All Things Shining: A Narrative and Stylistic Analysis of Terrence Malick's Films

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C. Clinton Stivers
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Dedication

For Bradford

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Abstract

This dissertation fills a gap in the scholarship on the films of Terrence Malick by providing a historically based and grounded auteur study that provides a comprehensive examination of his formal and thematic concerns in *Badlands* (1973), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Thin Red Line* (1998), *The New World* (2005), and with a coda on *The Tree of Life* (2011).

This auteur study draws on critical approaches to formalism, Hollywood genres, American cultural myths, and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Each chapter that addresses a specific film opens by historically situating Malick and that film within an industrial and production context that has evolved in response to varying social and cultural forces. Each chapter then includes a close formalist analysis of the film's narrative and stylistic elements. The focus of the study is an examination of how Malick uses Heideggerian philosophy as an instrument to critique American cultural myths, which he engages by drawing on and revising popular Hollywood genres.

Malick's ontological aesthetic is integral to his critique of American cultural myths, and is influenced by the philosophy of Heidegger, about which he has an intimate understanding, having translated and written an introduction to Heidegger's *The Essence of Reasons* before becoming a filmmaker. His aesthetic makes use of a decidedly Heideggerian critique of what Heidegger once called our "destitute times," in which a Western mode of self-assertion and instrumental thinking has distorted the world, transforming it into objects to be manipulated and consumed. In this mode of self-assertion, says Heidegger and Malick's films, human beings have become forgetful of

what it means to be human, forgetful of a relation to Being, which connects all human beings. While Heidegger identifies the ancient Greeks as the originators of this Western perspective, Malick engages Heidegger's work by extending Heidegger's critique of destitute modern times to American culture and to the cultural myths conveyed by the Hollywood film industry.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: On Decoding Terrence Malick…..……...…….….1

Chapter II: "Backing Over": Terrence Malick's Early Path……..……19

Chapter III: An Architect's Message Left Unread: Unfolding "Blueprints" and Horizons in *Badlands*……..……...…..…..…56

Chapter IV: "Pointing" Toward Horizons in *Days of Heaven*……...…….113

Chapter V: "What's your name kid?" The Enigmatic Voiceover in *The Thin Red Line*……...…..…..167

Chapter VI: Rising and Falling in *The New World*…….……242

Chapter VII: Coda: *The Tree of Life* and the Evolving Achievement of Terrence Malick…..…….…..……..296

Bibliography:……...306

Appendices…….…..326

Appendix I.…….……..……...……..327

Appendix II……..337

Appendix III…….....……..341

Appendix IV…….....350

Vita…….…….…….....…….365

Chapter I
On Decoding Terrence Malick

> The difficulty is not one of *decoding* him. […] If Heidegger resorts to his own peculiar language, it is because ordinary German does not meet his purposes. If we cannot educate ourselves to his purposes, then clearly his work will look like nonsense. And yet we should not conclude that it *is* nonsense merely because we are not sure what is to keep us from the conclusion.
>
> When it comes to divining Heidegger's purposes, his arguments and descriptions will not be very helpful […] They assume that we have learned where to look for their relevances—that, paradoxically, we have already gained the "horizon" which *Sein und Zeit* set out to *open* for us, namely, the "transcendental horizon of the question about Being"—and that, insofar as we have, we *necessarily* share his purposes and need not depend on his arguments.
>
> -- Terrence Malick, Translator's Introduction, Martin Heidegger's *The Essence of Reasons* (1969: xvii-xviii)

"Nobody knows why" (Biskind, *GM* 255). Nobody knows why director Terrence Malick disappeared, why he abruptly vanished from Hollywood for twenty years, and perhaps even America, after making just two films, *Badlands* (1973) and *Days of Heaven* (1978), both of which received critical praise for their gorgeous cinematography and innovative voiceover narration. An intensely private man, Malick failed to provide an explanation; he refused interviews and mysteriously dropped out of sight.

In the following years, the public desire to know—to divine the reason for Malick's seemingly peculiar behavior—led to various rumors and tales of his whereabouts, mental and spiritual health, and occupations. In other words, unable to latch onto a reason that could justify Malick's actions, a narrative developed that described him as a "living abstraction" (Bart 3), a "cinematic Salinger, as silent as Garbo, as evasive as the Fugitive" (Biskind, *GM* 255). Perhaps because of this, as the years continued to pass, Malick's reputation acquired evocative power, that of an enigmatic auteur, an "archetypical figure" (Turan 1998) whose legend has become "one of Hollywood's genuine myths" (Biskind *GM* 255).

"Nobody knows why he came back," but in the early 1990s, producers Michael Geisler and John Roberdeau announced that Malick would direct a film about World War II, an adaptation of James Jones's war novel, *The Thin Red Line*. Despite his return to filmmaking, however, Malick continued to baffle by maintaining his silence. His two previous films had been commercial disappointments, yet he was able to acquire $52 million of financing from a major Hollywood studio and attract several of Hollywood's most popular stars. Due in part to the efforts of Phoenix Pictures to market the film as an event—"Malick the auteur back from the wilderness"—Malick's return became highly anticipated. In addition, just five months before the release of *The Thin Red Line*, Steven Spielberg had released his own World War II movie, *Saving Private Ryan*, a commercially successful spectacle that dazzled audiences with archetypal heroes, iconographic elements of the war genre, and nostalgia for America's "good war." Spielberg's success, and Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation*, boosted coverage of Malick's return in the popular press, thus further raising the stakes. On December 23rd 1998, Malick officially returned to Hollywood filmmaking with the release of *The Thin Red Line*. Despite all the buildup, the movie did not achieve commercial success. However, perhaps especially in the shadow of *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Thin Red Line's* elusive qualities and, like his previous films, its lush cinematography and innovative use of voiceover, served to solidify Malick's status as an enigmatic but talented, even brilliant, filmmaker.

Terrence Malick is an unusual Hollywood filmmaker who, after making just five films in thirty-eight years, has developed a distinctly poetic aesthetic that has helped establish his reputation as an auteur. This reputation is appropriate for a director who,

after attending film school at a time heavily influenced by the auteur approach, emerged during the Hollywood Renaissance, an era when formally trained directors were given unprecedented freedom to shape their own projects and pursue their own interests. Although Hollywood's industrial structure has changed, of course, since his work appeared in the early 1970s, Malick still writes his own scripts and works closely with his editors, cinematographers, and sound mixers, maintaining a great deal of control over his projects—even with their lackluster box-office performance in a commercially driven film industry—and he is recognized as an auteur in most thorough studies on the history of American film and its directors (Bordwell and Thompson; D. Cook; Ray; Mast).

