie and Clyde*. [Akira] Kurosawa is the father of all violence in modern movies, Kurosawa via Arthur Penn in *Bonnie and Clyde*, and Sam Peckinpah. So there is a certain way to treat violence, this more gory way that really comes ultimately from Shakespeare. (Coppola and Werner 1990)

The chain of history can only continue if each generation is receptive to the past. Kenneth Burke posits the concept of "frames of acceptance," by which he means "the more or less organized system of meanings" by which an intelligent person "gauges the historical situation and adopts a role with relation to it" (1959, p. 5). When filmmakers like Spielberg and Dickerson willingly and instantly adopt the role of film fanatics, worshipping David Lean in gushed or hushed tones, they accomplish two things.

First, they open within themselves a Walt Whitmanesque total "frame of acceptance," a heightened reception and perception of their deified predecessor that motivates and guides their commemoration of him in their own work. Second, assuming the role of the fan aids in the rhetorical reception of the MOD audience by allowing them a means of identification with the filmmakers. The MOD audience then sees a sort of mirror image of their exalted ones exalting yet other great ones. Thus by assuming the role of fans, filmmakers in a sense serve as a bridge to connect their predecessors with their fans.

#### *Templates: Frame for Frame*

Not only do filmmakers position themselves as fans in acknowledging past influences, the stories told also demonstrate how the past becomes a template for current creativity. George Lucas used vintage film footage to guide the crew at his fledgling

special effects company, Industrial Light and Magic, in completing the starship battle sequences of *Star Wars*. According to the narrator of *Empire of Dreams*, “Lucas spliced together aerial dogfights from old war movies.” ILM visual effects artist Ken Ralston elaborates,

... and we matched frame to frame in the action there as close as we could. And it was hugely helpful. To describe that abstract world of battle is impossible.

Storyboards don't do it as far as the pacing, the rhythms that he needed. That was a great thing. (Becker & Burns 2004)

In this instance, the relationship of new to old is much closer than in the previous examples. If the visual effects artists matched the action “frame to frame” to old war movies, the starship fighter sequences in *Star Wars* could almost be said to have been formally and rhythmically “cloned” from their predecessors. The innovation came with the application and adaptation of the movements and camera angles of those old war films to the starship scenes. Ironically, it would be for these very scenes, so vitally indebted to past filmmakers, that George Lucas would be touted as revolutionarily innovative.

Lucas seems the most able to parlay his adoration of all manner of classic films into new variations. Whether it's the echo of the female robot from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in the Star Wars character, C3-PO, or the engravings of C3-PO and R2-D2 on the inner pyramid walls in the Lucas-produced *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, his films perhaps contain the most motifs commemorated and renovated from the past.

Two different stunts from *Raiders* were designed to mimic closely the stunts from previous movies. The first was intended to be an exact copy of a move from a old movie

serial and the other was an updated version of a stunt from a classic western. Of the first, Lucas informs the documentary audience that the source of his inspiration for the stunt was a shot “that was repeated several times in several different Republic serials of a guy on a horse jumping onto a truck. So we did that stunt – that exact same stunt – and built a whole sequence off of it.”

The second stunt was the idea of stuntman Terry Leonard, who, according to director Steven Spielberg, “was actually copying [legendary stunt performer] Yakima Canutt, the famous stunt in *Stagecoach* where he went under all the horses and the covered wagon.” At Leonard’s request, Spielberg updated that stunt for the film so that it could be performed under the truck in a way similar to how it had been done originally under the horses and wagon.

These particular motifs were lovingly appropriated from their original sources by the filmmakers – who were thrilled by them as children attending Saturday matinee movies – and imitated as an acknowledgement of their excellence. Spielberg specifically refers to the spike room scene that he contributed to *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* as “flagrant homage, so to speak, to those old Republic serials” (Bouzereau, 2003).

Film motifs are not the only ones to be commemorated; older art forms and past film icons appear in commemorated and renovated form in films made by these MOD speakers. In *The Godfather, Part III* writer/director Francis Coppola incorporates a performance of an Italian opera into the film and even draws a motif from that opera into one of the story’s subplots. He identifies his inspiration thus:

When I was a kid, my dad conducted a production of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. I used to go a lot with my father and sometimes he would let me sit in the orchestra pit

next to him. I remember four or five things just impressed me so much. One was the idea that these men had an argument and one bit the other's ear and drew blood and that that was a Sicilian way to do a duel and it meant that it would be a duel to the death. (Coppola and Werner 1990)

Coppola's ability to apply this ear-biting motif in the more contemporary setting of his film's narrative demonstrates how he commemorated and renovated a past creation in his present creation.

As well as the more blatantly visible echoes of past motifs, more subtle ones also find their way into new works. Christopher Reeve confesses that he "stole from Cary Grant" to create his bumbling version of Clark Kent (Thau, 2001). Phil Tippett, Stop-Motion Animator on *Return of the Jedi*, tasked with designing intergalactic gangster Jabba the Hutt, reports that, "George [Lucas] said, 'I need something that's alien and grotesque – that's like Sidney Greenstreet.'" Tippett adds that "at one point I did put a fez on one of the [model] characters like Sidney Greenstreet" (Becker & Burns, 2004).

While filmmakers clearly reference and commemorate motifs from past films, it is important to note that the tribute intentionally is never exact; in order to adapt the motif to their new work and thereby mark the filmmakers' place in the historical line, the motif is renovated by mixing in additional elements, or altering or rearranging ones already present. The film version of Jabba the Hutt eventually became, in animator Tippett's words, "this big, slug-like thing that is just this pulsating mass of flesh," losing any obvious resemblance to the Sidney Greenstreet model from which it grew (Becker & Burns, 2004).

In the case of Indiana Jones, his character is changed but still recognizable: George Lucas's intention was to base the hero on the classic Saturday afternoon action-adventure hero but "never quite up to what he was supposed to be, what the old, classic Republic serial hero was" (Bouzereau, 2003). In a different move, Lucas created his *Star Wars* saga by combining 1930's space operas like *Flash Gordon* with themes gleaned from the writing of Joseph Campbell on comparative mythology and world religions (Becker & Burns, 2004).

Oliver Stone translated much of his personal experience as a foot soldier in Vietnam into the screenplay of *Platoon*, although he took liberties in altering the characters that inspired it by combining traits from a number of characters into a single character in one case and entirely reversing one character's personality in another (Kiselyak, 2001).

Robert Altman and Frank Barhydt scrambled and combined a collection of Raymond Carver short stories to make the screenplay of *Short Cuts*. "I look at all of Carver's work as one story," says Altman. The random method of assembling the stories was, as Altman describes it, "Like you shot a shotgun out into the air and everywhere a BB fell, you said, 'OK, I'll use that story and that story and that story.'" In order to give the film his more personal stamp, Altman also chose to set the scenes in Los Angeles rather than Carver's Pacific Northwest.

Carver's widow, Tess Gallagher, who gave permission for the material to be licensed and also served as consultant on the film, offers her unique perspective on this type of personal touch, or commemoration with renovation:

I was relieved when he translated the stories to L.A. because I knew he would be adding himself, adding his own vision to the stories and that it wouldn't be just Ray. Now, somebody else might say, "Shouldn't you protect the originating setting of those stories?" I don't think so. I think that when you have essentially two geniuses coming together, there ought to be evidence of contributions from each of them coming together and making something new and that's what really excited me. And I thought also it will get Ray's stories out of that cliché of just simply the trailer court milieu. It wasn't just working class lives he was dealing with. It was middle America. It wasn't just the working poor, it was people in suburbia. And so this is very fortunate. (Kaplan & Dorr 1993).

Filmmakers commemorate the past creations of others as a tribute and homage to artists and works that have inspired them. In paying artistic tribute, they necessarily renovate the work by adding their interpretation to it, condensing and adapting the work in order to create novelty. In the words of Tolkein scholar Tom Shippey, quoted on *The Lord of the Rings: The Appendices Part Five*, "Now we have two roads to Middle Earth, two roads into the map – Tolkein himself and Tolkein as interpreted by Jackson."

Director Peter Jackson shares that credit with his production team when he speculates,

I hope that what we have done is certainly in keeping with the spirit of Tolkein and one of the dreams, I guess, is that, if he was in a position to be able to see these films, that he would be happy with what we have added and what we've changed and what we've simplified – well, he probably wouldn't be happy with what we've simplified – but I hope he would at least have some sense of delight

in the fact that this mythology that he set out to create is now taking on a life separate to him. (Pellerin, 2004)

In all of these examples, the filmmakers openly acknowledge their influential sources, perhaps because they not only pay deliberate tribute to them but also because they recognize and accept that current works *must* somehow commemorate past works, since no work can be *entirely* new. As the poet Paul Valéry claims in his “Letter About Mallarme,”

what a man does either repeats or refutes what someone else has done – repeats it in other tones, refines or amplifies or simplifies it, loads or overloads it with meaning; or else rebuts, overturns, destroys and denies it, but thereby assumes it and has invisibly used it. (1972, p. 241)

Thus, throughout the history of artistic creation, memory is piled upon memory, each being repeatedly inscribed with variation such that any new work becomes to the discerning and educated eye like a layered palimpsest, through which the history of all works that have preceded and influenced it are visible. These new works, containing commemorated past works which their creators are confident of having sufficiently renovated, in turn become available resources to be commemorated and renovated in future works.

#### History as Creative Resource:

##### Attitudes toward Collaborative Creativity

While directors pay specific tribute to past films as they turn the old to new, the discourses of MODs also demonstrate that filmmakers employ history as a resource in the present. In these MODs, history becomes a resource in three distinct ways: to justify

present activities, to reject past ways of doing, and to portray film artists and technicians as more than drones or machines. Echoes of Burke's comments on his book title, *Attitudes Toward History*, offer important perspectives here. Burke "renames" the book in ways relevant to how history is employed as a resource in the stories told in MODs: "Attitudes Toward the Incessant Intermingling of Conservatism and Progress" speaks to the movement from old to new and back again in both filmmakers stories and creativity theory.

Two further suggestions, "Statements of Policy on Problems of Organizational Behavior" and "Manual of Terms for a Public Relations Counsel with a Heart," are fun characterizations of how collaborative creativity emerges in the MOD accounts of working together in light of past ways of doing. These accounts emerge as a constant set of embraces (counsel with a heart) and refusals (problems of behavior). They embrace division of labor, embrace old fashioned guild methods of production, and embrace the talents of their fellow artists. They refuse to take sole authorial credit, refuse to separate craft from artistry, and refuse to fall into mechanistic metaphors for the work. In both embraces and refusals, then, these artists emphasize the synergistic potential for emergent creativity as collaborative and as a set of attitudes toward collaboration itself.

A physical attitude denotes a position taken by the body, a stance situating oneself within an environment and in relation to others in that environment. By extension, an attitude also refers to an orientation of the mind in relation to a social situation. Burke describes the attitude shaping process thus:

Our philosophers, poets, and scientists act in the code of names by which they simplify or interpret reality. These names shape our relations with our fellows.

They prepare us *for* some functions and *against* others, *for* or *against* the persons representing these functions.” (1959, p. 4, original emphasis)

The vocabulary MOD speakers use symbolically acts to embrace or refuse the situations in which they work with one another. Specifically, MOD speakers reveal their attitudes to one another by their verbal *identifications*. They praise their collaborators and the coordination they achieve with them as they cooperate on the making of the film. They assimilate themselves into an ensemble by forsaking their own names and assuming the choral pronoun “we” when speaking of their work. They separate themselves from “old school” technicians and associate themselves with menial workers who might not otherwise have “the least chance” of collaborating creatively on a film. The words these filmmakers choose to tell their stories situate them within the context of their co-workers and reveal their dispositions and their positions – “where they stand” – in the total picture of the project. From these identifications, these associations and separations, these characterizations and designations, they reveal their standings for or against the various functions of the filmmaking process, the people representing these functions, and thereby reveal the tenor of their attitudes toward the history of filmmaking.

While all MODs in this study are retrospective, most having been made in the past few years, only the fictional narrative film of *The Lord of the Rings* is of this millenium. Most of these MODs document films of the 1970s and 1980s and speakers continually compare the way films were made then to the way they are made now, especially with the advent of computer technology. Before computers altered the creative landscape of filmmaking, techniques developed and tested down through filmmaking history were adopted for contemporary projects. Steven Spielberg, speaking of his work

on the *Indiana Jones* trilogy of the 1980s, values the collaboration of collective creativity and conjures historical images of guild work as his vital influences when he says,

I like movies that are all about craft and collaboration. Films that rely on the best of all departments: the best plasterers, the best electricians, the best painters, the best special effects experts, the best property masters. When it all comes together and you don't do it in the computer – and I'm not being Luddite when I say this – but when you're really having to rely on all the different departments just like old Hollywood used to do and Old England used to do to realize the director and the producer and the writer's vision and the actor's vision. That's good old-fashioned movie-making and I *love* that. (Bouzereau, 2003)

Spielberg, by crediting creative “vision” to the producer, writer, and actor, celebrates the practical cooperative system of guild work.

While the guild concept conjures idyllic images of happy craft workers harmoniously collaborating, the cold reality of unions in the history of old Hollywood and old British production tells of a system that compartmentalizes, institutionalizes, and regulates labor often ineffectively and inefficiently. Producer Gary Kurtz tells a story exemplifying this of director George Lucas's encounter with a British technical union man while filming *Star Wars* in London:

Gil Taylor was a very old school cameraman, very crotchety. George, coming out of low-budget filmmaking, was used to doing a lot of things himself. So George would say things like, “Put a light here,” and Gil took offense at that kind of thing. He says, “That's not your job, son. You tell me what you want to see and

I'll do it the way I think is best to create what you want to see." It was a clash of style of working. (Becker & Burns, 2004)

More than just a clash of working styles, this rigid adherence to union rules impedes the spontaneity that flows freely when team members willingly cooperate with each other. Industrial Light and Magic – the company George Lucas created to design, build, and film the special visual effects on *Star Wars* – necessarily rejected the strictures of union labor as obsolete. According to visual effects supervisor Dennis Muren,

Everybody sort of cross-trained and worked in different techniques. That was different than the Hollywood system that had very strict sort of union rules. But there was no way that this work could be done that way or no way the Hollywood unions could understand what we were doing. (Becker & Burns, 2004)

Refusing to do things the old Hollywood way was not as much an act of rebellion as a recognition of a way of working that would not have allowed the film they envisioned to come into being. This spirit of low-budget filmmaking revised the ground rules for organizing the work flow of creative teams by breaking down the traditional division of labor: revision dissolving division.

As reported by the MOD speakers on *The Lord of the Rings Appendices*, this fluid spirit of interactive collaborative creativity developed to near perfection among the artists responsible for designing and building Middle earth. Designer/Sculptor Jamie Beswarick relates, "We all worked in the same room so we could constantly see what everyone else was doing and quite often we'd feed off of someone else's idea or they'd feed off ours." From conceptual designer John Howe's point of view,

Richard Taylor has created something very unique down at the Weta Workshop because he's managed to collect around himself all these individuals that have a huge amount of talent but don't have the need to make sure that everyone knows who they are and what they are capable of doing.... It's the work that's important and not the person who's doing it. (Pellerin, 2003)

Conceptual designer Alan Lee attests to the specific cross-disciplinary nature of collaborative creative work that can emerge from this attitude:

It's been a huge kind of collaborative process all the way through and there hasn't been a great kind of division of labor. So you have people who might have been brought on as painters suddenly find themselves sculpting. ... so I've done my share of heaving props around and gardening... (Pellerin, 2002)

In the case of Middle earth designers, they cohere into a collective identity where articulating the credit among individuals is no longer necessary. They are content enough to identify themselves as part of Weta Workshop and *The Lord of the Rings*. While they do credit specific individuals with creative contributions, they also speak collectively of themselves as "we" just as much.