Despite the consensus that Malick is an auteur, there is a relatively small body of serious scholarship on his work, which as mentioned, has been widely admired yet often met with bafflement (Lee, Maslin, Smith) and, in some cases, derision (Bart; Handy; Hunter; MacCabe; Whalen). A pervasive phenomenon, too, in the critical reception of Malick's work involves those who acknowledge it as that of an esoteric visionary poet, yet merely tiptoe around support of that claim. Instead, studies of this sort emphasize Malick's mystifying, idiosyncratic behavior, which includes his two-decade absence; peculiar, perfectionist working methods; and an obstinate refusal to be photographed or to speak with the media, and they ultimately seem to suggest that his films' meanings are too oblique and difficult to interpret (Lee; Patterson; Romney), pattern also being repeated in the initial critical response to his most recent film, *The New World* (2005)

That is not to say that no cogent studies have illuminated Malick's films; naturally, scholars have offered serious and helpful analyses.[1] Even so, most studies only slice into his work in fragmentary ways. For example, while only three books have attempted to take on his body of work—a fact that is especially striking when considering the number of studies on many of Malick's Renaissance contemporaries—their treatment, unfortunately, is insufficient. One, *The Films of Terrence Malick*, by James Morrison and Robert Schur, is awkwardly organized (comprised of "critical vignettes" and "riffs") and fails even to provide an analysis of *The Thin Red Line*, despite having been published five years after that film's release. The second book, *Terrence Malick*, by Lloyd Michaels, analyzes Malick's first four feature films. Michaels addresses each film's narrative and thematic elements and the many American literary allusions that appear in Malick's first four films. Despite this addition to studies of Malick, Michaels neglects to engage with the unique ways that Malick employs cinematic style. Finally, *The Cinema of Terrence Malick: Poetic Visions of America*, edited by Hannah Patterson, does attempt a more structured and comprehensive study of Malick's films. However, each of the articles (except one) in the not quite but nearly random series of essays is limited to analysis of one film. The essays vary widely in topic: for example, Malick's use of music in *Days of Heaven* (Power) and the commercial reception of *The Thin Red Line* (Flanagan). Most essays seek to understand his films by comparison to others—for example, *Badlands* to Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Missouri Breaks* (Orr);

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[1] Two books, *Terrence Malick: Film and Philosophy* by Stuart Kendall and Thomas Deane Tucker, as well as *Terrence Malick and the Thought of Film*, by Steven Rybin, appeared too late to be addressed in my own study.

Days of Heaven to traditional westerns such as *My Darling Clementine* and *Red River* (McGettigan); and *The Thin Red Line* to both Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (Flanagan) and Andrew Merton's 1964 film of the same name (Peebles-Power). Granted, the book does begin to shed light on Malick's aesthetic, yet by her own admission, Patterson acknowledges that her collection is "by no means definitive" (5).

Anyone familiar with Malick scholarship knows of the need for a more comprehensive treatment of his work. Current scholarship acknowledges that Malick is an auteur, yet this claim remains inadequately developed, because there are only two single-volume auteur study approach to his films. This study, then, attempts to fill that gap in Malick scholarship and aims to provide a comprehensive examination of his works, *Badlands* (1973), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Thin Red Line* (1998), and *The New World* (2005).

For over three decades, those who are intrigued by his films have shared frustration with Malick's now legendary refusal to answer questions about his life and his work, and his lack of commentary challenges scholarly efforts to contend with the mysterious, elusive, almost ineluctable qualities of his work. Yet I would argue that we *can* come to a better understanding of his oeuvre. Perhaps ironically, Malick's own words, quoted in the epigraph, may encourage such an undertaking. As he remarked about attempts to understand Heidegger, we might remark about him: if his descriptions of his purposes have not been very helpful, then we must educate ourselves to them. Towards that end, we can assert that Malick is an auteur, and his films articulate a vision whose purposes need not baffle, as they are far from "nonsense."

As a whole, Malick's films articulate the problems of existence intrinsic to contemporary life (the violence against ourselves and the environment, slavish materialism, and the yearning for redemption, all emanating from the celebration of a self-propelling individualism) yet simultaneously reveal for the audience the possibilities of a fuller and more aware, productive, and creative mode of existing in the world. His films attempt to enact this experience by drawing on key features of Heideggerian philosophy and engaging with American cultural myths to organize a distinctly "ontological" aesthetic; that is, this aesthetic attempts to provoke in viewers a reflexive questioning by juxtaposing contrary ideas, emotions, and filmic conventions and sustaining these contraries in a lasting, unresolved tension. In holding such contraries unresolved, his films expose those incompatible American values and myths that Hollywood films repeatedly seem to reconcile and naturalize in an effort to confirm America's belief in an idealized cultural self-image (Ray 57). To this end, Malick's aesthetic serves as a critical exploration for the ideological contradictions crippling a perspective which many Americans blindly accept as the literal truth. To expose this illusion, Malick's aesthetic disorients habits of perception to elicit a questioning that can awaken a fresh sense of our place in relation to ourselves, other humans, nature, and Being.

In addition to the aforementioned books, a number of excellent critical articles appear in scholarly journals, specialist film magazines, and on-line journals, yet each of these studies is limited to (and by) the analysis of a single Malick film, an odd fact given the long time span over which his four films have appeared. Taken together, most of these articles recognize the primary concerns of Malick's films, recognizing that they

suggest elements of Heideggerian philosophy, engage with American cultural myths, and pose challenges to the generic, narrative, and stylistic conventions of classical Hollywood cinema.

The philosophy of Heidegger is one of Malick's enduring concerns; however, his use of it has not been comprehensively examined across his body of work. While several critics have mentioned that Malick wrote on Heidegger for his honors thesis, *The Concept of Horizon in Husserl and Heidegger*, and in a translation, *The Essence of Reasons* (Critchley; Patterson; Silberman; Morrison and Schur; Bersani and Dutoit), only his former professor, Stanley Cavell, in *The World Viewed*, Marc Furstenau and Leslie MacAvoy in "Terrence Malick's Heideggerian Cinema: War and the Question of Being in *The Thin Red Line*," Kaja Silverman in "All Things Shining," and more recently, Bradford Vivian in "The Question of the Cinema" seriously attempt to articulate the ways in which Heideggerian philosophy manifests itself in Malick's work—through nature and voiceover, for example, to name but two elements.