If designers are willing to do grunt work on a production, grunt workers can also emerge as artists of sorts in some productions. *Short Cuts* director Robert Altman, more than any director in this study, demonstrates an openness to the contributions of all members of his production company, not only those in clearly "creative" positions, such as the designers and actors. While any director could justify his absolute authority, Altman seems humble enough to allow himself to consider honest responses from the lowliest of production company members. As he relates,

These people who do all this work aren't machines, and everybody is putting in an artistic input. And it all melds together and you cannot eliminate anybody's contribution. I mean, the person who has the least chance during a whole film one time will do something or say something or indicate something. I mean, I can be shooting a scene, rehearsing a scene. I can look over and see a PA [production assistant] or a grip [member of the lighting crew] or a somebody standing over there looking at it and thinking, "Oh, this is shit." And I think, "This guy doesn't like this scene." And then I'll look back at it and say, "What's wrong with this scene?" And maybe I'll find something that's wrong with it. So when this film was done, that guy who was standing over there sneering might have had a big artistic input into it. (Kaplan & Dorr, 1993)

Altman's anecdote articulates an awareness that collaborations of a collective in a creative project consist of a chain of influences and the actions taken upon those influences by those receptive enough to respond to them. Rather than seeing these workers as "machines," he sees them as people with artistic sensibilities worthy of significantly contributing to the project. In choosing to accept the tacit criticism of a menial worker, Altman rejects the traditionally autocratic attitude of a film director.

The exuberance with which Spielberg exclaims, "I *love* that!," the characterization of the crotchety "old school" union cameraman, the metaphor of a team of artists "feeding off of each other," and the willingness to honor all labor, verbalize and enact attitudes of "acceptance and rejection." These are acts of naming that are vocabulary for action: "We must name the friendly or unfriendly functions and relationships in such a way that we are able to do something about them. In naming them,

we form our characters, since the names embody attitudes; and implicit in the attitudes are cues for behavior” (Burke, 1959, p. 4).

Attitudes toward collaborative creativity run the gamut: with history as a resource, filmmakers justify their choices as embraces or rejections as well as portray film artists and technicians as actively participating in these choices. Burke’s process of naming, embodiment of attitudes, and behaving depends, in these MOD stories, on history as a resource for creativity.

#### Making History: Evaluating Creativity and Creating Consent

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Andy Serkis was the human actor who drove the computer graphic and human hybrid character of Gollum. Serkis relates,

So it’s unlike anything obviously that *I’ve* ever, ever done in my life and people used to come down on the motion capture stage and go, “You realize you’re making film history here,” and I kind of was like, “Well, yeah, cause ... it’s this kind of confluence of all these different skills and people’s energy that *is* making this thing special. (Pellerin, 2003)

Even though Serkis was told that *he* was making film history, he generously attributes creative credit to all other people who came together to make the character of Gollum come to life. While his and the company’s prediction that they were making film history turned out to be correct, some creativity scholars claim that it remains for others to determine whether their work is creative or not and, more significantly, *how* creative it is. In short, “You’re making history!” has its parallels in how creativity is conceived and evaluated in theories of creativity itself.

According to Amabile and Csikszentmihalyi, creativity is an abstract concept that is the result of judgment; it is not a pre-existent quality. In order for a work to be judged as creative, it must be judged first to be significantly different from what is old. One might better speak of the *ratio* or, in its more humanistic terminology, the *relationship* of new to old in a work. Too little new and too much old is trite and redundant; too much new and too little old is jarring and incomprehensible.

In order to determine whether any work is creative, it needs to be judged as truly significant and new by those most qualified to bestow that judgment. Amabile and Tighe (1993) assert, “In our work, we rely on consensual assessment in our operational definition of creativity: products or responses are creative to the extent that appropriate observers agree that they are creative” (p. 10). Promulgating his systems view of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi agrees, elaborates, and further defines the elusive term thus:

Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one.... It is important to remember, however, that a domain cannot be changed without the explicit or implicit consent of a field responsible for it. (1996, p. 28)

It is also important to note that a domain may be changed simply by the addition of relevant knowledge or product and need not be changed radically or revolutionized in any way. The stories told in these MODs establish and enact “consent”—as filmmakers judge each others’ works as “making history.” It is these “gatekeepers” who, according to Amabile and Csikszentmihalyi, can reasonably distinguish the old from the new in the domain of filmmaking and determine whether the work perceptibly and significantly alters that domain.

The story of how the special effects exhibited in *Star Wars* forever changed the way movies were seen and made exemplifies the systems view of creativity as consensually assessed and socially constructed. On *The Legacy of Star Wars*, a satellite featurette attached to *Empire of Dreams*, the narrator states that audiences emerged from theaters with “a realization that cinema had been fundamentally changed” and that “*Star Wars* introduced cinematic techniques and innovations that would change filmmaking for the better in years to come” (Leva, 2004b).

Director James Cameron offers details of how *Star Wars* changed cinema when he explains:

There were two or three key innovations. One: motion. Incredibly dynamic. George is an editor. He thinks in cuts, and that film took the stunning kind of sense of detail and the starkness of space that you saw in *2001 [A Space Odyssey]* (1969), directed by Stanley Kubrick] and just kicked it into high gear, just turbo-charged it where everything was moving and crossing and there was huge scale and tremendous depth to the shots.... And the technological innovations that went into moving those ships and creating that kineticism, the motion control that made that possible, that was a major milestone in visual effects history that everyone acknowledges.

Cameron compares *Star Wars* to *2001: A Space Odyssey* in order to make his claim about how much of a creative leap forward Lucas' film made. The judgment of whether creativity is present and in what measure depends on an awareness of the history of creation in the appropriate domain.

The second innovation Cameron credits to *Star Wars* is, in the narrator's words, "the concept Lucas calls 'the used future.'" Cameron articulates the difference between the old and the new cinematic versions thus:

Up until then everything looked like it had been made the day before and just delivered and you imagined all these ships having that kind of "new car smell." ... There was a textural reality to it and that was breathtaking. No one had seen that before.

Along with testifying how *Star Wars* built upon and altered the science fiction cinema it inherited, Cameron and Peter Jackson, along with other directors such as Ridley Scott, go on to credit *Star Wars* with starting their careers or inspiring them to accelerate. In Scott's words, *Star Wars* "influenced me when I did *Alien*. I thought, I'd better push it a bit, make it like truck drivers." Jackson draws a clear link to his work as well:

It certainly affected us. I mean, *Lord of the Rings* is an ethos which is very much based on that of *Star Wars*, which is, "Make the world believable, have everything a bit dirty, have everything a little bit run down, because that realism is just the first building block towards creating any connection with the characters."

Directors Jackson, Cameron, and Lawrence Kasdan all substantiate the "You're making history!" claims about the creativity of *Star Wars*. Kasdan confesses, "When I came out [of the theater], I said, "That's incredible. That's a whole other kind of movie that has now been invented." Jackson elaborates,

*Star Wars* smashed open the possibilities of what film could actually do. It was like a seismic shift in how people perceived the cinema-going experience. Not only did it have powerful themes and stories that could resonate, but it was

executed in a way that was so much more believable and so much more exhilarating than anything that we'd seen before.

In their responses to *Star Wars*, these directors assume all three roles of fan, critic, and memorialist: they applaud openly and enthusiastically, they articulate the values they perceive in the film, and they take the level of accomplishment they see in the film as a model to guide their own work. Having themselves accomplished work that has been respected and praised, these directors easily assume the additional roles as gatekeepers or “appropriate observers” qualified to judge Lucas’s work as creative.

As the accolades pile up for George Lucas’ work on *Star Wars*, the history of filmmaking comes full circle from this chapter’s opening analysis of film directors’ tributes to and accolades for David Lean’s *Lawrence of Arabia*, through the attitudes evidenced in verbalizing collaboration, to the evaluation of “making history.” In their progression from the roles of fan, critic, memorialist, and finally to innovator, filmmakers enact a creative cycle that is powered by commemoration and renovation. The depth in which they fulfill the act of commemoration in the first three of these roles – fan, theorist, and memorialist – and the extent to which they perform their renovation with imagination and skill will help determine how far-reaching will be their acclaim as innovators and makers of film history.

History as Commemoration and Renovation:

A Rhetoric of Collaborative Creativity

Susan Sontag’s essay, “Film and Theater” in the *Tulane Drama Review* (1966), attempted to draw large conceptual distinctions between film and live theater as art

forms. For the purpose of this chapter, her observation on history is an important one.

Sontag writes of film,

. . . this youngest of the arts is also the one most heavily burdened with memory.

Cinema is a time machine. Movies preserve the past, while theatres--no matter how devoted to the classics, to old plays--can only "modernize." Movies resurrect the beautiful dead; present intact vanished or ruined environments; employ, without irony, styles and fashions that seem funny today; solemnly ponder irrelevant or naive problems. The historical flavor of anything registered on celluloid is so vivid that practically all films older than two years or so are saturated with a kind of pathos. (p.32)

If the films themselves are saturated with “pathos,” then the stories told of the making of films are saturated with “ethos” and “logos” as filmmakers labor to establish their own roles and rationality within the milieu of film history, to justify their own creative choices against the backdrop of film industry practices, and to participate in evaluative consensus-making that is the bedrock of judgments about creativity itself.

The discourses in MODs narrate history—as influence, resource, and consent—and employ two primary rhetorical strategies: commemoration and renovation. These strategies operate on several levels: 1) to establish roles for the speakers themselves in film history; 2) as emplotment, a documentary strategy that invites identification with values and meanings that undergird the stories; and 3) as a way to understand collaborative creativity itself.

### *Filmmakers Roles in History*

As *commemoration*, filmmakers lovingly appropriate elements of past films into their present work, name and proclaim their influences, and openly display their attitudes toward those influences. Commemoration works through encomium, the verbal acts of tribute, homage, and praise. In MOD discourses, filmmakers effect panegyrics – public displays of praise – in two ways: by incorporating their predecessors’ work into their own and by verbally acknowledging with pride their indebtedness to their influences.

Stories of *renovation* are also rhetorical acts that link the old with the new. From fans to artists, from children to adults, from movie-goers to movie-makers, stories that build on the past to create new roles for the storytellers are particularly effective rhetorical devices to move from imitators and apprentices to accomplished and innovative filmmakers with their own places in film history and industry. The rhetorically created roles—fans, critics, and memorialists—are bridges that enable the speakers to cross film history as audience to filmmakers.

When filmmakers commemorate and renovate their own roles in film history, they are participating in the sharing of history—as story, as “personal and public pasts,” and as the craft of industry practices. Susan Sontag (1966) also makes this point in comparing theatre and cinema:

. . . compared with the theatre, innovations in cinema seem to be assimilated more efficiently, seem altogether to be more shareable--and not only because new films are quickly and widely circulated. Also, partly because virtually the entire body of accomplishment in film can be consulted in the present, most filmmakers are more knowledgeable about the history of their art than most theatre directors are

about the recent past of theirs. The key word in many discussions of cinema is “possibility.” (pp. 32-33)

Indeed, the rhetoric of commemoration and renovation in filmmakers’ stories is a shared sense of “possibility” in creating their own historical roles.

### *Emplotting History as Romance*

Sontag singles out the key word “possibility”; so too does Hayden White in connecting history with story:

. . . it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual. If we view narration and narrativity as the instruments with which the conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated, or resolved in a discourse, we begin to comprehend both the appeal of the narrative and the grounds for refusing it. (1990, p. 4)

The rhetoric of the MODs themselves also relies on the strategies of commemoration and renovation, a way of narrating the past as romance. For White (1975), romance is one form of emplotment; it is the drama of self-identification, celebrating the triumph of the good after trials and tribulations. The directors surveyed in this chapter constantly celebrate their own triumphs in commemoration: capturing and rendering details of scene, character, locale, and event as tribute to the ideal past of filmmaking giants. To be “blown away,” to recreate “frame for frame,” to embrace and to reject are metaphors of romantic sensibilities toward history and toward creative accomplishment as not only possible, but attainable.

The rhetoric of commemoration of the old and renovation into the new invites identification with a world view of limitless possibilities, creativity, and triumphs.

Because every MOD is a success story, a romance, the world view invited is a particularly fascinating one for audiences. These successes are very much part of the Hollywood mythology, a dream factory of oceanic fame, wealth, and power. Indeed, the world view painted in MODs is one of accomplishment, acclaim, and success—if one stands on the shoulders of giants, pays proper tribute, and proves worthy of carrying forward the innovations of the past.

So White also suggests we look carefully at forms of plotment in order to refuse succumbing to stories of history with “conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real.” MODs necessarily are *not* tragic, satiric, or comedic stories of failed projects, broken dreams, and box office disasters. The genre won’t allow it. As romances, they construct real events as constant *commemorations of individual and ensemble triumph* and romanticize history as *successful innovations in creativity*. These are important, inspiring, and hopeful world views possessing great appeal for their audiences.

#### *Collaborative Creativity as Conversing with History*

Finally, an interesting picture emerges for creativity theory in the discourses of MODs. While creativity theory constantly speaks of the relationship between the old and the new as central to any judgment of creativity, stories told in MODs give a much more concrete and multi-faceted picture of this relationship and to standards created by gatekeepers and arbitrators.

While creativity theory speaks to the fact that creativity is a judgment conferred on a product by the appropriate gatekeepers, it rarely speaks to the *rhetoric* of judgment employed. MODs, however, reveal the language and rhetorical devices by which creativity is judged by showcasing how the central creativity concepts of “old” and

“new” are at once contrasted and linked. This contrasting and linking process – a form of logic – takes the rhetorical move of commemoration further by giving the old new life. Where commemoration fundamentally keeps the past in the past, memorializing it, renovation brings it into the present, revivifying it. The discourse of MODs consistently dramatizes the rhetorical strategies of respectfully engaging with the past in order to create in the present. By recalling the past through praise, commemoration appropriates it. Once thus appropriated, renovation renews the past through addition, adaptation, or some other mode of variation. By appropriating the old, commemoration functions as a form of *mimesis*, of an imitation or “taking.” By making the old new, renovation subsequently functions as a form of *poiesis*, of “making.” The movement from commemoration to renovation takes history in order to make history, and the cycle then repeats ad infinitum.

Commemoration and renovation is, thus, not only a logical linear sequence, but a cyclical ongoing conversation—between past and present, between old and new, between creativity in theory and creativity in practice. MOD speakers, engaging in this conversation, make sense of “both personal and public pasts,” and invite their audience to share their values and meanings toward creativity. Their adopted roles are bridges that function rhetorically, to embody attitudes toward the past and shape actions in the present.