In the foreword to his ontological analysis of cinema, Cavell briefly argues that Malick's use of beautiful nature shots functions to transpose concepts embodied in Heidegger's *What Is Called Thinking*, arguing that in *Days of Heaven* the "works and the emotions and the entanglements of human beings are at every moment reduced to insignificance by the casual rounds of earth and sky" (*The World Viewed* xiv). According to Cavell, then, Malick's aesthetic, while extracting beauty from nature, does so to project a Heideggerian notion about our destitute modern age, wherein man, in trying to take dominion over the world, refuses to participate in it and thus is crushed by the absence of natural beauty--an absence Malick's nature shots emphasize through their

presence. Though Cavell just briefly addresses Malick's work, he acknowledges his relationship with the director, and identifies an important link between Malick and Heidegger that is insufficiently explored in Malick scholarship.

Noting Cavell's claims, Furstenau, MacAvoy, Silverman, and Vivian have identified the Heideggerian nature of *The Thin Red Line*, calling it an example of "Heideggerian cinema" (*Cinema of Terrence Malick* 174) and arguing that it is difficult "to characterize the state of mind into which *The Thin Red Line* throws us without invoking Heideggerian metaphors" (Silverman 324). In their recognition of *The Thin Red Line's* Heideggerian concerns, these critics have worked to identify how his philosophy influences its themes. Silverman, for example, noting Heidegger, explains that "To be a human, he tells us, is to be 'held out' into the 'nothing'—into the void of that nonbeing out of which we have emerged and to which we will return" (324). Malick's film, says Silverman, "suggests" this proposition from Heidegger's "What Is Metaphysics" because "the 'nothing'" hits a frontline soldier in the face with every step he takes (326). Furstenau and MacAvoy assert that "Malick has assumed the role of a poet in destitute times" (180), a role Heidegger found crucial in an age dominated by instrumental, rational thinking. With references to Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," "Poetically Man Dwells," and "What Are Poets For?" Furstenau and MacAvoy keenly foreground the Heideggerian aspects of the film, as does Silverman (at times), yet no one has addressed the ways that each of his films, including *Badlands* and *The New World*, also make use of Heidegger's work, especially of the concept of horizon—a sense of the boundedness of the world in which one lives—the subject of Malick's undergraduate honors thesis.

One of the ways to come to terms with Malick's vision is to understand how his films draw upon American cultural myths such as the myth of the frontier and the conception of America as a garden-like Eden. Neil Campbell identifies Malick's specific interest in the frontier myth, and although he focuses only on *Badlands*, he argues that the film forces us to question notions about regeneration through violence and the "inevitable progress inherent in these mythic American themes of transformation, making us revise these beliefs, and ask different, complex existential questions" (38). Culling from Malick's first three films, Ron Mottram sees several recurring issues embodied in this frontier myth, such as "the problem with the appearance of evil, the violation of nature in the world and in ourselves, the loss of paradise and the search for redemption, the barrenness of contemporary American life and the existence of violence as a reaction, the impingement of the urban and industrial on the pastoral, and the nature and meaning of war" (14). Mottram argues that when Malick's films are ordered in chronological story time, they ultimately construct "a particular history of twentieth-century America that charts the end of the pastoral myth, the triumph of industrialization in its most virulent form, mechanized, global war and the emergence of a post-war culture that is without a defined sense of identity and values" (21). Mottram, then, posits Malick's work as a larger critique on more contemporary American cultural issues. Campbell's argument indirectly affirms this claim, in that he sees *Badlands* as suspicious of the frontier myth through its ironic expression of "wider cultural doubts over the viability of the counter-culture, the involvement in Vietnam, and the long-term prospects for the 'New Frontier' announced by Kennedy in 1960" (38), a sentiment echoed by Marsha Kinder ("The Return of the Outlaw" 9). Campbell concludes that Malick's film works to expose the

contradictory values that American myths produce, "the impossibility of fulfilling myths that assert mobility *and* settlement, freedom *and* restraint, individualism *and* conformity" (47), what David Laderman describes as an "ideological contradiction at the heart of America's Heartland" (123). While written before the release of *The New World*, several of these claims hold true for that film as well.

Malick scholarship has yet to address the ways in which the director uses genres (and later stars) as a means to gain financing for his projects, nor has it examined how he explores cultural myths and develops his philosophical concerns by working through the structures of genres; however, several critics have examined his films in terms of genre. Neil Campbell, for instance, draws on the work of Richard Slotkin, asserting that *Badlands* exposes "a pessimism about society's motivating values and underlying beliefs, not least because of the generic responsibility films themselves must bear for the maintenance, perpetuation and unquestioned reinforcement of the damaging, but persistent, American cultural myths and ideologies" (47). Although Campbell does not specifically identify Hollywood as the source, the implication is clear, for the Hollywood film industry maintains and perpetuates these myths in the form of genres, popular formulas that Malick loosely works through in order to address his larger concerns. Malick's films interrogate popular genres such as the road movie in *Badlands* (Bignell, Kinder, Corrigan), the historical romance in *Days of Heaven* (McGettigan; Wondra), the war film in *The Thin Red Line* (Silberman; Streamas; Power; McGettigan; Campbell; Mottram), and the historical romance in the epic *The New World*.

Without question most of the scholarship on Malick's work addresses his films as formal departures from the conventions of classical Hollywood conventions. A number

of studies address stylistic and narrative characteristics such as sound (Crofts; Chion, *Audio-Vision*; Cain; Leigh; McGettigan; Zuckor), cinematography (Ciment; McCann; Petric; Wood), and narrative structure (Morrison; Petric). Yet, as we will learn, all of these elements are governed by a larger vision which uses Heideggerian philosophy as an instrument to critique the decidedly American perspective embodied in America's cultural myths.

Biographically, we know that Malick studied, taught, and translated Heidegger and was a student of Stanley Cavell's at Harvard during a time when the myth and symbol school of American studies was both widely influential and in the process of being questioned and revised. Works such as Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, and Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* all were written by scholars trained at Harvard and exerted considerable influence in American Studies in the 1950s and early 1960s. These groundbreaking studies explored how specific cultural myths, symbols, and metaphors represented and shaped the American experience. Lewis, for example, explains how the Adamic myth of the nineteenth century involved a "hopeful," heroic Adam as "an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched by the usual inheritance of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling ... fundamentally innocent" (5). The scholars of the myth and symbol school isolated cultural myths and mythic figures, arguing they were central in helping to define the American experience.

While Malick was in school, however, other American Studies scholars posed challenges to and revisions of the myth and symbol school. Richard Slotkin, for instance, argued how such "primary myths" become "self conscious narratives," which mask dominant ideology through culture industries like Hollywood cinema (20). In other words, this hero was granted dominion over the whole American garden, establishing the cultural and historical codes of the New World, which still persist today. Slotkin says that these myths serve with equal facility the requirements of conservatives and liberals. Drawn from society's history, these myths have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing our ideology and dramatizing our moral consciousness—with all the complexities and contradictions which it contains (5). Like Slotkin, Malick is suspicious of American cultural myths, and his films use genre as a way to explore and criticize some of them.

Malick's project echoes that of Heidegger, who viewed the age of modernity as deeply troubled, the result of a Western mode of self-assertion and instrumental thinking that has distorted the world, transforming it into objects to be manipulated and consumed. In this mode of self-assertion, says Heidegger, we have become forgetful of what it means to be human, forgetful of our relation to Being, which connects us with all other beings. While Heidegger identifies the ancient Greeks as the originators of this Western perspective, Malick's aesthetic attends to both America and the Hollywood film industry, whose myths are typically communicated through genres that most often reinforce this idealized cultural self-image.

Heidegger's thought venerates the powerful potential of art, and the belief that an artist—a "poet in destitute times"—might emerge to redeem the era. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," he says that the work of art is to disclose truth, to open up a world, a human dwelling place. Art, for Heidegger, is a polemical event that sets us free from what is merely timeless and fixed, inserts us into history, and situates us back into an ongoing polemical world. Malick's work steps out of the history of the American literary and cinematic narrative tradition, yet reinserts us into history by using these American myths in order to "draw us back to ourselves [and] remind us of our place in relation to Being and other beings" (*WAPF 111*), ultimately providing an alternative way of what Heidegger calls situating *Dasein* in the world which can reopen the ontological questioning of Being. In doing so, Malick's work does not suggest that we should return to a primal or prelapsarian existence, nor that we should separate ourselves from our earthly existence. Rather, it suggests that we should embrace and recognize the tension rather than seek to reconcile it.

The model for my study of Malick's work is derived from a neo-formalist approach and will provide the analytical tools for a close reading of each film to examine how Malick's narrative and stylistic systems work to communicate themes and evoke emotions. However, because this formalist approach can be too narrow, in order to explore Malick's films as wholly as possible, this auteur study will also employ other critical approaches in an attempt at what Robin Wood has called "synthetic criticism" ("IGE" 475), which selects and blends critical approaches, depending on the film and filmmaker being studied.

In Chapter II, I will provide a kind of intellectual/cultural biography of Malick from his early, middle-school and high-school years until 1971 when he completed his studies at the American Film Institute (AFI) and began work on *Badlands*. This chapter will engage with, for example, an open letter signed by Malick and fifty other American Rhodes Scholars in England in 1967 challenging Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration over the Vietnam War (published and covered in the *New York Times*); Malick's two works on Heidegger: an undergraduate honor's thesis, *The Concept of Horizon in Husserl and Heidegger*, and his translation of (and introduction to) Heidegger's *Essence of Reasons*; an essay that Malick co-wrote with Jacob Brackman published in the "Notes and Comment" section of the 13 April 1968 *New Yorker* responding to the death of Martin Luther King (and including information that Malick and Brackman gathered when they interviewed King in August of 1967); and articles published during the late 1960s in the student newspaper at M.I.T, where Malick taught philosophy in 1968-69, which describe the many changes and conflicts occurring during his time at the school. Previous scholarship hasn't connected Malick or his film work with any of these documents. Ultimately this chapter will address Malick's concern over problems in America and his understanding of Heidegger and how they are linked to the his early emerging social and political life and views during the 1960s.

The next four chapters will explore each of his films. In Chapter III, I will turn my attention to Malick's first film, *Badlands*. After situating briefly the industrial, social, and cultural context in which Malick made *Badlands*, I will offer an analysis of the film's narrative and stylistic systems, arguing that it employs conventions of the road movie, teen rebellion, or "outlaw lovers on the run" film that became popular during the

Renaissance. However, Malick ultimately uses the popular genre to explore his larger concern of exposing the inherent contradictions in the myth of the frontier, and he appears to make an explicit critique (much more so than in his other films) of the empty moral landscape, obsession with celebrity, and failure of the counter culture in the waning years of the Vietnam War. An understanding of Heidegger illuminates the fact that Kit and Holly are estranged from their own actions in a way that indicates a disconnection from being. That is, they treat things and people as objects that they manipulate and consume in their murderous mode of self-assertion as they search for meaning and identity that is absent in their world. Interestingly, *Badlands* is Malick's only film that does not employ Heideggerian concepts as a way to affirm an alternative mode of being in the world—unless, that is, one sees the film making the argument that Kit and Holly (along with other ancillary characters) are all lost and blind to the beautiful open landscape of the Dakota Badlands. Malick's exposure of that blindness is consistent, as well, with a romantic idealism that yearns for a deeper sustaining connection to nature.

In Chapter IV, I will examine how the narrative and stylistic systems in *Days of Heaven* also function to communicate its primary meanings. I argue that this film, set in 1917, is the most difficult Malick film to categorize in terms of genre. While the film's trailer attempts to present it as a highly conventional love triangle, Joan McGettigan and John Orr have argued that Malick is working through the western genre (*The Cinema of Terrence Malick*). The film does in fact show an America in its final moments of transformation from an agrarian republic into an industrialized nation, and I agree that it also employs conventions of a love story and that love stories, like other genres, help sell

tickets. More central to my concerns, however, is that Malick again makes a cultural critique of the frontier myth, arguing that regeneration through violence is a fallacy that ultimately leads to loss—loss of the pastoral that is depicted in the final destruction of the wheat farm. In *Days of Heaven*, Malick also more obviously weaves Heideggerian principles into the technical elements of his filmmaking. While both Bill and the Farmer are consumed, albeit in unique ways, by industrialization and economic growth, Malick uses cinematography and the montage of beautiful nature shots, for example, to emphasize the loss of the Panhandle's Eden and to demonstrate to the viewer that there is an alternative way of situating *Dasein* in the world, a way that these two men, like Kit and Holly in *Badlands*, are unable to see.