Rhetorical commemorating and renovating, as proclaiming influences and detailing changes, is at once sensemaking, identification, and judgment. The stories filmmakers tell are *weighted linguistic transactions*, rhetorical acts that fashion meaning out of past participation with historical artifacts and real events, attribute and distribute

creative credit among a wide range of collaborators past and present, and evaluate the existence and significance of the new emerging from the old. In acknowledging the best of the past, filmmakers recognize that it must be renovated to gain new life and for them (the filmmakers) to become part of history themselves.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Back Lot Shop Talk:

#### Collaborative Creativity Dramatized through Metaphor

On the *X-Men 2* MOD, *The Second Uncanny Issue of X-Men! Making 'X-2,'* director Bryan Singer responds to a question concerning his “vision” of the film. He succinctly summarizes the interdependency of the ensemble in collaborative creativity when he relates,

A film is not like a book or a painting. A film is made by thousands of people and I'm kind of a funnel through which all their talents pass. So in that sense, it can be called my vision, but it's really my vision of their visions. (Burnett, 2003)

Singer's view of the filmmaking process generously validates the creative contribution of all members of his production company by crediting them as well with “vision,” the mark of an artist, and then by seeing their visions as interconnected with his. Singer's director-as-funnel metaphor crystallizes the image of a director as the epicenter of creative activity in a film production, gathering and channeling the variegated creative talents of a host of collaborators toward a common goal. This image provides an entrance to the central theme of this chapter: how language, in the capacity of metaphor, is a window into collaborative creativity enacted through ensemble communication.

Singer's metaphoric dramatization, characterizing the relationship between director and production company, is one of dozens nested within the mythically

structured and historically conversational sagas of film MODs. These metaphors are powerful ways of seeing the communicative processes that are collaborative creativity. If chapter two is a rousing tale told by conquering heroes around a campfire and chapter three is a conversation between creators past and present in a made-for-video parlor, then this chapter is the friendly banter of shop talk traded over lunch on the studio back lot.

“Shop talk” captures the give and take of friendly conversation centered on work, the daily joys and challenges of working with others, “the delicious gossiping over back-fences” (Payne 1995, p. 333). For Mirivel and Tracy (2005), shop talk often “has a gossipy quality;” “. . . chitchatting with and around . . . institutional expertise. . . [I]t is the raw materials for building political savvy” (pp. 16-17). As communication about communication, shop talk happens in “crevices:” “It is in the spaces in which a group is officially not on task that especially subtle and interesting facets of organizational identity may be found” (p. 28). The discourses of MODs are very much shop talk, inviting audiences to join production members in the back lot to share in the gossip, the expertise, and the working identities of filmmakers.

Metaphors – whether a funnel or shop talk – are perspectival, imaginative, and dramatic acts of language that create new realities. The metaphors employed by MOD speakers move beyond the well-known metaphors of organizational leadership, “climate,” and “culture” to capture the centrality of communication to collaborative creativity. Whereas production company members have specific artistic tasks to perform – acting, cinematography, set design, costume design, editing, etc. – the director’s task consists entirely of communication. The preamble to the Director’s Guild of America, Inc. of 2005 describes this task: “The Director’s function is to contribute to all of the

creative elements of a film and to participate in molding and integrating them into one cohesive dramatic and aesthetic whole.” While the infinitive verbs “to contribute” and “to participate” are nebulous ones, the metaphors utilized by MOD speakers are communicative acts that dramatize how and why directors use language and actions to create symbolically, even vicariously, through the medium of the creative talents of their production company.

In this chapter I argue that the metaphors employed by MOD speakers do the rhetorical work of dramatizing collaborative creativity through character and environments. The metaphors depicting the director as a *character* – military leader, assistant, madman, and playful child – are symbolic acts that language leadership as dramatic performances; the metaphors depicting the production *environment* as fictive worlds are symbolic acts that produce habitable and guiding ideologies for collaboration. Together, these metaphors symbolically move beyond the overarching metaphor of “vision” to capture the often overlooked *human* aspects of collaborative creative processes – emotion, relationships, interaction.

In the first section, I introduce theoretical frames of reference to elucidate the way metaphor exemplifies and assists creative activity. Next, I analyze the various ways in which ensemble members metaphorically characterize directors. In the third section, I analyze the metaphors directors borrow from the fictive worlds they are creating. Finally, I interrogate vision as a God term for collaborative creativity.

## Metaphors in Language and Organizational Leadership

The metaphor is perhaps one of man's most fruitful potentialities. Its efficacy verges on magic, and it seems a tool for creation which God forgot inside one of His creatures when He made him. – José Ortega y Gasset, (1968, p. 33)

Metaphor is fundamental to thought itself, to the life of language, and thereby to all human communication. For I. A. Richards (1936), “That metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language can be shown by mere observation. We cannot get through three sentences of ordinary fluid discourse without it” (p. 92). Indeed, it has been impossible to write these chapters without metaphors – the campfire, the parlor, and now the back lot— as ways of conceptualizing the discourses about collaborative creativity. For Kenneth Burke, metaphor provides “perspective by incongruity” and “appeals by exemplifying relationships between objects which our customary rational vocabulary has ignored” (1954, p. 90). Burke defines metaphor specifically thus:

Metaphor is a device for seeing something *in terms of* something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this. If we employ the word “character” as a general term for whatever can be thought of as distinct (any thing, pattern, situation, structure, nature, person, object, act, rôle, process, event, etc.,) then we could say that metaphor tells us something about one character considered from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A. (1962, pp. 503-4, original emphasis)

Burke further suggests that “it is through a variety of perspectives that we establish a character’s reality” (1962, p. 504). The various angles provided by a host of metaphors, then, can bring to us a more “well-rounded” understanding of a particular entity. It is important to note also that, for Burke, the perspectives metaphor provides reveal dreamlike and “hitherto unsuspected connectives” (1954, p. 90) normally undetected by reason. In a somewhat related observation, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim,

Metaphor ... unites reason and imagination. Reason, at the very least, involves categorization, entailment, and inference. Imagination, in one of its many aspects, involves seeing one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing – what we have called metaphorical thought. Metaphor is thus *imaginative rationality*.

...Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness. (p. 193, original emphasis)

Metaphor, then, like language itself and thought from which it derives, symbolically acts to extend the range of our knowledge and understanding by verbally, radically, and constantly throwing together distinct objects that our rational minds might never associate. In one sense, metaphor turns reason on its ear and forces it to transcend itself by appropriating its usual tools – categorization, entailment, and inference – and shuffling them into different, seemingly illogical, orders. And because of our ability and proclivity to make comparisons and connections, we commandeer our logic to make sense of all these novel incongruities that the imaginative frolic of metaphor has revealed to us. Thus, by virtue of metaphor, we transcend the confines of reason and create new realities.

While everyday speech is rife with metaphor, not all are capable of such transcendental creative powers. Potent metaphor needs, in Aristotle's view, "to set the scene before our eyes; for events ought to be seen in progress rather than in prospect" (2004, 1924, p. 136). Like a play or motion picture, metaphor should enact a story in our imaginations that seems to be happening *now* and not in the future. Seen through Aristotle's eyes, then, a well-made metaphor is a condensed, verbal drama – a visually arresting, succinctly vivid, theatrical narrative projecting a new idea onto previous knowledge.

Metaphors, then, are powerful modes of thought and vision: as perspectival, as imaginative rationality, as dramatic acts that create new realities. In the discourses of MODs, the metaphors most frequently employed by speakers are those that characterize the directors as leaders and the production environment as created through this leadership. The metaphors of leadership, however, move beyond the characterizations of leaders in organizational scholarship.

Studies of leadership that focus on characterizations of leaders (as opposed to situational contingencies) have historically been approached by giving attention to either leader traits (characteristics) or style (behavior). Trait theories focus on judging leaders by their innate and persisting possession of generally held "ideal" leadership attributes such as perseverance and courage. Weber's classic study (1947) defined three different types of leadership: traditional, charismatic, and bureaucratic. Traditional leaders come to their position by appointment, often by heredity; charismatic leaders inspire their followers with a sense of mission; bureaucratic leaders derive their authority from the legal structure of the organizational position they fill. Surveying research from 1945,

Stogdill (1974) culled five traits identified with effective leaders: intelligence, dependability, activity, achievement, and socioeconomic status. Bennis and Townsend (1995) further articulate leader character with these fourteen traits: personal ambition under control, honesty, ability to communicate, being a servant to the people, sense of purpose, absence of arrogance, never taking credit, sense of humor, inclusiveness, fairness, competence, integrity, and decisiveness (pp. 14-27).

Stylistic approaches describe leaders according to how they lead rather than who they are. Lewin, White & Lippitt (1939) identified three different styles as they related to decision making: authoritarian (sole decision maker), democratic (decision making shared with employees), and laissez-faire (no decision making; employees do what they want). Blake and Mouton (1964) used a 9x9 managerial grid to pinpoint a leader's style as a position along two axes: concern for production and concern for people. For example, the 1,9 position (high on people, low on production) they term "country-club" management; 9,1 (low on people, high on production) they call "authority-compliance"; 5,5 rates a "middle of the road" moniker. Eisenberg (2007) differentiates three approaches of leadership for organizational change, along with their appropriate job titles and communication styles: monologic (manager – unidirectional only), transactional (leader – alternately bidirectional), and dialogic (facilitator – simultaneously bidirectional). These leaders are positioned on a continuum charting communication as a tool (monologic) to communication as constitutive (dialogic).

#### Metaphors of Leadership: Dramatic Characterizations

With a few exceptions, like "country-club manager" and "servant to the people," these descriptions of leadership qualities and styles do not utilize metaphors to engage in

perspectival, imaginative and dramatic creations of character. MOD speakers, however, are quick to land on crystallized *characterizations*, brief titles or names designed to accurately capture the gamut of leader performance in a few linguistic symbols. For Burke, “A fundamental resource ‘natural’ to symbolism is substitution.” Furthermore, he continues, “abbreviation is also a kind of substitution, ... while it is also a necessary kind of ‘condensation.’” Finally, “condensation also can be viewed as a subspecies of substitution” (1966, pp. 7-8). By naming (or name-calling) a person, we have substituted an abbreviation or condensation – a single word or phrase and its connotations – for all the unique, intricate complexities that comprise this person’s being – background, upbringing, culture, thoughts, actions, and situation.

For Erving Goffman, these crystallized characterizations in language are dramatically enacted in everyday life. The Director’s Guild might do well to utilize Goffman’s description (1959, p. 241) of the communicative work of “directing” others:

[I]f one individual attempts to direct the activity of others by means of example, enlightenment, persuasion, exchange, manipulation, authority, threat, punishment, or coercion, it will be necessary, regardless of his power position, to convey effectively what he wants done, what he is prepared to do to get it done and what he will do if it is not done. Power of any kind must be clothed in effective means of displaying it, and will have different effects depending on how it is dramatized.

The metaphors utilized by MOD speakers are Burkean substitutions and Goffmanesque dramatizations. Below I analyze the most salient metaphors of leadership in MOD discourses: military commanders, control freaks and madmen, assistants, and playful children. As metaphors of leadership, perspective is foregrounded, imaginative rationality

is engaged, drama is enacted, and new realities are created that move beyond leadership styles and traits to offer perceptive critiques on director performance and the centrality of communication to collaborative creativity.

*Going on the Front Lines: Director as General, Ship's Captain, and Pioneer*

Making a film is a war. There are many battles every day.

*The Empire Strikes Back* director Irwin Kershner (Sherman, p. 55)

Considering that directors are obviously in a leadership position, it is no surprise to find military metaphors characterizing them. George Lucas personally stepped in to oversee the work of the production's special effects division, Industrial Light and Magic. Visual effects artist Ken Ralston testifies,

George was our general, we're his soldiers, and we're all fighting this single battle to get this film out. We're going on the front lines here and that gave us also kind of a feeling of being special and fighting this great battle to get this thing done, whatever it is. (Becker & Burns, 2004)

In a similar vein, composer John Williams says of *Superman* director, Richard Donner,

The character of the guy, the kind of man he is, the kind of general he turned out to be, a terrific general, who everyone was very happy to follow in his service and do his bidding, I felt I had a complete creative cape of my own, so to speak.

(Thau, 2001)

Another military metaphor emerges in the words of actor Jack Lemmon when he speaks of *Short Cuts* director Robert Altman as having,

...a kind of leadership like the captain of a ship; you trust them – completely – and if they throw something at you that's absolutely from the moon, you don't

say, “I ain’t gonna do that,” or “I gotta figure a way out of this because the guy’s cuckoo. I mean, I’m not gonna be seen on the screen doing this.” You will try it, you will do your very level best because you trust the man. (Kaplan & Dorr, 1993)

Organizational theorist Alistair Mutch (2006) argues that, in many cases, military metaphors are used unproblematically and often erroneously in organizational analysis to imply a rigid “command and control model based on the disciplined implementation of centrally devised strategy.” This leads to “a false polarization of this model against a looser network based model” and blinds analysts to the “relative autonomy” that is also available in military networks, as well as “the potential for strict discipline” (p. 766).

In all these characterizations, however, the MOD speakers willingly embrace the military metaphors and endorse what Mutch calls the “performative” (p. 753) use of the metaphor; that is, the way the metaphor influences behavior. Ralston, rather than chafing at being rigidly controlled and commanded by “General Lucas,” emphasizes the privilege of being personally lead with an urgency that draws inspiration from the dramatic images on which they worked. Williams implies the absolute artistic freedom in contributing he felt by indulging in the “creative cape” reference to his film’s title character. Finally, Lemmon’s metaphor compares the risk of navigating the high seas with an actor’s risk of ego and career whenever he or she performs for the camera. Trust in the director then serves, in Lemmon’s view, as the essential motivator to give an actor the courage and commitment to try whatever seemingly crazy and frightening action a director asks an actor to perform. In all these examples, then, rather than implying rigidity and severity,

the military metaphor connotes the marshalling of diverse creative forces by a strong, assertive leader who provides inspiration, freedom, and trust.

Brian Van't Hul, visual effects director of photography on *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, offers a non-military leadership metaphor for director Peter Jackson:

To me, that's one of the definitions of a pioneer is this crazy guy who says, "Let's go over there." We say, "We don't want to go over there. It's nice and safe over here. Why don't we just stay over here and do nice, safe stuff." He goes, "No, no, no. Come on, we're going. And he forces everyone to come along and then once you get there you say, "Oh yeah, this is much better here."

Weta Workshop supervisor Richard Taylor iterates, "It's one of the real delights of working with Peter as a director is that he will take you – creatively – places you could never bring yourself to risk going" (Pellerin, 2003). As Lemmon, Van't Hul, and Taylor attest, the burden of creativity is rife with risk, so that artists are tempted to practice their art in safe havens, repeating tried-and-true ways of creating. So, when a director can lead, lure, or drag those timid artists into an undiscovered wilderness teeming with possibilities, he earns his title as co-creator, despite not performing the artists' practical crafts.

These metaphors of military leaders and pioneers are dramatic ones: the front lines and the wilderness are scenes of combat and unknown forces that demand action—both leading and following. They are also imaginary ones: rarely are realities of death faced in the day-to-day production work of filmmaking. Indeed, these metaphors demonstrate Lakoff and Johnson's claim that metaphor is a way to comprehend "our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness." The speakers'

military and pioneering metaphors of leadership are evaluations of the directors' *effective* performances that crystallize feelings, experiences, practices, and awarenesses.