I will analyze in Chapter V *The Thin Red Line's* formal systems, arguing that Malick uses the war genre as a way to explore how the ideology of American cultural myths, in conjunction with a decidedly Heideggerian technocratic rationality, has created loss and separation of the men from themselves, other beings, and from a connection with any larger sense of Being.

Most reviewers have classified *The Thin Red Line* as a war film and, in general, have complained about its failures as an example of that genre. For instance, *New York Times* critic Janet Maslin and *Chicago Sun Times* critic Roger Ebert both comment on the film's rambling, meandering narrative, a black mark against any film that aspires to belong to the war genre. Ebert, in particular, believes that confusing voiceovers interrupt the skillfully conducted battle scenes. Even a more scholarly review by Tom Whalen in *Literature/Film Quarterly* bitterly criticizes the film's problematic status within the war genre, though he admits the film possesses some of the "classic" features of war films.

Most of the discourse about this film has not done it justice. While we can argue that *The Thin Red Line* fits, to some extent, within the war film template, we can also argue that some of its features tempt us to see it as an anti-war film. To categorize it definitively as either misses the ways that it steps outside of these genres/subgenres and fails to consider adequately what is again a crucial concern of the film: its Heideggerian philosophical investigation of the nature of being (Being). Even the few who have addressed this are unable to pin down just how Malick manipulates the elements of film, especially the much-maligned voiceovers, to disclose the limitations of the individual characters' worldviews and to call attention, in turn, to the ways any audience member may be limited by his or her own horizons, which are inherently entwined within and defined by--as Heidegger suggests—the epistemological rationality of western metaphysics that inhibits ontological thinking.

In Chapter VI, I examine how, for the first time in his career, the industrial context in which he was working seems to have led Malick to wilt under pressure from a studio, in this case New Line, and perhaps compromise his vision by cutting twenty important minutes from his latest film, *The New World*. While the film's world premiere ran for 150 minutes, due to unfavorable reviews and/or audience response, New Line announced that Malick was shortening the $30,000,000 film.

As with the other films, I examine *The New World's* narrative and stylistic systems and show that the film, suffused with Heideggerian philosophy and American Romantic idealism, uses the genre of the historical romance epic as a way to explore the moment that the myth of the frontier began to take shape through the love triangle of John Smith, Pocahontas, and John Rolfe. Malick sees this historical moment as one in

which the Jamestown colonists had an opportunity to learn from and embrace Native American culture and connectivity with the natural environment. As the film progresses, however, Malick illustrates how western man's self-assertive willing, one of the key ideological roots of the frontier myth, ultimately is blind to this connectivity as characters such as John Rolfe systematically manipulate the world into things to be controlled and consumed.

In the final chapter, I briefly address *The Tree of Life* while drawing some conclusions about Malick's oeuvre as a whole, placing him among the ranks of other auteurs.[2] I emphasize that Malick's project always indicates problems with the perspectives that embody the American cultural myths and offers alternative modes of being. The finished project constitutes a close analysis and probing look at the key features and concerns of Malick's films.

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[2] After the Coda chapter, see the appendix for a detailed plot segmentation for each of Malick's first four films.

Chapter II
"Backing Over": Terrence Malick's Early Path

This chapter provides an intellectual/cultural biography of Malick from his early, middle-school and high-school years until 1971 when he completed his studies at the American Film Institute (AFI) and began work on *Badlands*. The chapter will go into detail about Malick's concern over problems in America and his understanding of Heidegger and how they are linked to the young Malick's emerging social and political life and views during the 1960s.

Critical and commercial commentary has frequently acknowledged what seems to be Malick's mysterious, inexplicable silence about and reluctance to comment on his work (Biskind, Walker, Thorpe, to name a few). However, a number of recently uncovered writings on Malick's early life exist, including some documents Malick wrote, which, when combined with interviews he has given, help to shed light on his developing concern for and preoccupation with specific problems in the world. These documents include, for example, an open letter signed by Malick and fifty other American Rhodes Scholars in England in 1967 challenging Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration over the Vietnam War (published and covered in the *New York Times*); Malick's two works on Heidegger: an undergraduate honor's thesis, *The Concept of Horizon in Husserl and Heidegger*, and his translation of (and introduction to) Heidegger's *Essence of Reasons*; an essay that Malick co-wrote with Jacob Brackman published in the "Notes and Comment" section of the 13 April 1968 *New Yorker* responding to the death of Martin Luther King (and including information that Malick and Brackman gathered when they interviewed King in August of 1967); and articles published during the late 1960s in the

student newspaper at M.I.T, where Malick taught philosophy in 1968-69, which describe the many changes and conflicts occurring during his time at the school. Previous scholarship hasn't connected Malick or his film work with any of these documents. I have also uncovered some material on a graduate film class that Malick audited while at M.I.T. taught by cinema verite/direct cinema documentary filmmakers Ed Pincus and Richard Leacock (who, at that time, were also conducting studies on the syncing of sound and image using lightweight cameras), along with other documents detailing the American Film Institute's auteur-based film courses that Malick took from 1969-1971 when he was in its first class of scholarship filmmakers.

In order to understand Malick's body of work most fully, we must first reach an understanding regarding the development of his interest in several fundamental problems and contradictions in American culture, and, more broadly, with human beings in the world, problems and contradictions that the mature director has continued to grapple with in his films. To do so, I would first like briefly to provide background on Malick's father, Emil, whose own work addresses issues that overlap with those of his son's. I am convinced that Malick's social, intellectual, and aesthetic perspective was being shaped in powerful ways during this early period in his life, bringing him to a set of preoccupations that informs his later work as a filmmaker.

Malick's Father

Whether directly or indirectly, Malick's father influenced his son during his formative years. Although Malick attended middle school, high school, and college away from his parents (Austin, Cambridge, and Oxford, during which time his parents resided in Bartlesville, Oklahoma; see his *Tree of Life* script where Malick includes an eldest son

whose parents ship him away to boarding school, despite his objections), Malick is his father's son. By looking a bit closer at his father, we can begin to gain a better understanding of Malick's worldview as it developed in his early years.

Like Malick, Emil was an athletic, artistic, religious, intelligent, and imaginative man—a leader—who worked for a globally dominant corporation, albeit from the margins within that industry, and who demonstrated a desire to resolve enormous issues affecting mankind such as world hunger and, in the 1970s, environmental pollution. His work shows a belief, perhaps naïve, that technology and a systems-oriented approach could be used to benefit mankind and resolve its problems, naïve, that is, especially when we consider that his work, however innovative and well-intentioned, appears to have been appropriated and twisted by the for-profit motives of the oil industry.

To begin, Emil Malick's career unfolded during a postwar era dominated by what Godfrey Hodgson, in *America in Our Time*, has called "the ideology of liberal consensus." This consensus rested on the assumptions that capitalism and democracy functioned to promote economic growth, social equality, peace, and social justice; that the one real threat to this progress was Communism, which must be fought diligently; and that America had a moral duty to export its system to the rest of the world.[3] Scholar

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[3] Hodgson offers six assumptions on which the consensus was based: (1) The American free-enterprise system is democratic, creates abundance, and has a revolutionary potential for social justice; (2) The key to this potential is increased production and economic growth, which makes it possible to meet the people's needs out of incremental resources. Social conflict over resources between classes therefore becomes obsolete and unnecessary; (3) There is a natural harmony of interests in society. American society is getting more equal. Capitalists are being superseded by managers. The workers are becoming members of the middle class; (4) Social problems can be solved like industrial problems—the problem is first identified; programs are designed to solve it, by government enlightened by social science; money and other resources—such as trained people—are then applied to the problem as 'inputs'; the outputs are predictable, that the problems will be solved; (5) The main threat to this beneficent system comes from the deluded adherents of Marxism. The United States and its allies, the Free World, must therefore expect a long struggle against communism; (6) It is the duty and destiny of the United States to bring the good tidings of the free-enterprise system to the rest of the world (*America in Our Time* 76).

Franklin Kalinowski frames the push toward consensus as a response to the threat of scarcity and argues that in the early 1960s, it was assumed that our problems were technical rather than political and, therefore, that a shift toward more centralized, rational decision making, more "human engineering," and the continued pursuit of the "gospel of efficiency" would correct the internal problems of an "undermanaged" society. The New Frontier and the Great Society corporate liberals would resolve our difficulties if only the American people would defer to the expertise of the social managers (68).

During the era of consensus, we see Malick's father was an athletic, artistic, and religious man. He attended M.I.T. from 1935 to 1937 where he competed on the varsity fencing team.[4] In 1937, an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* indicates that Emil A. Malick, projected graduating class of '39, was elected captain of the M.I.T. fencing team for the following year, and that he specialized in the saber ("Tech Elects Malick" 10). He also studied engineering at M.I.T., although he apparently never finished his degree, leaving school early to enlist in the military just before World War II. It appears that Emil did not compete on the fencing team his final two years at M.I.T.; instead, he shows up in 1939 in Chicago[5] as Lieutenant Emil Malick, the choir master and organist performing concerts in the choir of the Church of Our Saviour (Donnelly 14).[6]

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[4] In the Friday, March 6 edition of *The Tech*, the M.I.T. student newspaper, an article claimed that Emil "showed much promise" as a freshman. He won two matches and lost a third. In the February 9, 1937 edition, Emil is listed as an alternate in epee and saber. In a March 9, 1937, edition, Emil suffered a heartbreaking defeat. According to the story, Emil was leading a bout 4-0 but went "haywire" and lost the bout 5-4.

[5] Terrence's Malick's half-Irish mother, Irene, grew up on a farm just outside of Chicago.

[6] In Malick's "autobiographical" *Tree of Life* script, he indicates that the father "never finished school"; he quit school in order to "feed his family."

Emil appears to have been employed at Boeing briefly in the 1930s and to have begun working for Phillips Petroleum[7] in the mid-1940s, and he remained committed to that company until he retired. In 1947, the *Aviation Daily* journal listed Malick as the Chief Aviation Technologist in the Sales Technical Division at Phillips (12). In 1955, *Petroleum Week* noted that he had been promoted from assistant manager to manager of the rocket fuels division's research and development department in MacGregor, Texas (30); however, that job transferred headquarters to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1956 ("Phillips Transfers Headquarters of Rocket Fuels Division"). He worked for Phillips and developed dozens of patents to improve the safety and fuel efficiency of airplanes and rockets and ways to protect liquids such as water and milk from nuclear fallout.[8] He also developed patents related to anti-icing additives for hydrocarbon fuel and several patents for concentrating beer and wine containing carbon dioxide by crystallization at

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[7] History of Phillips Petroleum Company located at http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/P/PH004.html

The following history mirrors the industrialization of the Texas Panhandle in 1917, during the year when and location where *Days of Heaven* takes place. *Days of Heaven* involves the harvesting of wheat to support the war effort whereas Phillips supported the war effort through production of natural gas and oil.

Incorporated at Bartlesville in 1917 (where Emil Malick lives and has lived for fifty plus years), Phillips Petroleum Company illustrates the development of the U.S. oil industry. The company began in Bartlesville with the exploits of two brothers. In1905 they drilled their first gusher on land leased from an eight-year-old Delaware Indian girl (this fact brings to mind the colonization of Pocahontas that we see in *The New World*).

After discovery of Texas's huge Panhandle gas field in 1918, Phillips became involved in the developing natural gas industry. In particular, the company specialized in extracting liquids from natural gas and by 1925 was the nation's largest producer of natural gas liquids.

The company joined the refining and retail gasoline business to profit from the ncreasing demand for automobile fuel. In 1927 Phillips opened its first refinery in the Texas Panhandle, and in 1942 the company bought more than 250,000 acres in the Hugoton-Panhandle gas field. On November 19, 1927, it opened its first gasoline service station in Wichita, Kansas. Because this station was near the new U.S. Highway 66, the company used "66" in its name. Then, in 1930, Phillips began using the U.S. highway shield as its logo, making the brand easily recognizable across the nation (we see both the shield and logo on a large gas tank in the middle of South Dakota in *Badlands*).

[8] During this time, Emil applied for and received over twenty patents. According to the United States Patent Office, in 1948-1955, his work ranged from increasing fuel pump performance in aircrafts, preventing the flame intensity in reaction motors in jet engines and combustion devices, developing an apparatus for controlling the fuel flow to power plants, improving methods in performance of turbojet engines, and improving the means to ignite rockets.

elevated pressure.[9] During this time, he also attended conferences for the Society of Automotive Engineers across the world.

In early 1969, he was named the President and CEO of Provesta Corp, a subsidiary of Phillips, a firm created by General Mills, Inc. and Phillips Petroleum Corp., to combine their advanced technologies in the manufacture of synthetic protein designed for mass consumption in an effort to deal more effectively with the world's nutrition crisis. As the leader of Provesta, he developed patents and directed a project focused on a method to isolate and produce single-cell protein, a project aimed at eliminating world hunger. In the early 70s, during Nixon's presidency, Emil also began to work on a project to re-recycle used oil to eliminate environmental pollution.