*Sledgehammer: Director as Control Freak and Madman*

In contrast to the rather obvious real-world leadership metaphors, MOD speakers characterize two directors much more colorfully, emotionally, and melodramatically. Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger bluntly pegs James Cameron thus: "He's a control freak, basically. I mean, he wants to do basically everything because he has such a clear vision of what he wants to see." Actor Michael Biehn provides some details of how much Cameron would do:

Jim's, like, explaining the blue screen camera to the guys and what they should be doing. I mean, those guys were in special effects all their lives and Jim's saying "Oh, no, no, you can't – Oh, you're having trouble? This is how you fix that." ... He did that with everybody. Camera, sound, ... He knows everybody's job better than they do and he's better at it than they are and I think sometimes he gets frustrated because of that.

Schwarzenegger elaborates further,

You see him ending up running with the smoke machine and creating smoke in front of the camera and then putting on blood and trying to do your makeup although the makeup and special effects department has already done the job. But he then has to improve on it somehow.

While speakers offer examples of Cameron vigorously participating in nearly every technical aspect of the film, no speaker – technical artist or actor – complains of interference or of his mania for exact conformity to every detail of his desires. Instead,

they express an almost left-handed admiration for his clarity of vision and intensity of focus. Visual effects supervisor Gene Warren even appreciated Cameron's technical expertise and close supervision because, "he understood. You could talk about things, how to do 'em and what you wanted to do" (Ling, 2001).

One actor in *Platoon* goes further in characterizing in heightened imagery his director, Oliver Stone, as he details the battles he and his fellow actors endured while filming. Johnny Depp admits, "I thought he was a madman, one of those guys who sort of rides that fine line between brilliance and explosion of the brain." He supports his claim with this tale:

He'll stop at nothing. I remember when we were doing the scene where I was about to croak. Rain was pissing down on us. I was letting the rain get into my mouth, you know, cause it was awful, just making me sick. He'd start the scene and I'd say, "Chris," you know, talking to Charlie. Oliver would cut. But he didn't cut like – he just screamed, "Cut!" And he'd say, "Bullshit! Do it again!" We'd start it again, crank up and do it again. He'd cut you again. "Bullshit! Fuckin' liar! Do it again!" He'd push you, man. He was just a sledgehammer in the middle of your forehead. You hated him in the moment, you'd hate him. But *that* would take you to the next level and the next level and the next level. (Kiselyak, 2001)

The violent and "striking" imagery Depp employs to narrate his tale and the abusive behavior of his director to which he testifies seems fitting within the context of the production circumstances of filming a Vietnam war story in the steaming jungles of the Philippines. Depp seems to revel in what might be referred to as a vulgar, macho

glory in the grueling adversity inflicted on him, while ultimately crediting Stone's abrasive character with extracting a higher quality of performance out of him.

The metaphors of control freak and madman are dramas of leadership that crystallize character "out of control" yet purposeful. These metaphors also capture the speakers' feelings beyond rationality: Cameron's frustration, Warren's understanding, Depp's hatred. With these metaphors, the new realities – of improvements and "next levels" – are revealed and understood as arising from the performances of the director.

#### *Creating Together: Director as Assistant*

Not all directors are blatantly adversarial, controlling, or freaky. Actors report that Robert Altman, Richard Donner, and Martin Scorsese fill their roles much more convivially. Of Altman's way of working, actress Andie MacDowell confides,

You never feel like "Here's the moment where I have to prove myself. I have to show how good I am." He has a way of having rehearsal or trying things out sneak up on you so that you're creating with him and by the end there's been a rehearsal but *he* never called it a rehearsal.

Actress Margot Kidder attests to the flexibility and psychological attunement the director-as-assistant can achieve when she tells of Richard Donner's work with her:

But what he did as a director is the sign to me of a really good director. Each one of us was directed in a different way, according to our needs. And he figured out very early on one's vulnerability as an actor, one's strength, and helped you *that* way. He knew that if he got my energy up, got me giggling, and then let me roar into a scene that you never knew what would happen and that often something very funny and good would come out of it. So he would do that with me. He'd

joke with me, he'd tease me *relentlessly*, pull practical jokes, and always get me.  
(Thau, 2001)

Far from being perceived as commanding, as the military models imply, a director-as-assistant is portrayed by ensemble members as accommodating while remaining in control, as actor Robert De Niro and director Martin Scorsese characterize their long-term professional relationship. According to De Niro,

We'll come together on a project; he'll do it for his reason, I'll do it for mine. As any actor will tell you who's worked with him, he'll try anything with you. You'll come up with an idea, you give him a choice, he'll try it. So he's very open to that stuff.

Scorsese offers this account of their experience working on a speech from *On the Waterfront* that De Niro's character – the retired, corpulent Jake La Motta – performs as a rehearsal in his dressing room:

My feeling was that it would have to be unemotional, as flat as possible. But as we started to do it he said, "can I try this, can I try that?" I think we did about eighteen or nineteen takes until he had worked his process all the way through as an actor. And this is one of the key things about making the pictures we made together from *Raging Bull* to *King of Comedy*. The way I work with him, he would always tell me – "as long as we try things, but you're 'the guy.' In the final analysis, if you don't like it, it doesn't go in." And he always kept his word that way, which made it very comfortable to work together. (Bouzereau, 2004)

No explicit metaphor emerges in these characterizations, perhaps because the "assistant" role is so subtle and self-effacing to be almost invisible. But the speakers

nevertheless set a scene before our eyes of directors' performances – displays of a more human and spiritual sort of power – that illumines often overlooked qualities of leadership. Unlike Depp's characterization of Oliver's Stone's constant barking, "Bullshit! Do it again!," these speakers each emphasize their director's devoted attention, sensitivity, and gentle guidance in "trying things." The scenic backdrop for these metaphors is "work" – without the high-pitched melodramatic histrionics, antagonism, or fantastical imagery, but with its own different and deftly poignant drama of directors siding *with* their actors to help them battle their *inner* adversaries: sneaking in rehearsals to sidestep an actress' performance anxiety, teasing an actress to activate her performance strengths, or allowing an actor an indefinite number of "takes" to work through his performance process. The new reality that then emerges in and through the metaphor of the self-effacing "assistant" is a constant sense of collaborative creativity as mentored mutual experimentation.

*Biggest Kid On The Block: Director as Player*

Even more disarming and liberating than the director-as-assistant characterization is that of director-as-player. *Short Cuts* Assistant Director Allan Nicholls paints this picture of the working environment director Robert Altman creates:

Bob is not a manipulative director. He has a way of doing it but he doesn't – I think it's unexplained, I think he just creates a very comfortable place for everybody to come and play and everybody just comes and plays and that's what we end up doing. (Kaplan & Dorr, 1993)

In this study, the director most touted for his infectious enthusiasm and childlike sense of play, however, is *Superman* director Richard Donner. According to actor Christopher

Reeve, “Dick Donner is the biggest kid on the block and his sense of playfulness really is what gave the movie its magic.” Actor Gene Hackman agrees and elaborates:

Dick has that rare quality of being able to instill in the actors a sense of fun and a sense of “This is your project,” you know, “This is yours. Let’s see what you can do, let’s open it up, let’s perform, let’s have fun.” But Dick’s strong personality and sense of fun and love, not only for the project but for the actors, makes working with him just a pleasure.

To illustrate this director’s childlike enthusiasm, creative consultant Tom Mankiewicz and Donner both collaborate in telling the story of how Donner convinced Mankiewicz to fix the bloated early draft of *Superman*’s shooting script:

MANKIEWICZ

Literally one morning, 5:30 in the morning, I was upstairs and the phone rang and this voice said “Get up! Get up! Get up!” With that voice that Dick has, you know exactly who it is.”

DONNER

I called him. I said, “Mank, I just got this 500-page script that the Salkinds [producers] send me on *Superman*...”

MANKIEWICZ

“And *you’re* gonna do *Superman*.” I said, “Oh no, I’m not!” I had been rewriting a lot of pictures and I didn’t want to do it anymore.

DONNER

He said, “Ah, I don’t know.” I said, “Come on over and let’s talk.”

MANKIEWICZ

And Dick is almost irresistible when he's pushin'.

#### DONNER

So when Tom arrived, I was at the other end of my property in a Superman costume that the Salkinds had sent me with their script. And I just came running across the lawn. Tom thought I was nuts. I really thought I could fly. The minute I put that costume on I knew I could fly. Tom just bought it instantly. I mean, he just bought into it. I looked like I was an Adonis. I don't know how anybody could have met the qualifications that I had in that blue leotard. I had socks stuffed in and everything. It was amazing. (Thau, 2001)

The metaphor of the playful child is a potent one: for perspective, for imaginative rationality, for drama, and for new realities. In contrast to earlier metaphors of the military, the wilderness, freaks and madmen, and the self-effacing assistant, the playful child is a perspective by incongruity that invites a host of affiliations, attitudes, and actions not associated with traditional styles or traits of leadership. But the playful child is a metaphor that rings especially true with our traditional notions of creativity—as spontaneous, liberating, joyous, outrageous, bold, and fun. Directors who refigure the workplace as a playground and don costumes of bold, primary colors to persuade their fellow artists to join their play somehow seem to display the appropriate powers to educate, or lead *out*, the creative capacities of their followers. Indeed, this metaphor of director as playful child demonstrates leadership by example and returns imaginative rationality to the mix full force.

## Metaphors as Perspectives by Incongruity on Leadership

The director exercises the power of his position from decades of movie making tradition and from the authority of the Director's Guild agreement. He is categorically in charge of coordinating the entire film, must participate in and contribute to every part of the filmmaking process, and may do so as he sees fit. How does he exercise this authority or, in Goffman's terms, "display his power" as a leader? The metaphoric personas, the masks of character that ensemble members slip over their directors' faces in the scenarios they dramatize, provide tentative answers to that question.

Focusing strictly on the *terms* of characterization alone – general, ship's captain, pioneer, assistant, control freak, madman/sledgehammer, playful kid – and the inherent dramas they present reveals that all these terms designate various configurations of high and low, dominant and subservient relationships between director and ensemble member. Scenarios from the dramas these words enact play with distinct differences.

The general and ship's captain represent the classic top-down relation. These supreme commanders always remain totally in charge, well removed by numerous levels of rank from you, the lowly foot soldier or sailor. The pioneer is also separate from you but in a foreground/background configuration. The pioneer always moves ahead while you lag behind. The assistant relates to you from an equal or slightly lower level. He either stands by you, gently guiding with his arm under your elbow or actually stoops beneath you to offer support and understanding. To come to the level of the playful kid, you actually need to stoop down and sit on the floor, a level that dissolves the hierarchy. The control freak moves to whatever level he wants, but you cannot. You are in a straitjacket except when you are at the end of his puppet strings. The madman, you feel,

should be in a straitjacket, but he isn't. He's a sledgehammer coming from *above* you *down* onto the middle of your forehead. And yet, in truth, the sledgehammer is there for you as much as the assistant. The sledgehammer is never aloof, like the military commanders. Though he comes *down* hard on you, and you hate him for it in the moment, all that abuse ultimately *raises* you to higher and higher levels of performance that transcend any you could have given without him.

Granted, some of the actual interactions with the directors that inspired these characterizations were mitigated by the receptivity and willing subordination of the ensemble members. Yet the choice to slip the mask of any of these personas on their director indicates the *perceived* hierarchical relationship and emotional tenor of the encounters experienced in the heat of production battle and reflected upon in the cool of its aftermath. Using metaphors to portray these relationships, MOD speakers are "trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: [their] feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness" (Lakoff and Johnson, p. 193). Metaphor, for Burke, is always perspectival. And perspective by incongruity requires a dramatic vocabulary, "with weighting and counter-weighting, in contrast with the liberal ideal of *neutral* naming in the characterization of processes" (1984, p. 311).

If, in characterizing the traits and styles of leadership, organizational theorists have emphasized this "ideal of neutral naming," then MOD speakers have tipped the scales in the opposite direction: told from unique points of view, rendered in dramatic scenes and acts that center their stories in conflict and its resolution, ensemble characterizations emphasize heightened or subtle emotions, unapologetic judgments, salient idiosyncrasies, surprising paradoxes, and whimsical fantasies to portray the

experience of face-to-face communication in more specifically human terms. Through metaphors that shine light on usually undervalued aspects of leader-follower relationships, MOD speakers critique the performances of their directors, re-enacting dramas of collaboration and creativity in characterizing the essences of leaders.

In *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner provides case studies of eleven leaders. As prelude to these studies, Gardner, who considers a leader's followers as "audience members" and "collaborators," proposes this theory:

... leaders present a *dynamic* perspective to their followers: not just a headline or snapshot, but a drama that unfolds over time, in which they – leaders and followers – are the principal characters or heroes. Together, they have embarked on a journey in pursuit of certain goals, and along the way and into the future, they can expect to encounter certain obstacles or resistances that must be overcome. Leaders and audiences traffic in many stories, but the most basic story has to do with issues of *identity*. (Gardner 1995, p. 14, original emphasis)

A leader's communication process – being, in the case of film production, virtually identical with the creative process – entails not only the initial articulation of the director's dynamic perspective, the all-hallowed "vision," but the dialogue enacted and metaphors engendered by all. The metaphor-fueled stories mutually define the identities of both director and ensemble. For Mirivel and Tracy (2005), "Shop talk updates people regarding actions of visible organizational members." Indeed, MOD shop talk enacts a more practical and personal version of vision: "how organizational members develop a sophisticated understanding of how people in their industry are seen" (pp. 16-17). Thus,

the characterizations that ensemble members use to critique their “on the road” experiences working with their director constitute an essential perspective on the dynamics of collaborative creativity.

These critiques MOD ensemble members construct of their directors’ performances take the form of condensed firsthand verbal dramas enacted in pointed, personal, and biased evaluative terms. MOD ensemble members critique the varying *effects* of their directors’ means of displaying the power of their role, simultaneously revealing their own implicit or explicit expectations and standards of the communicative exchange. These metaphoric characterizations critique a director’s communication performance in three ways: 1) by naming or “magical decree,” 2) by dramatizing, or “secular prayer” and 3) by justifying or redeeming the “negative” characters and praising or approving the “positive” ones. For Kenneth Burke, “The magical decree is implicit in all language; for the mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it is to be singled out as such-and-such rather than as something other” (1973, p. 4). Rather than aiming for neutral names, stripped to their denotations, MOD characterizations employ fanciful names, loaded with connotations, implicitly spotlighting the speaker’s specific choice of the dominant aspects of director performance as well as the speaker’s emotional reactions to it. These names alone immediately conjure vibrant images of leader-follower communication, which speakers then either confirm or contrast with the details of their actual interaction.