In a Congressional hearing on Tuesday, April 1, 1969, Emil presented a speech entitled "World Food Development—Its Challenges and Opportunities" wherein he discussed the world food crisis, both the pitfalls which have been encountered in man's past attempts to deal with it and his hope for the future that the world's armies fighting hunger would move as one in a concerted effort to win this battle. In this presentation, Emil identifies a paradox in the world—in this case, in the world food picture; however, Emil expresses confidence that the world hunger problem can be eliminated by implementing a systems-oriented approach, an approach that we will later learn that his son's generation found reprehensible.[10]

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[9] In 1965, an article, "There Are Instant Foods of All Descriptions—Even Beer" written by Ward Cannel in the Victoria, Texas newspaper lauds Emil for his "secret process" for making reconstituted beer.

[10] In his presentation, Emil provides a metaphor for cooperation between industry and government that appears nearly verbatim in Malick's *Tree of Life* script: "Industry must bear the child. Government, as the sire, can benefit from the counsel the U.S. Navy used to give expectant fathers when they asked for leave to attend the birth of their offspring: The father is necessary only at the laying of the keel—not at the launching" (297).

In his address to the Congressional hearing, Emil analyzes the status and implications of single-cell protein in the future world food supply, noting that "some believe that the world is facing a world food crisis that may bring civilization down to its knees," ("World Food" 296) leading to starvation and socio-political instability. While acknowledging the serious problem of world hunger, Emil also expresses confidence that industry could "create vastly greater supplies of food, and with startling speed," although one thing is missing: "The greatest tragedy is the current lack of a hardhitting, single-minded, systems-oriented programming of effort to eradicate the food shortages in all corners of the earth. Working together, industry and government could without question assure an ample world food supply that can keep up with any presently projected growth in world population" ("World Food" 296-297).[11]

Emil thus identifies a problem and provides a method by which to solve it, a method which embodies several assumptions of Hodgson's ideology of liberal consensus. In this case, the American free-enterprise system, specifically Provesta Corp, has the ability to create abundance and, as a result, the revolutionary potential for social justice. The key to this potential is increased production and economic growth, which makes it possible to meet the world's needs for food. According to Emil's presentation, social conflict over resources between classes can be rendered obsolete if industry and governments work together. Here, Emil proposes that a social problem like world hunger

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[11] In another paper on the status and implications of single-cell protein in future world food supply, Emil wrote about the problem in a way that summarizes the conditions in *Days of Heaven*: "modern man still uses primitive man's circuitous, grossly inefficient path to producing protein. Fields are tilled, seed sown, prayers addressed for rain and sun, and crops grown, first ravaged by insects, birds, and forces of nature. What remains is harvested. Animals are fed the grain, then slaughtered. Finally, a fraction of their carcasses reaches the ultimate customer – man." Congressional Hearing Exhibit 2. "Worsening Food Shortages Call for Global Planning."

can be solved like an industrial/management problem. The problem is first identified; programs are designed to solve it; government enlightened by social science, money and other resources—such as trained people—are then applied to the problem as "inputs"; the outputs are predictable: the problems will be solved. The main threat to this beneficent system of the United States and its Allies, the Free World, comes in the forms of Communism, or those willing to manipulate starving nations for political purposes. Ultimately, Emil argues that it is the duty and destiny of the United States to bring the good tidings of the free-enterprise system to the rest of the world (*America in Our Time* 76). What is significant for our purpose is that Emil's worldview, symptomatic of his era, was in many ways rejected by his son and many of his generation.

Malick's Early Life and Letter to LBJ

Emil's own work addresses issues that overlap with those of his son's, and I am convinced that Malick's social/intellectual/aesthetic perspective was being shaped in powerful ways during this early period in hiss life, bringing him to a set of preoccupations that informs his later work as a filmmaker. Like his father, Terrence Malick was an intelligent, imaginative, athletic, and religious man, who, for the first thirty years of his life, actually did "speak his mind."

To begin, Malick grew up during the postwar era in which "the ideology of liberal consensus" was dominant. Sources provide conflicting information on his date and place of birth–some state November 30, 1943, and others 1944; some say in Ottawa, Illinois, others in Waco, Texas. In one of his interviews with Michel Ciment, Malick states that he was born in Waco, Texas, and raised in Austin and then Oklahoma (30). Apparently Malick "didn't grow up with asphalt under his feet," as he was raised amid the farms and

oilfields of Waco and Bartlesville (Thorpe 124). Malick was worshipped by his family[12] and devoted to his mother, but he often had terrible fights with his father (Biskind, *GM* 259).[13] The oldest of three brothers, Malick's two younger brothers were Chris and Larry.[14] Chris, the middle brother, was involved in an automobile accident that burned him badly and killed his wife. Larry, the youngest, went to Spain to study with guitarist Segovia. In 1968, he committed suicide.[15]

When Malick was eleven, his parents sent him away to a boarding school, St. Stephen's Episcopal, in Austin, Texas. Starting in his teenage years, he spent his summer breaks working in oilfields, on wheat harvests in the U.S. and Canada, and even driving a cement mixer in a rail yard (Walker 82). When Malick was sixteen and seventeen, he followed the wheat harvest in the summer, and, during this time, he slept in Greyhound buses and in the wheat fields with his pet raccoon, working alongside drifters. His dream was to teach (Hodenfield 22).

At St. Stephen's, he excelled as a defensive lineman on the football team (Handy 96; Biskind, *GM* 259).[16] Malick broke the school record for most quarterback sacks his

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[12] In a 2008 edition of *Prime Times*, a Bartlesville magazine for seniors, Malick's parents, Emil and Irene, were "December Donors" to Elder Care, a company that provides services to seniors and caregivers ("Thank You" 6)

[13] According to Biskind, although Malick was soft-spoken and tried to avoid confrontations, he shared his father's temper. Malick often had fights with his father over trivial issues. For example, even at the age of fifty, Malick fought with his father about his refusal to take pictures—which his father loved to do. They also fought about whether Malick should wear ties to church. Malick has always been preoccupied with faith and religion and knows the Bible well (Biskind, *GM* 259).

[14] Chris, the middle child, attended graduate school at Oklahoma University, wrote a thesis entitled "Response Biases in Estimates of Certainty," and graduated in 1975 with an M.S. in Psychology (Malick, C.).