These details are fleshed out in dramatization, or re-enactment, which “sets the scene before our eyes” and depicts the action therein through impersonation, dialogue, and explicit exposition. Burke claims, “Any mimetic act is prayer,” and more

specifically, “Secular prayer, as a ‘moral act,’ is the *coaching of an attitude* by the use of mimetic and verbal language....” (1984, pp. 321-322, original emphasis). Implicitly, MOD speakers’ dramatic re-enactments of on-set, conflict-laden communication not only decree their biased perspectives on what the *situation is* but also petition for what the *attitudes* of both their director and themselves *should be*. These implicitly hortatory decrees and petitions then are weighted further by the explicit opinions of the speakers, added as commentary. Speakers thus conclude their metaphoric drama with a final moral – a judgment justifying and thereby redeeming the actions of the “negative” characters and celebrating and praising the actions of the “positive” characters. For Burke, “Prayer ‘transcends’ a given conflict (involving a yes and a no) when it adopts a ‘higher’ point of view from which the opponents are found to merge” (1984, pp. 325-326). Speakers must rhetorically transcend the conflict in cases of “negative” characterizations – such as the “control freak,” “madman-sledgehammer,” or even the military leader – by “redeeming” the antagonistic director, that is, by absolving him of the “crime” of conflict by claiming the struggle made for a better, more creative end result. The “positive” characterizations, where the director did not create any serious conflict and amicably resolved any existing conflict, receive encomiums, the rhetoric of praise. Thus all three stages of MOD speaker critiques – naming, dramatization, and redemption/praise – function as characterizing judgments, weighted rhetorical opinions that shed important light on the human character of collaborative creativity itself.

#### Deploying Metaphors to Create and Build Production Culture

Metaphors of the director as *character* function to create a participatory identity—for all production members to contribute to and use as a framework to

understand and to critique the director's performance and delineate the dynamics of collaborative creativity. But a broader level of metaphor is also operating in the discourse of MODs that moves away from individual character and toward the working environment of the film's production. This level of metaphor is a mapping of the *fictional world of the film* onto the *real world of the production company*.

MOD documentarians exploit the juxtaposition of those two worlds – the fiction film and the real-life production – to make their own wry comments on the making-of drama. For instance, just after George Lucas mentions that *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* “got hit by reviews because it was so dark and people sort of complained that it wasn't for kids,” the documentarians immediately insert a clip of Indy's twelve year old sidekick, Short Round (Ke Huy Quan), dramatically closing his eyes (Bouzereau, 2003). Connection between the two worlds are often exploited in the titles of MODs: *Taking Flight* (Superman), *Empire of Dreams* (Star Wars), *Other Voices Back Through Time* (The Terminator), *A Tour of the Inferno* (Platoon), *Inside the Ring* (Raging Bull). In ways both subtle and direct, MODs relate the drama of the fiction film to the drama of its making.

#### *Mapping Metaphors and Organizational Culture*

This relationship can be fruitfully explored in terms of metaphor. For Lakoff and Turner (1989), metaphors create correspondences from one term to another this way: “A metaphor with the name **A IS B** is a mapping of part of the structure of our knowledge of source domain **B** onto target domain **A**” (p. 59). Designating **B** as a “source domain” and **A** as a “target domain” clarifies the unidirectional movement of metaphoric “mapping.”

When the fictional film is mapped onto the production company's work, Kenneth Burke's observation about symbolic worlds and "real" worlds pertains:

The difference between the symbolic drama and the drama of living is a difference between imaginary obstacles and real obstacles. But: the imaginary obstacles of symbolic drama must, to have the relevance necessary for the production of effects upon audiences, reflect the real obstacles of living drama.

(1973, p. 312)

While Burke is comparing the symbolic drama created in a work of art to the living of the drama of life, the double reflection is important for the metaphoric mapping related in the discourse of MODs. If character provided routes to evaluation of the director, then this metaphoric mapping of fictional film to working environment provides routes to understanding how the director creates in and through communication.

Creating a working environment conducive to the requirements of production occupies a central part of the director's task, ambiguously phrased in the DGA as "to participate" and "to contribute." The creation of this working environment is what organizational researchers commonly call "communication climate," a term used to "account for certain properties of organizations that determined people's feelings about their organization," which, in turn, "influenced members' motivation and behavior" (Neher 1997, p. 94). When organizational researchers explore climate in innovative organizations, scholars agree on the necessity of safety, trust, freedom to debate, and cooperation (West 2003; Nijstad and Paulus 2003). Stasser and Birchmeier (2003) claim that organizational climate must "reinforce information exchange, constructive disagreement, and tolerance of deviant ideas and novel information," that "members need

to feel safe in promoting unique perspectives,” and that “the expression of divergent points of view should be encouraged” (p. 100).

While researchers still brook some controversy over their difference in describing the communication components of interpersonal relations in an organization, climate – a weather metaphor connoting employee feelings about the work environment – usually is taken to represent a more ephemeral, superficial aspect of the experience. Culture, on the other hand – an agricultural, or even biological, metaphor imported from anthropological studies – represents a more stable, all-pervasive experience. Morgan (1997) identifies these two important strengths of the culture metaphor: first, “it directs attention to the symbolic significance of almost every aspect of organizational life”; second,

it shows how organization ultimately rests in shared systems of meaning, hence in the actions and interpretive schemes that create and recreate that meaning....The culture metaphor points toward another means of creating and shaping organized activity: by influencing the ideologies, values, beliefs, language, norms, ceremonies, and other social practices that ultimately shape and guide organized action. (pp. 146, 147)

In the discourses of MODs, the organizational culture created in and through the director’s communication strategies is portrayed in two important deployments of the work of metaphors: 1) borrowing the central metaphors of the fictional dramas to create production culture, and 2) building the fictional world as an ideology for production culture. These uses of metaphors are symbolic creations that “ultimately shape and guide organized action.”

### *Borrowing Metaphors of Fictional Dramas to Create Production Culture*

Mapping the fictional film onto the work of the production company involves a tapping into the drama of the fictional world to grapple with and then harvest the lessons that symbolic drama can provide. For Martin Scorsese and *Raging Bull*, the boxing ring was unfamiliar territory:

I really didn't know that world. I mean, I knew the world but I didn't know the *ring*. I didn't understand what the ring was and is. I mean, I couldn't interpret it for my life. But I think at that time, of course, I was taking it too literally. Because ultimately I came to understand that the ring is everywhere and it depends on how much of a fighter *you* are in life and the hardest opponent in the ring that you have is yourself.... I started to connect with the material and certainly with the [main] character [boxer Jake La Motta]. I realized it years later. I kinda found myself in there somewhere ... (Bouzereau, 2004)

If Scorsese found himself, then production members of *Platoon* found something else: the borrowed war metaphor was so intense that cast members claimed Oliver Stone repeatedly experienced flashbacks during filming (Kiselyak, 2001). The lessons learned through grasping the metaphor of the drama of the film were easier for filmmakers who utilized the “family” metaphor to organize their work culture.

Several MODs of films in this study – *Superman*, *Malcolm X*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Short Cuts* – make reference to having a family feeling develop among company members, but the metaphor is most appropriate, central, and all-pervasive in *The Godfather* trilogy. Commenting on director Francis Ford Coppola, actor Robert De Niro claims,

That's just part of his nature, to have a family thing. And he made the film, the whole style of it – he personalized it in a way that he could understand, so it has a warmth, a romanticism about it that's its trademark almost. His personal life was carried over into the film and vice versa. It sort of overlapped.

For Coppola's sister, actress Talia Shire, "*The Godfather* was textured or perfumed, in a way, by our memories of our Italian-American family ..." Coppola made this happen first by placing family members in the production company. He cast Shire as the daughter of the family, hired his father to compose some of the music, and cast his daughter Sophia as the baby in the baptism scene at the end of the first *Godfather* film and as Michael Corleone's teenager daughter in *Godfather III*. In Coppola's words,

... as the movies were made one after another more and more, *The Godfather* became just kind of the biggest home movie in history and my attitude was "Why not have Tali play the part because maybe it'll be good for *her*?" ... And why not have my father get his break so he can write the music and why not put my little baby in the baptism scene? At least I'll have always a memory of that. It'll be like a home movie. I'll always be able to see what my kids looked like.

Coppola's gregarious directing style reinforces what many actors report as a natural sense of connection among the company when involved long-term in a film. As Shire explains,

It is natural to feel like a band of actors or a band of family. It occurs. Besides, of course, Francis additionally trying to have people come together with dinners and rehearsal periods which are really nothing more than creating kinfolk out of each other.

Actor Robert Duvall confirms the effect of this approach: “So we got to know each other kinda like a family outside the fictional frame and, naturally, if you’re relaxed and loose and open, it’s gonna carry over” (Coppola and Werner, 1990). Not unlike military metaphors used uncritically to describe leaders, these family metaphors necessarily heighten the *positive* values associated with well-functioning, nurturing families.

The importance of these metaphors taken from the fictional dramas is how they provide “instant” culture—“values, beliefs, language, norms, ceremonies, and other social practices” for a production company. Indeed, the metaphor of the boxing ring mobilizes struggle—whether Scorsese’s own internal battle, or the difficulties of capturing fight scenes cinematically—as always and already central to the production work. The metaphor of kinship and family as actualized by Coppola – taking meals together, thinking of the film as “home movies” – again serves as a kind of “instant” culture with ready-made social practices available through the metaphor. With culture “in place,” the work of communication, its strategies and negotiations, are ripe for collaborative creativity.

### *Building the Fictional World as an Ideology of Production Culture*

While directors borrowing the film’s central metaphor as a means of providing “instant” culture is a start, the most effective and imaginative director strategy for creating an effective working environment brought out in MOD discourse is enlisting the fictional world of the film as inspiration to guide the production of the film itself. Or more specifically, creating an organizational culture through metaphor, mapping the fictive world of the film onto the living world of its production. The tool or means for creating this metaphor of production-as-fictive-world began with the director’s explicit

fiat to the company to “make it real,” to accept the fictive world as real and build it according to that belief. The belief in the world motivated the artists to build it realistically and the realistic creation that resulted strengthened their belief. In this way, the very process of fashioning the physical environment, artifacts, and special effects of the films – Superman flying, starships moving in space, Middle earth and its inhabitants – mapped the ideology of the film’s world into the production culture.

*Superman* director Richard Donner communicated the vital importance of “making it real” directly to his collaborators in salient visual and verbal terms. Donner explains, “I have a sign to this day in my office of Superman flying through the air dragging a sign behind him that says ‘verisimilitude,’ because the story had to have its own honesty. Everybody had to believe it was real.” Tom Mankiewicz, creative consultant on the film, explains, “When you can make an audience believe that what is happening on the screen – even though it’s totally extraordinary – that this is *actually happening*, that’s when you have verisimilitude” (Thau, 2001). Director George Lucas insisted on special effects realism down to the minutest detail. *Star Wars* model maker Lorne Peterson reveals a specific guiding principle from his director on making the starships: “George wanted it to look like you could actually see the rivets, so you could see the logic of how it was made” (Becker & Burns, 2004).

More than two decades later, when Peter Jackson undertook turning *The Lord of the Rings* to film, he took Lucas’ groundbreaking and signature gritty realism even further. On *Appendix One of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* MOD, Jackson recounts his strategy for persuading the production company to invoke the ideology of Tolkein’s fictive world:

I gave a little speech to the design crew very early on. This is a little bit weird, but it was the only way I could really express myself. I said, “Look, we’ve been given the job of making *The Lord of the Rings*. From this point on, I want to think that *The Lord of the Rings* is *real*, that it was actually *history*, that these events happened. And more than that, I want us to imagine that we’ve been lucky enough to be able to go on location and shoot our movie where the real events happened. Those characters did exist and they wore costumes and I want the costumes to be totally accurate to what the real people wore. Hobbiton still exists. It’s overgrown with weeds and it’s been run down and neglected for the last three or four hundred years but we’re gonna go back there and clean it up. We’re the luckiest film crew in the world. We’re able to shoot in the real locations that these *real* events actually took place.” That was effectively my speech to try and get everybody’s head into what I actually wanted in terms of a feeling of reality. (Pellerin, 2002)

Once Jackson issued this persuasively worded and strongly emphasized edict to the design crew, it did indeed “get everybody’s head into” what he wanted and began to reverberate through the entire production environment.

In *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, actors Elijah Wood and Sean Astin play Frodo Baggins and Samwise (Sam) Gamgee, two hobbits on a journey to destroy the all-powerful One Ring in the fires of Mordor. Sam’s devotion to Frodo is total and he appoints himself protector of his friend throughout the vicissitudes of the odyssey. As filming progressed, Astin began to behave toward Wood as Sam behaves toward Frodo. As Astin explains,

I sort of appointed myself as his kind of “minder.” I wanted to look after him, make sure that he was OK...I saw the need for life to imitate art. Sam needed to look after Frodo as his sort of primary identity. As the fellowship started to coalesce, that was the job I carved out for myself. (Pellerin, 2002)

Notice that Astin uses the term “fellowship,” appropriated from the fictional drama to refer to his real-life behavior. Wood confirms, “Sean was very much Sam for me. Always looking after me, being there for me.” Throughout all six appendices worth of *The Lord of the Rings* MOD featurettes virtually all company members relate their work to some aspect of the Middle earth created first by Tolkein and then by the filmmakers. For instance, composer Howard Shore confesses,

I mention this so often even in other discussions of feeling like Frodo, and I really did feel like that, that I had this amazing journey to take and I had the ring in my vest pocket and you were chosen. Now you’re gonna write the music to *Lord of the Rings* and you had to do it. (Pellerin, 2002)

The over eighteen hours worth of MODs telling the epic story of the seven year process of making *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy contain the most detailed documentation of the collaborative creative process of all MODs in this study (and likely of all MODs presently in existence). The detailing of how they designed, built, photographed, and performed in New Zealand as Middle earth epitomizes the extent to which the “make it real” banner and battle cry can be taken. According to discourse on the MODs, the director, designers, performers, writers, producers, three hundred artists, and three thousand crew members all immersed themselves in Middle earth with fanatical zeal. In turn, Middle earth and the ideology, heroes, and artifacts they created from the inspiration

of J. R. R. Tolkien's novels guided and supported them through the fiction-paralleling vicissitudes of production. Conceptual designer John Howe reports, "Everyone was dedicated to what they were doing. Even if they weren't great Tolkien fans before they started working on the picture, they took it on board, they lived with it, they became part of Middle earth." Finally, art director Dan Hennah confirms the ultimate success of Jackson's original decree in setting into motion the creation of a "real" world of Middle earth scenes and capturing them permanently on film: "Being able to think of it and see it as something that is real certainly *made* it real and now it does exist" (Pellerin, 2002).

As these accounts illustrate, there is a sort of magic that occurs when the director "sets the tone" for the film by persuading the production company to so believe in the imaginary world of the film's fiction that they create it with a meticulously detailed sense of "verisimilitude." Recalling the production company's commitment on *The Terminator*, director James Cameron claims, "I think belief in the film was a critical factor, certainly for the actors but also for everyone who's at a creative level" (Ling, 2001). This belief begins with the belief that the film can be made and is worthy of being made and then extends to belief in the "reality" – that is, the credibility of the human drama and ideology – of the fictional world, regardless of its level of fantasy. The "reality" of the fictional world comes through the metaphoric connection it can have with the real world of the film artists. Of course, being artists and not schizophrenics, the company never forgets that the fiction film world is not actually their real world.

As Burke explains, "One uses metaphor without madness insofar as one spontaneously knows that the *literal* implication of the figure is *not* true" (1966, p. 462). But in this process of "making real" the world of the fictional film by "feeding" it with

parts of their real lives and erecting three-dimensional versions of their imaginations of it, the fictional world, in turn, “swallows” the filmmakers, enveloping them in their own very real creation. This creation then serves to inspire and motivate the film’s completion by providing itself – the ideology, images, and plot of its symbolic drama – as a guide through the trials of the company’s living drama. Thus, the filmmakers reality and the film’s imaginary fiction’s symbolicity interpenetrate through the potent borrowing and building of the film’s central metaphors.

The more of a connection with the sensory and ideological details of the fictional world they see in their real lives, the more they are “moved” to surrender themselves to it, inhabit the fiction with authenticity, and perform their real world creative tasks with zealous, secularly religious commitment. For Kenneth Burke, an ideology “is like a spirit taking up its abode in a body: it makes that body hop around in certain ways; and that same body would have hopped around in different ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it” (1966, p. 6). The imaginary world begins to “possess” the filmmakers metaphorically, in that they begin to see their life experience while making the movie – and especially their experiences *of* making the movie – through the perspective of the images, actions, characters and values of the fiction film. So as they make the film, the film, in turn, makes them – or re-makes them.

#### Metaphors as Makers and Mentors of Organizational Culture

Actor Willem Dafoe offers this evaluation of a director’s creative contribution to a film production, gleaned from his experience working on *Platoon*: “You know, a good director is a guy that creates a certain tone and creates the world, and you can *be* in that world, and then all he has to do is steer you” (Kiselyak, 2001). Once a director borrows

the film fiction's central metaphor to create an "instant" culture or sets in motion the creation of an appropriate production ideology by fiat to "make real" the world of the film, the task of coordinating the performances of film artists in the ensemble becomes significantly easier. The company's enveloping belief in the ideological reality of the fiction film – one they actively build with minds and hands – allows them to more easily accept and comply with the further guidance the director offers. In this way, directors participate entirely through communication and contribute most creatively by initiating and cultivating an inspiring ideological environment. As Edgar Schein (1991) claims, "... *the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture*" (p. 2, original emphasis).

The production-as-fictive-world metaphor animates and coordinates the creative efforts of the ensemble as effectively as it does because it is all-enveloping rather than superficial, grounded within the production work itself rather than imported from without, and highly imaginative rather than literal and mundane. Because the ensemble's business requires them to build this functional, fully-featured, fictional environment anyway, it becomes easy for them, when charged to "make it real," to become engulfed in their self-made surroundings, teeming with mythic imagery and dramatic language. Because of the ensemble's active involvement in literally "realizing" the imaginary, then, the source of the metaphor (the fiction film) securely maps itself, via every connection made by every ensemble member, to the target (the production). These connections include all characters, themes, plots, settings, artifacts (props), and imagery that comprise the world of the film. This plethora of material with which the ensemble is able to identify allows metaphor to function on a more systemic level than when used for

dramatic re-enactment in characterizing director performance. Here, metaphor functions beyond the linguistic level alone and works to crystallize identification of production world with fiction world in a practical way to inspire and motivate company members from within by “inhabiting” them with the film fiction’s complex of ideology, symbols, values, and practices.

Borrowing central metaphors and ideologies of films to be produced represents a broader use of metaphor, then, not simply for the re-enactment of past events but in the service of the creative process itself. As MOD discourse reveals, the more ensemble members accepted the ersatz reality of the imaginary fiction they themselves were laboring to create, the more involved and committed they became to creating it. When metaphoric mapping of fiction to life becomes extensive enough that a production company can virtually *live* that fiction, the boundaries between reality and imagination, performer and role, production world and film world, begin to dissolve.

MOD shop talk’s verbal dramatizations of this broader use of metaphor serve as meta-communication – that is, communication about communication. As practical metaphor takes metaphor itself beyond the linguistic sphere, so the meta-communication of shop talk takes the communication of collaborative creative events beyond the sphere of past experience into the sphere of re-present-ation, information, and interpretation. Thus, as boundaries are dissolved by the metaphoric mappings of fiction to life, so the meta-communication of MOD shop talk, in the guise of casual banter and delicious gossip, seeks to articulate the meanings those dissolutions elicit.

## Moving Beyond Metaphoric Vision to the Drama of Collaborative Creativity

Through metaphor, MOD speakers symbolically re-enact condensed verbal and visual dramas that language leadership as performance of character and reality as performance of culture. MOD discourse dramatically characterizes how directors display, enact, and embody the power of their position. Military leaders, pioneers, madmen, assistants, and playful children are potent metaphors that crystallize character, guide interactions, and provide entrance to a more human side of leader-follower communication dynamics. The central metaphors of film fiction—the boxing ring, the war zone, family—that directors deploy to import “instant culture” to the production company as well as fiats they issue to “make real” the film’s physical environment serve to animate ensemble involvement and creativity by fusing the ideologies and physicalities of symbolic drama with the living drama of production.

This chapter’s metaphor – shop talk on the back lot – is a way of framing this “living drama of production” to feature how film production members characterize their work, their interactions, and their investments in the films they produce. Shop talk – talk about work while not “on task” – includes gossip, insider knowledge and expertise, and politically savvy ruminations on issues of importance to organizational members. To characterize the various metaphors and the variegated use of metaphor by MOD speakers with the larger metaphor of “shop talk,” is to concentrate on the intricate ways that communication is at the heart of collaborative creativity. Central to collaborative creativity, in the discourses of MODs and in organizational research, is the metaphor of vision.

Most every MOD in this study highlights the term “vision” – either attributed to the director or as the director’s self-described task. Arnold Schwarzenegger says of James Cameron: “He’s a control freak, basically. I mean, he wants to do basically everything because *he has such a clear vision* of what he wants to see.” Actor Michael Biehn adds, “He was very, very precise in what he wanted, and meticulous. He wanted it his way. He wanted to get what he wanted. He wanted *his vision up there*.” (Ling, 2001, emphases added). Director Oliver Stone argues, “A movie is a collective effort, yes, but you have to have a person in charge, a person *whose vision makes it all coherent*” (Tirard 2002, p. 137, emphasis added). Indeed, this chapter began with the metaphor of the director as funnel, Brian Singer maintaining that a film is “really my vision of their visions.”

For organizational theorists, one leadership style is the “visionary” (Robbins 1998; Bennis and Townsend, 1995), where a leader transforms an organization by conceiving and articulating a clear image of its future. For West (2003), “Creative, innovative organizations are those where employees *perceive and share an appealing vision* of what the organization is trying to achieve...” (p. 256, emphasis added). Creativity research also employs the metaphor of vision, most often describing the solo genius as a “visionary.” For Denise Shekerjian, in her study of forty winners of the prestigious MacArthur Award (commonly known as the “Genius” Award), “vision and heightened creativity” are deeply linked because, “when motivated by deep-seated convictions that address a new and far-ranging order of things, the tendency is strong to think more creatively” (1990, p. 84). Silvano Arieti (1976) interrogates Jung’s theory of the “visionary mode of the creative person” where “the emerging product of creativity is

an *autonomous complex* which, like a neurotic complex, is a detached portion of the psyche that leads an independent life” (pp. 26-27, original emphasis).

From the nebulous “vision thing” attributed to effective leaders, the perceptions of others in organization life, to the creative visionary, vision becomes the “God term” for creativity across disciplinary realms. For Kenneth Burke,

... In any term we can posit a world, in the sense that we can treat the world *in terms of it*, seeing all as emanations, near or far, of its light. Such reduction to a simplicity being technically a reduction to a summarizing title or “God term,” when we confront a simplicity we must forthwith ask ourselves what complexities are being subsumed beneath it. (1962, p. 105, original emphasis)

It is appropriately ironic that the “vision” metaphor should serve as a “God term,” since the word “vision” imbues creativity with a mystical, ineffable quality that succeeds in robbing it of its human dimension by attributing it to Divine Providence. Through the use of this “summarizing title” of “vision,” the intricate complexities of human interactive dynamics of collaborative creativity are “subsumed” beneath its simplistic reference to the leader’s solitary deific connection.

“Vision” as a metaphor for knowledge production has been critiqued by postmodern theorists who link vision and the metaphors of sight to the ability to measure, to gauge, and to know the world in quantifiable ways. Vision renders the other senses “second class” and detaches the knower from the object of study in much art, science, and knowledge production. Richard Palmer (1997) explains,

The voyages of discovery [from Europe to the New World] show man exploring and claiming the surface of the earth in quite a new way . . . . The frenzy to

measure everything and, by extension, to control and to lay claim to everything that is measured, ushers in a new scientific era predicated on the quest for systematic and verifiable knowledge. (p. 23)

Dwight Conquergood's (1998) critique of the visual/textual bias also implicates vision as an impoverished way of understanding the world that loses touch with communication as immediacy, involvement, and intimacy (p. 26).

The "shop talk" discourses of MODs utilize vision and then move to articulate how – by sledgehammers and family meals – collaborative creativity is languaged as not simply ways of seeing and perceiving, but as performances that capture Conquergood's immediacy, involvement, and intimacy. As MOD discourse reveals, the performance of metaphor *influences* and *steers* collaborative creative activity and then serves to *re-enact* that co-creativity in retrospective sensemaking. Kenneth Burke (1966) sees "language as an aspect of action, that is, symbolic action" (p. 44), and in MOD discourse as elsewhere, metaphor performs by fusion, condensation, substitution, identification, and dissonance. Metaphor enacts miniature dramas, setting the scenes vividly before our mind's eye. Metaphor creates new realities by "throwing together" (the root meaning of "symbol") two entities our reason never associates, thereby providing a "perspective by incongruity" that forces our minds to logically justify the relationship between those initially jarring juxtapositions. By such performances, metaphor expands our knowledge and mental experience by its active method of imaginative rationality.

The performance of metaphor in the discourse of MODs foregrounds the poetic dimensions of collaborative creativity. Focusing on that performance allows the tools of figurative language to figure in the investigation of group ingenuity. The serious study of

metaphor in creativity research allows the inherently polysemic power of its strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg 2007) to extend our understanding of artistic invention's possibilities beyond the confines of scientific terminologies.

Metaphor's fanciful, theatrical, symbolic re-enactments go further in describing the tenor of professional co-creative relationships between leaders and followers than typical descriptions in organizational literature. Metaphors vividly present the often overlooked *human* aspects of collaborative creative processes – emotion, relationships, interaction – all of which provide a complex of factors that give each creative event its nuance, unpredictability, unrepeatability, and utter uniqueness.

These unquantifiable facets of creative experience – that the metaphor of vision shuts down – can only be approached through the terminology and philosophical orientation found in drama. The drama of metaphor resides in its conceptual tensions and connections, but also in its performative aspect, the manner in which it influences the practices of those who accept its imaginative suggestions as worthy of belief. Such is the power of not only the particular linguistic metaphors we have considered but of metaphor seen large, of a metaphoric orientation that includes perception but also knowledge and understanding, of an ability to transcend the limits of literal perspectives and enter the freedom of figurative ones that allow for greater performative leaps of faith into novel creations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Off-Screen and In Between Inferences:

#### The Human Dimension of Collaborative Creativity

This study has centered on how filmmakers language, story, and dramatize their creative work in the collaborative enterprise of making films. I selected making-of documentaries of eighteen significant films as texts to analyze. I focused on the mythic structure underlying these documentaries, on the manner in which filmmakers attribute collaborative creative credit to their predecessors and ensemble members, and on the way filmmakers use metaphor to dramatize ensemble creative interaction.

MOD discourse evidences mythic, historic, and symbolic patterns that verbally and visually dramatize the processes of complex, collaborative, creative activity entailed in producing a Hollywood feature film. As *mythic patterns*, MOD discourse employs traditional story forms and motifs to structure the building blocks of company member personal anecdotes into a cohesive narrative of the entire enterprise. As *historic patterns*, MOD discourse implies a linguistically weighted conversation between the contemporary filmmakers and their filmmaker heroes as they commemorate and renovate those predecessors' prior creations. As *symbolic patterns*, MOD discourse spotlights the rhetorical tropes filmmakers use to create collaborative environments and to characterize creative ensemble interaction.

Chapter two, *Campfire Victory Songs: Collaborative Creativity Structured as Mythos*, featured how MODs structure an appealing and comprehensible story for their audiences. I demonstrated that MODs follow mythically-based motifs that imbue narratives with mystery, suspense, and surprise, retelling the tale whose end is already known. Northrop Frye provided the perspective of MODs as romance tales of a successful hero quest. Kenneth Burke's dramatisic method allowed me to find the MOD story's central agon, or struggle, to be between the creative and chaotic forces and to recognize their complementarity in his concept of "cooperative competition." Joseph Campbell provided the monomyth that structures the hero's journey away from and return to home. His seventeen motifs that map the hero's adventure in more detail helped to articulate the creative journey of the filmmaking ensemble of heroes. Finally, Mircea Eliade supplied insights concerning cosmogony that inspired my view of MODs as contemporary creation myths and symbolic rituals that celebrate and perpetuate the original creation story. MODs, then, utilize the structure of the quest tale to organize the plot, drama, and rhetoric of collaborative creativity told in MODs. Audiences, then, are invited to re-experience the journey, and every MOD symbolically and ritually repeats and re-actualizes the cosmogony.

In chapter three, *Parlor Conversations: Collaborative Creativity Constituted in History*, Kenneth Burke and Hayden White inspired my view of MODs as virtual conversations of filmmakers with their historic predecessors. Burke's analogy of the "unending conversation" and White's concept of the emplotment of history in fictional genres provided a conceptual frame through which to view filmmaker attitudes to filmmaking predecessors, traditional industry practices, and present collaborators.

Through their various roles as fans, critics, and memorialists, filmmakers rhetorically and practically commemorated the achievements of their Hollywood heroes and then rhetorically and practically renovated those achievements in their own work. This renovation and commemoration of film history looped back into creativity theory and the importance of evaluation. This chapter traced the rhetorical route through history by which creators evaluated creativity.

In chapter four, *Back Lot Shop Talk: Collaborative Creativity Dramatized through Metaphor*, the lens of language provided entrance to the rhetorical and poetic trope of metaphor when filmmakers create and narrate creative events. Burke's concept of perspective by incongruity and Lakoff and Johnson's concept of imaginative rationality supported the argument that metaphor is constitutive to understanding and to storying creativity. The film production ensemble, at the decree of the director, used metaphor to map the ideology of their fictional world onto their real lives and especially onto their work lives during production. Then the ensemble used metaphor to characterize their production interaction with their director. Finally, the metaphor of vision was interrogated and found to be pervasive as a God term in filmmaker discourse even as it shuts down the collaborative nature of creativity that the discourse dramatizes.

The purpose of this study has been to utilize the discourses of making-of-documentary films to understand how collaborative creativity is storied. In turn, these stories revealed specific communication forms, practices, and strategies that enrich theoretical conceptions of collaborative creativity. This chapter now moves to larger answers of how these stories operate, how this study has enriched the theoretical conceptions of collaborative creativity, and how collaborative creativity might be

differently valued in future creativity research.

### Narrating Collaborative Creativity

The fundamental premise guiding this study is that creativity narratives provide valuable resources for apprehending the variegated phenomena of collaborative creativity. This study has asked *how do MODs story collaborative creativity?* Myth, history, and metaphor are all ways of “storying.” But collaborative creativity is also storied in MODs by what is *not* seen on screen and by what audiences are *invited to extrapolate* from these stories to our own lives. These two rhetorical strategies cohere in an operative term: inference. What can this study now infer about stories of collaborative creativity, and how is inference constantly invited by the form of story?

### *Collaborative Creativity Storied as Space-Off*

Film theory speaks of “off-screen space,” the concept where the viewer’s attention is directed to areas beyond the frame that the camera forecloses. For example, off-screen space is engaged 1) by characters looking off screen, 2) by characters entering from off-screen, 3) by framing a character or item such that part of it is out of frame, and 4) by leaving the screen frame empty of people and motion of any kind (Adams, 1976). The best example of off-screen space is the presence of the camera itself: we are invited both to infer and to ignore its presence, even as the frame itself is created by the camera operator through its lens.

Gender theorist Teresa de Lauretis (1987) borrows this concept, which she terms the “space-off” and defines as “the space not visible in the frame but *inferable* from what the frame makes visible” (p. 26, emphasis added), to construct a metaphor for the invisibility of the feminist view in male-dominated discourse. For de Lauretis, the

feminist view is “the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representations. I think of it as spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved out in the interstices ...” (p. 25).

Off-screen space in MODs is a rhetorical strategy and effect – for documentarians and for audience members. In terms of production choices, MOD documentarians employ off-screen space by 1) having the speakers address an off screen interviewer, 2) by excising the questions from the final edit of the interview, and 3) in splicing interviews together to create a kind of “he said/he said” account of an event. In these ways, they call attention to the existence of perspectives and apparatus not included in the frame of the MOD and yet inferable from it. There is, throughout all MOD discourse, an off-screen space concatenation of stories, narrators, events, and judgments. As audience, we are invited to simultaneously ignore these concatenations of off-screen space even as it operates by inference to create the experience of having participated in the “making of” a film.

This rhetorical strategy and effect is similarly important to this study’s approach to and conclusions about collaborative creativity. MOD discourse, figuratively speaking, narrates collaborative creativity as off-screen space. Very rarely do the speakers explicitly mention the terms “collaboration” or “creativity.” As a researcher, then, I had to infer collaborative creativity as off-screen and more importantly as “social spaces carved out in the interstices.” These social spaces of collaborative creativity, narrated obliquely and teased out here explicitly, provide an alternative to paper and pencil test instruments of psychometric and experimental cognitive psychologists. These accounts are first-person, lived experiences, and ephemeral—characteristics of creativity and its

processes that too often “go missing” in creativity research.

MODs offer testimonies “from the horses’ mouths,” implicitly emphasizing aspects of the collaborative creative experience most salient to them and thereby offering a built-in insider’s critique of the values of collaborative creativity. In a sense, these stories say to creativity researchers, “Hey, look over *here* and see what matters to *us, the co-creators.*” The audio-video medium lends the added effect of each speaker’s presence, an embodiment of story, a re-embodiment of lived experience in that unique social space. The idiosyncratic details of these experiences relived in their oral performance don’t easily fit scientific hypotheses of creativity, collaborative or otherwise.

Furthermore, the processes of collaborative creativity and the lived experiences of the creators have been lost to time. Only through memory and narration can the remnants of those events be recalled, ordered, and relived. In a sense, we are hearing, viewing, and re-experiencing these gathered remnants of memory through the multiple lenses of each narrator, crafted into a story line by the documentarians, and produced after the “fact” of the experiences. Inferring collaborative creativity through these ephemeral events, captured now in performances on video, is a symbolic re-construction of those ephemeral events outside the frame but inferred from the frame. Indeed, all creativity research does this symbolic reconstruction, whether deducing characteristics of creative people from case studies, delineating contextual factors conducive to creative environments, or naming interactions that are fruitful to production. Most creativity research, however, does not recognize or acknowledge this symbolic reconstruction.

This study not only recognizes its own methods, but exploits the concept of “space-off” to acknowledge that collaborative creativity as processual “event” is always

value-laden, experienced, embodied, and ephemeral. Accounts of these events are always symbolic reconstructions—whether retold in first-person stories or recounted as social scientific “fact” in creativity research. Approaching these accounts “obliquely” as space-off acknowledges out of frame structures of representation; that is, mythic structures pervade the tale, speakers converse in and with history; and metaphors are marshaled to serve ideological functions. A similar approach to researching creativity, obliquely through its representations in space-off, might also conclude that collaborative creativity itself is “space-off.” We can only infer its processes and operations, but never point the camera directly at it and record it as it happens.

The danger in this conclusion is in continuing to reify the mystery of individual genius, to locate creativity in the supernatural realm or a sort of “twilight zone” out of the reach of human comprehension, and to treat creativity as a substantial entity of its own right, independent of the social interstices in and from which it emerges. The value in this conclusion outweighs those dangers. That is, “space off” is a reminder that collaborative creativity is a human endeavor—always mythic, historic, and languaged—never separate from the social, political, and the aesthetic. Thinking of collaborative creativity as “space off” inferences to these realms, is a way of opening creativity research to explicit questions about them. Later in this conclusion, I offer some tentative answers to larger, “space off” questions about collaborative creativity.

*Collaborative Creativity Storied as Moral Inducements to the Hollywood Dream Factory*

Communication theorist Walter Fisher (1989) extends Kenneth Burke’s definition of man as the symbol-using animal to define humans as homo narrans, the animal whose generic form of symbol use is storytelling (p. 63). Fisher has proposed “the narrative

paradigm,” the perspective of narration as the way human beings reason in everyday life, the “argument” of their discourse presented through the elements of story. For Fisher, narration means “symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (p. 58). Fisher further claims that the narrative paradigm

... implies that human communication should be viewed ... as stories or accounts competing with other stories or accounts purportedly constituted by good reasons, as rational when stories satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements. (p. 58)

Fisher claims that story audiences possess an “inherent awareness of narrative probability” (“what constitutes a coherent story”), and they have a “constant habit of testing narrative fidelity” (“whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives”) (p. 64).

So director Robert Altman invites his entire cast and crew to view the “dailies,” and Spike Lee solicits financial support from prominent members of the African-American community to help finish *Malcolm X*. “Good reasons” in story form constitute the bulk of MOD discourse. It is significant that, in common parlance, we speak of *relating* a story as synonymous with *telling* a story. In telling a story, the storyteller *relates* that story; that is, the storyteller logically connects the sequence of events in the story into a cohesive whole, with a point or message, and also logically connects the story itself to the audience. As well, each audience member does his or her own work in relating the story to his or her life. Meaning is not settled in the narrative paradigm; instead, the “moral of the story” is left to the listener.

What is the collective “moral” lesson, or inducement, available in the discourses of MODs? And what moral are we invited to apply to the space-off claims about collaborative creativity? The stories in MODs are success stories, no doubt paralleling other organizational and individual tales of success offered in the creativity literature: the invention of the internet, the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA, the triumph of J. K. Rowling and the publisher of Harry Potter novels. Their moral? You can do this, too. Listeners, then, are invited to participate in the successful quest, revel in the “glory” of the victorious tale, and imagine themselves on the brink of their own journeys. True to Fisher’s paradigm, these stories invite us to imagine that we too can succeed—with inventions, discoveries, and triumphs—*if we collaborate to unleash the creativity that adheres in the group.*

For organizational theorist David Boje, however, this “success” story is typical of most stories told by management and recounted by researchers in management theory: “the construction and choice of the *happy story* over competing voices is less a search for the truth than a naive political and economic complicity that marginalizes alternative stories” (1995, p. 997, emphasis added). Boje features the multiplicity and *contentiousness* of collective storytelling processes: “People wander the halls and offices of organizations, simultaneously chasing storylines--and that is the ‘work’ of contemporary organizations. More important, organizational life is more indeterminate, more differentiated, more chaotic, than it is simple, systematic, monological, and hierarchial” (p. 1001).

The same list of adjectives might well be applied to collaborative creativity, but then I would be falling into the same trap of most creativity research, ending with lists of

characteristics that describe creativity, but failing to capture the moralizing urge of stories about creativity. Instead, in the vein of “space-off,” how might we imagine from our own lives the tales *not* told on MODs? What voices are marginalized? When I think of most organizational stories, those told *among cohorts, about others, at work*, don’t these stories often feature others who are inept, lazy, and manipulative? Don’t these stories often feature abuses of hierarchy and power, intrigue and backstabbing, perceived and real affronts? Don’t these stories feature a *lack* of collaboration and *attacks* on creativity?

The stories told in MODs *excise* all of this, asking us to imagine a world of collaborative creativity where everyone works equally hard and at the top of their game; where interactions are never about pettiness, squabbles over resources, or grabs for power; where work is never imbued with drudgery, going-through-the-motions, too-much-on-my-plate of the daily grind.

MODs tap into and perpetuate a potent ideology surrounding Hollywood and its “dream factory.” Susan Hayward (1996) argues that we can read, for example, a photograph of Marilyn Monroe in several ways:

At the denotative level this is a photograph of the movie star . . . . At a connotative level we associate this photograph with Marilyn Monroe’s star qualities of glamour, sexuality, beauty. . . . At a mythic level we understand this sign as activating the myth of Hollywood: the dream factory that produces glamour in the form of the stars it constructs, but also the dream machine that can crush them—all with a view to profit and expediency. (p. 310)

The Hollywood myth folds into and across American culture as something to be both sought after and avoided at all costs: glamour, power, money, but also decadence,

destruction, and decay. MOD stories, read for their accounts of collaborative creativity, offer only narratives of a mythic Hollywood to be sought after, endorsed, and held up as exemplars. “Profit and expediency” are good things. Audiences, then, are left not to wonder—why do my attempts at collaborative creativity fall short?—but instead to continue to purchase a share in the dream machine.

Thus, no story told on a MOD stands alone but interacts with all other stories told on that particular MOD, all other MODs, all other Hollywood tales, and all other stories ever heard by MOD speakers or audiences. Following Fisher’s theory of narrative rationality – stories’ adherence to coherence and probability – each MOD anecdote finds its meaning in the mutual evaluation of it and every other story any one individual hearer has experienced. Meaning is thus the result of correspondences, whether in the exchange of idea and action while collaboratively creating or in the performance and evaluation in storytelling. Storytelling then becomes a mutual meaning making process – arguably the central business of communication – and this process makes way for a multiplicity of meanings from one storytelling event.

This study has followed the multiplicity of meanings offered in MOD discourses to its fork in the road: success tales are made into documentaries, offered in case studies in creativity research, and told and retold in organizational celebrations. The contentious stories we chase in the hallways and offices, tales of failure, collapse, and destruction, are *individual experiences and individual shortcomings*, left unstoried in the grand cultural narrative of the Hollywood Dream Factory. Cautionary tales, “Don’t do it this way!” too often occur only in the rear-view mirror on the road of the success story, as detours and off-ramps, sometimes mentioned but never narrated as central to the tale of collaborative

creativity. This inducement to successful “happy” stories, while excising contentious and marginal voices, however, is a very tragic view of collaborative creativity. Later in this conclusion, true to Kenneth Burke’s faith in critical orientations that hold both/and, rather than either/or, I offer a comic view.

### Ways of Seeing Collaborative Creativity

Taking communication as constitutive to collaborative creativity significantly enriches creativity theory. The term “theory” derives from the Greek *theasthai*, meaning “to observe.” As it derives from same root as the word “theatre,” theory may be interpreted as *a way of seeing* some concept that is more abstract than concrete. Previous creativity research has been founded on diverse “ways of seeing” the elusive concept of creativity: that creativity results from a number of personality traits present in individuals (Guilford, 1950), that creativity follows a process of conscious and unconscious cognitive stages (Wallas, 1926; Osborn, 1963; Barron, 1988), that creativity emerges after the mastery of domain-relevant knowledge and skills (Gardner, 1993; Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), that creativity is most fluent when resulting from intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996), that creativity is greatly conditioned upon cultural and economic influences (Simonton, 1999), and that creativity models economic investment where creators “are able to ‘buy low and sell high’ in the realm of ideas” (Sternberg, 2006, p. 87).

Approaching collaborative creativity from more of an oblique angle than the majority of existent creativity studies has yielded a counter-statement of collaborative creativity. Where much previous research has focused on *personality*, this research has focused on *relationships*. Where much previous research has been limited to *cognition*,

this research has featured *communication*. Where much previous research has focused on statistical *counts*, this research has focused on human *accounts*. Where much previous research has sought to *exclude* seemingly irrelevant aspects of creative experience, this research has sought to *include* all aspects of creative experience *that speakers deemed* important. Where much previous research has sought to *simplify* creativity, this research has accepted and honored its *complexity*. In short, this study has brought creativity theory a view of the human dimension through consideration of story, language, performance, relationship, and emotion.

Three specific counter perspectives that this study has yielded are first, that collaborative creativity is shared, not possessed; second, that collaborative creativity occurs within the dynamics of the human drama; and third, that collaborative creativity is perpetuated and imbued with meanings through its performance. These three perspectives intertwine in a kind of mobius strip that continually loops in and through communication.

#### *Collaborative Creativity is Shared, not Possessed*

Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1996) first shifted the time-worn research question from “What is creativity?” to “Where is creativity?” He answered it by claiming that creativity occurs in the exchange between individual creator and the field of “gatekeepers” who judge whether that creator’s product is considered novel and valuable enough to be added to the domain’s body of knowledge. While this view introduced the concept that others were involved in creativity from an *evaluative* position, it still situated all power to *generate* a creative product in the individual.

This study found that MOD narrators verbally credit many production company members with creative power and attribute the success of their final film to the creative

synergy that resulted from combining all of their diverse talents and efforts in cooperation. Time and again, MOD speakers relate how an idea first was generated by one person then passed on to others who developed it further until at the end of this collective shaping process, the idea had been nurtured by numerous minds and hands, often finishing in a different and better form than first imagined. Thus, in this sense, as far as the final product is concerned, creative power exists entirely apart from any individual member in the fusion of all their creative talents and efforts together. It is never *possessed* by any individual but *shared* by the collective.

Sharing recalls James Carey's definition of the ritual model of communication and its synonyms: participation, association, fellowship, common faith, and community (1988, 18). For Carey, communication is "the representation of shared beliefs," not solely the imparting of information. To approach creativity as shared by a group, rather than possessed by an individual, acknowledges the centrality of communication, symbol use, and the drama of human relations to creativity. Mapping this sharing through story is an alternative route to dramatic collective acts that constitute collaborative creativity.

Two views of communication – as dialogue and relationality – further illuminate collaborative creativity as not possessed by one but shared by all. For communication theorist Leslie Baxter (2006), "A dialogic view moves the center from individual mind to the 'between' – the joint communicative practices of interlocutors" (p. 107). "Meaning-making is accomplished in multivocal utterances between interlocutors, rather than in the minds and actions of sovereign individuals" (p. 108). From this view, for creativity practiced by an ensemble, any particular individual's thoughts and acts only take on meanings – in this context, creative value – outside of him or her, in the "between" of

symbolic exchanges conducted across the ensemble.

Communication as relationality further dispossesses the individual of total and unqualified creative powers. For rhetorician Celeste Condit (2006), “Communication is a process of relating” (p. 3) and relationship “presumes fluidity and is nonessentialist. No relationship is static; relationships cannot be precisely and fully enumerated as to their qualities and boundaries” (p. 4). Condit’s broad view sees everything that exists as “nothing more than a particularly, and perspectively, constituted set of relationships. ... There are no clear boundaries, no thing ... that has a discrete existence separate from the web of relationships of all to all” (p. 5). What this means for collaborative creativity as communication is that as no individual “entity” – the identity of any person who participates in creative activity – can exist apart from the “set of relationships” that form, inform, and belong to the group. Because these people and their relationships to one another are constantly in flux, their creative activity is never able to come into possession of any one of them.

#### *Collaborative Creativity Emerges Within Human Drama*

Creativity may be less mystical than it was centuries ago, but it is far from being understood when approached from scientific vocabularies. The human drama that is creative activity cannot be generalized into diagrammable models, mathematical formulas, or pithy theories; I hold with Kenneth Burke (1954, p. 7) that the scientific method suffers from its unique form of “trained incapacity” that makes it blind to the human nuances and details that are part and parcel of the experience of creativity. Certainly, scientific approaches and vocabularies have an-aesthetized the inherently aesthetic qualities of artistic creativity.

This study has found that MODs structure, historicize, and language the story of collaborative creativity as a human drama. Over and over, the stories told center on the interaction of people in purposeful pursuit of envisioned goals, cooperating and competing, encountering obstacles and finding help, meeting and suffering a sequence of trials, experiencing fortune and enduring misfortune. A dramatic perspective, one that specifically looks for the drama in all situations, emphasizes motive, attitude, perspective, bias, relationship, social interaction, emotion, choice, thought, and environment. Without attention to drama, the human dimension of creativity is missed and the research risks losing sight of creativity as wrapped up in all things humans do, feel, think, and say. Attempting to distill creative processes to their “active ingredients,” much like Big Pharma strips natural herbs of their other constituents, only impoverishes the study of human creativity and risks throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Collaborative creativity as human drama emphasizes different “terms for order.” Combs and Mansfield (1976, xvii) summarize how Kenneth Burke argued

*Life is drama. Action means structured behavior in terms of symbols, which implies choice, conflict and cooperation, which men communicate to each other. Society is a drama in which actions, in terms of social symbols, are the crucial events. The difference between “staged” drama and the drama of real life is the difference between human obstacles imagined by an artist and those actually experienced. The realms are homologous: Life and art both deal with the fundamental problems of human existence, and both aim at the symbolic resolution of conflict through communication.*

Indeed, collaborative creativity emerges within human drama; human drama also offers a

view of collaborative creativity as a kind of symbolic resolution of conflict through communication. In that these are success stories, situated in history, articulated through multiple voices, and marshalling language to induce cooperation, this “problem” of human existence—how to create collaboratively—is temporarily “solved.”

Folklorist Robert Abrahams (1968, 148) applies this same calculus to verbal art, explaining that expressive art often focuses on a problem, a problem that is then

“magically” transferred from the item to the recurrent problem [in culture] when the performance operates successfully, sympathetically. Because the performer projects the conflict and resolves it, the illusion is created that it can be solved in real life; and with the addition of sympathy, of “acting with,” the audience not only derives pleasure from the activity but also knowledge.

As such, these dramas of human relations in and through collaborative creativity are equipment for living (Burke 1973) and necessarily comic perspectives (Burke 1984).

While Burke’s tragic perspective features the scapegoat, victimage, and mortification as the “cure” for our fatedness to a course of unchangeable events, his comic perspective features an appreciation of the human condition in all its foibles: attendance to irony, critical awareness of active choices, and possibilities of symbol use. These comic perspectives on the drama of collaborative creativity are available in these performances.

#### *Collaborative Creativity Lives and Finds Its Meanings in Performance*

Unlike case studies, biographical methods, or pen and paper tests used to study creativity, MOD stories in this study all come by way of oral performance, a mode of human engagement equally reminiscent of living room chat and water cooler banter as well as tribal histories and recitations of epic adventures intoned by griots. These oral

performances proceed directly from the memories and feelings of MOD speakers' lived experience and as such implicitly reveal which aspects of creating collectively they hold most important. Their choice of topics and language constitutes an "event" in the inchoate stream of sensory impressions that make up their past experience. Considering that some of these experiences took place more than two decades before these oral narrations, the details they choose to relate become highly significant. Despite lapses of memory and the possibility of fanciful embroidering of details, or perhaps because of them, MOD tales plainly reveal the personal and professional values their tellers hold.

MOD speakers perform their perspectively weighted first person accounts for an off-screen interviewer and a camera that captures that performance for a potential multitude of DVD viewers. The medium of video allows an audience to experience repeatedly the wealth of communicative details present in the vocal and gestural delivery of each speaker, a richness that easily eludes written transcriptions or is excised in third-person accounts in biography or case study. Despite the fact that documentarians edit these intimate performances according to their own version of the overall story, these performances are rich accounts of what matters to these individuals, as well as what matters to culture in a particular historical moment.

Victor Turner (1988) sought to humanize the study of culture as performance by conceiving of humans as performers, *homo performans*. Taking his cue from Kenneth Burke, Turner writes: "If man is a sapient animal, a tool-making animal, a self-making animal, a symbol-using animal, he is, no less, a performing animal, *Homo performans*, . . . a self-performing animal—his performances are, in a way, reflexive, in performing he reveals himself to himself" (p. 81).

Ours is not an oral society, one that depends on memory and recitation of knowledge to perpetuate its culture (Ong, 2002). Nevertheless, MODs, like other documentaries on video, give us the best approximation of preserving culture through oral performance of stories. The reflexivity available in and through these performances of memories of events of collaborative creativity ring true to Turner's claim (1988, p. 24) that cultural performances provide moments to enact, comment on, critique, and evaluate the norms and values of a culture: "a sociocultural group turns, bends, reflects back on itself, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other components that make up their public selves."

Each of these enriched notions of collaborative creativity—creativity is shared by the group, creativity emerges from and offers a comic perspective on human drama, and individual performances are our record of reflexivity—brings into the scholarly conversation a larger question about collaborative creativity: what do we value? What are our shared beliefs, our overarching set of values, our revelation to ourselves by ourselves about collaborative creativity as performed in these stories? Creativity research has, of course, heralded creativity as a valuable activity, but to what purpose?

#### Collaborative Creativity as Intrinsically Valued

For Silvano Arieti, "Creativity is one of the major means by which the human being liberates himself from the fetters not only of his conditioned responses, but also of his usual choices" (1976, p.4). Moreover, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi claims,

... most of the things that are interesting, important, and human are the results of creativity. We share 98 percent of our genetic makeup with chimpanzees. What

makes us different – our language, values, artistic expression, scientific understanding, and technology – is the result of individual ingenuity that was recognized, rewarded, and transmitted through learning. Without creativity, it would be difficult indeed to distinguish humans from apes. (pp. 1996, 1-2)

Paul B. Paulus and Bernard A. Nijstad add “Creativity, or the generation of novel ideas, especially ones that are useful, is essential for our survival as a species” (2003, p. vii). All of these theorists couch the value of creativity in the language of behaviorism, in attempts to raise our species above that of chimps, and in the language and urges of evolutionary biology: we must create to survive.

*Pleasure, Community, and Transcendence*

No speaker on any of the MODs I studied speaks directly or obliquely of collaborative creativity in terms of behaviorism, species, or survival. But, over and over, when filmmakers reflect on why they agreed to participate in a film project or what it has meant to them after it was finished, their comments reflect these three motives at once: pleasure, community, and transcendence. In a word, filmmakers found creating a film together valuable for its own sake – for the beauty they could create, for the opportunity to create with others, and for the meaning the experience gave their lives.

Fundamental to the sense of value given to the collaborative creative experience by members of the film ensembles featured on MODs is the intrinsic worth of creating. All speakers without exception operated from the assumption that the opportunity to create was valuable in and of itself. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls this an “autotelic” activity, where the reward is in the doing of it (p. 113). In the sense that creativity is enjoyed for its own sake, it is both pleasure and play. Huizinga (1950) claims that it is the

“fun-element that characterizes the essence of play” (p. 3) and even identifies “rapture” as an element proper to play (p. 17). Despite the explicit tales of the difficulty of the work, as much was said about the pleasure of play. Filmmakers experienced spontaneous pleasure in creating. “What pleasure in art does is to confirm for both the artist and the viewer that to be embodied in the world is to participate in this spontaneity of feeling, without which one is not human” (Herwitz, p. 5).

While the fun of creating is at the heart of creator values, the value of creating together with other creators is the next level of autotelic experience. Numerous ensemble members reported that the opportunity to work with other professionals, some of very high caliber, some respected, some admired, some even worshipped, was a large part of why they participated in collaborative creativity. Just the opportunity to create as an ensemble instead of alone, to enjoy the society of others while performing an activity they loved was reason enough to do so. This value in the society of others while playing, particularly in the case of filmmaking, recalls Eisenberg’s (2007) concept of “jamming”: combining skill (of diverse film artists), structure (the organization of production), setting (the literal film set and behind-the-scenes areas), and surrender (to the collaborative creative phenomenon). Even while acknowledging the tensions and conflicts that flared among the ensemble at times during production, MOD speakers consistently sing the praises of working with others and give thanks for the opportunity to do so. The common refrain sounded much like *The Terminator* editor Mark Goldblatt’s remark about working on the film, “I’m just so happy to have been a part of it” (Ling, 2001).

Finally, the chance to be a part of a project that was bigger than any of them, that needed an ensemble in order to be realized, made the experience of collaborative

filmmaking a heightened and highly rewarding one. This sense of transcendence confirms the value of collaboration in creativity. This again follows Eisenberg's view of the jamming experience, "appealing because it enables individuals temporarily to feel part of a larger community, but without the obligation to reveal much personal information" (2007, p. 82). But as Victor Turner (1982, p. 47) reminds us, holding on to this feeling of *communitas*, of being part of a bigger community and its creative flow, is difficult, if not impossible: "We thus encounter the paradox that the experience of *communitas* becomes the memory of *communitas*. . ."

### *Valuing Collaborative Creativity*

It's an easy argument that collaborative creativity is still not highly valued in the United States as a whole as compared to the value placed on individual creativity. This country was founded during the period of the Enlightenment and its fundamental paradigmatic worldview of fierce individualism is written into our constitution. Our capitalistic economy is designed to protect the property and wealth of individuals and has fewer measures in place to distribute property and wealth. That economic orientation greatly influences the distribution of creative credit. Ownership of intellectual and creative property is an American right dictated, protected, and defended by law. As well, an Emersonian self-reliance and reification of individual genius still pervades our beliefs about creativity. Consequently, many Americans subscribe to the maxim, "A camel is a horse designed by committee." As a whole, we too often consider the ideas of others a problem rather than a help.

Our individualist culture exalts solo work significantly above group efforts. Aesthetically, foreground or figure is valued over ground or background. We spotlight,

praise, and privilege solo performance in the arts while devaluing those performers who prefer to blend into a collective. For example, when we listen to a popular song, how aware are we of the work, much less the names, of the studio musicians in the background? More systems are in place for rewarding individual than group creativity. How many awards are there for ensembles? Being “absorbed” into a collective, like the Borg in Star Trek mythology, is considered equivalent to being lost to oblivion. Even when we consider creative groups, our attention is drawn to the leader, and we are immediately interested in who contributed what to the creative product.

It is difficult to escape this culturally inscribed individualistic predisposition toward creativity, even when advocating a greater valuing of collectivistic creativity. While conducting this research, I found myself struggling against my own ingrained habits tending toward featuring individuals. Indeed, I looked closely for crediting of individuals by other individuals as much as individuals using the collective “we” in their storytelling. Centuries of ideological influence embedded in constitutional principles die hard, if at all. It would be naively idealistic to believe that this country will soon embrace an Eastern-influenced collectivist orientation (pun intended) to creativity. Nevertheless, more research can and should be conducted on collaborative creative efforts and accomplishments to raise consciousness regarding the phenomena in the academic community and, hopefully sooner than later, in the larger cultural landscape.

Victor Turner (1988, p. 41) offers two moods of culture to demonstrate how social life moves between the indicative, “It is,” and the subjunctive, “What if?” in performance genres like carnival, masquerade, and staged performances. Here I offer

future possibilities for research in this second mood to imagine, not what *is* collaborative creativity, but what might happen *if* we thought about this differently.

*What if . . .*

What if research, rather than pursuing traditional paradigms of personality traits and product evaluation, focused on creator values like beauty, pleasure, jamming, and transcendence? What might a study that focused on creators emotions reveal? What could we learn if we focused on listening to creativity stories, asking creators open ended questions about their work, why they do it, and how they do it?

What if more researchers approached collaborative creativity aesthetically, poetically, and dramatically rather than scientifically? Instead of aiming for objectivity and distance, what if they embraced subjectivity and closeness? Instead of attempting to steer their results toward simplicity, clarity, and predictability, what if they steered them toward complexity, ambiguity, and possibility?

What if, instead of attempting to distill and decontextualize collective creative phenomena into efficient computer models, what if we cultivated and translated that phenomena into expressive works of art? What could we learn if we collected groups of creator narratives and analyzed the texts obliquely for their human, social, and autotelic values? Scholars could research subjects like the production of a theatrical play or the mounting of an art installation with the same eye as an actor or a sculptor – an eye that analyzes in order to cultivate the ability to better perform the art.

What if we asked around, as I did of my peers, and solicited their questions about collaborative creativity? And what if I arranged these questions in a poem? It might look something like this:

A Collaborative Creativity Research Questionnaire List

Poem

by Shannon Navarro, Yvonne Kline, Chris Patti, Eric Paul Engel,

Bobby Ann Loper, Zoe LeCain, and Bob Gonzalez

In collaborative creativity,

how does one develop one's own

concepts without the influence

of the others in the group

destroying

the integrity and original

intentions of said concepts?

How do you use your ideas

without everyone else

disrupting

them with their own

input/opinions?

How might the creative

collaborative process function in a

therapeutic

manner, as an alternative to

traditional psychotherapy?

How do creative collaborators work  
(their processes and practices  
in and around the act of creation)?

What would a

step-by-step,

detailed reflexive examination

from the perspective

of the collaborators themselves

yield?

What, if any, specific words

trigger

a collaborative approach

to creativity?

What causes some

collaborative efforts to

flourish

and others to fail?

Must there always be a

strong leader,

or does a democratic system

work

best?

Do individual feelings

of participants

affect

the overall project?

How can a truly creative

group create something that is

better

than the sum of its individual

parts? How can collaborative

creativity be

cultivated?

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### About the Author

Robert M. González, Jr. received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from Boston University in 1977 and his Master of Fine Arts in Acting from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1980. He has taught courses in theatrical performance, dramatic literature, and communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Hillsborough Community College, the University of South Florida, and the University of Tampa. He has directed five plays and performed in over forty more. He is currently a full time instructor in the Department of Speech, Theatre and Dance at the University of Tampa.