[15] According to Biskind, Malick's youngest brother, Larry, went to Spain to study guitar with virtuoso, Segovia. In the summer of 1968, Terry learned that his brother, disenchanted over his lack of progress, had broken the fingers on both hands. Emil asked Terry to go see Larry, but Malick refused, telling his father to go instead. Emil went and found Larry dead (Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* 248-9).

[16] According to Sissy Spacek, "Terrence Malick once told me that making a film is like running down a football field with a tiny baby, having to protect it from all types of danger and interference while trying to make it across the goal line alive and intact" (Judell, http://www.indiewire.com/ots/2007/01/how_to_pronounc.html).

senior year and was nominated for Texas football player of the year. He also excelled academically in several subjects, especially science, math, and English. He graduated with academic honors, winning several rewards: the Bishop's Medal (the highest award given to a graduating senior at the school), the Texas Chemical Council award for "outstanding work" in science, the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Medal in science and math, and the St. Stephen's Book Prize in English ("Will Wilson's Daughter Gets School Honor" 2). [17]

In 1961, Malick entered Harvard, and despite his achievements and ability in science, math, and English, he majored in Philosophy, studying with respected film theorist Stanley Cavell and philosophy professor Hubert Dreyfus. In 1963, Malick received an honorary scholarship for achieving "Rank 1" on the dean's list at Harvard. The certificate that Malick received read as follows: "The President and Fellows of Harvard College have awarded a John Harvard scholarship for the academic year 1962-1963 to Terrence Frederick Malick in recognition of academic achievement of the highest distinction" ("Award Honorary Scholarship for Harvard Rating" B19).[18] He graduated

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[17] The two awards Malick didn't win went to John D. Gerhart ("Will Wilson's Daughter Gets School Honor"), a high school and college friend, who later became an international philanthropist, educator, and bird lover, and about whom Malick, at the urging and bequest of Gerhart's family, wrote a brief tribute after Gerhart died: "When I first met John D., he was in the 10th grade and had just arrived at St. Stephen's School in Austin, Texas, from his hometown of Abilene. All of us were struck by his kindness and good cheer, his interest in other people, his sense of fun. He had a way of drawing us together and soon became our class leader. After college, when he left for Africa, years might go by when we did not see each other, but always when we met again it was as if we were resuming a conversation that we had left off in mid-sentence. And so I cannot think of him as someone in the past, gone from us now. It seems the life we knew can have no end, and that in just a short while we will take it up again" (http://www.allavida.org/alliance/articles/johngerhart.html).

[18] The *Chicago Tribune* article begins by stating that "Proud grandmothers are Mrs. Nanajon Malick of Roscoe Street and Mrs. Thomas Pillion of Ottawa, Ill., who have just received word from their son and daughter respectively, Mr. and Mrs. Emil Malick now of Bartlesville, Okla, that the latter's son, Terrence Frederick Malick, has received an honorary scholarship."

Phi Beta Kappa after five years in 1966, receiving his bachelor's degree from Harvard in June ("UT Student A Rhodes Scholar" A6).[19]

On Saturday, December 18th, 1965, Terrence Frederick Malick, twenty-two, of Bartlesville, Oklahoma ("Rhodes Scholars from U.S. Announced" 12),[20] was selected as a Rhodes Scholar for two years residence and study at Oxford with an option for a third year ("UT Student A Rhodes Scholar" A6). According to Malick, "I got a scholarship to go study at Magdalen College at Oxford in Great Britain" (Ciment 30). At Magdalen, Malick studied philosophy but never completed his studies. In fact, his thesis wasn't acceptable to his "Senior Tutor," Gilbert Ryle, who claimed it wasn't philosophical enough (Walker 82).

While Malick was at Magdalen, many Americans felt optimistic about their president and their country, but even during this period of apparent confidence, the cracks and fissures in the consensus were beginning to show, and many began to express an ambivalent view of progress and the future of America. During the era of consensus, the "liberal" strain in the thinking of men like Malick's father sought to improve the living conditions of the poor by engaging them in the dynamics of "progress" and by extending the benefits of political democracy to those who had been prevented from enjoying them by tyranny, discrimination, and their own ignorance. But this way of defining progress incorporated the very structure of thought which justified the subjection of "non-progressive" races and peoples "for their own good" (Hodgson 497). Elite policymakers

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[19] According to a Harvard Dorm History Search at http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~dorms, in 1961, Malick lived in Room 8 in Matthews Hall and moved into Adams the following year.

[20] According to the article, a scholar-elect is chosen by a process that begins with endorsements from the student's university. In 1965, a Rhodes scholarship carried an annual $2,500 stipend, covering academic and living expenses during both term time at Oxford and vacations.

like Emil Malick based their foreign policy toward Third World countries on the liberal consensus assumption that the people of the underdeveloped nations, whom they sought to provide with the benefits of capitalism and democracy and protect from communism, had only "primitive" political and cultural systems that would easily bend to the Western notion of "progress."

American foreign policy in the post-WWII period was based in part on the assumption that American democracy and capitalism could and should be exported. American citizens, according to Hodgson, largely accepted these assumptions as they approached the polls to choose either Nixon or Kennedy in 1960, and the political differences that determined their choices were not significant enough to undermine the consensus they shared that the American system was working at home to guarantee a promising future and should be exported abroad. That consensus would be dashed apart during the ensuing decade.

From 1964 to 1971, the country experienced a period when dominant, residual, and emergent aspects of the culture clashed in the United States with great force and lasting effects. As more citizens became critical of the motives and the means employed to settle the country and fulfill the Unites States' "Manifest Destiny," the nation experienced tumultuous events that roiled Unites States' traditions of democracy and capitalism.

According to Hodgson, the peaceful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis in April 1962 may have offered Americans some reason to feel optimistic, but many Americans, especially students, began to express concern for the future of America. The primary sources of that discomfort included the Vietnam War, the "Southern struggle

against racial bigotry," and the Cold War. Other "disturbing paradoxes" in American society became evident: advances in technology had not eliminated meaningless labor or unemployment; glaring gaps existed between the wealthy and the impoverished; exploitation of natural resources abounded despite rapid population growth; America's "democratic" system was being manipulated in undemocratic ways; and apathy and complacency obtained when innovative thinking was most needed. Hodgson, summing up the disruptive effect of the 1960s on the American people, argues that these events and paradoxes discredited both American domestic and foreign policy and even brought under suspicion the moral character of the nation and its people:

> Americans had gone into the age of Kennedy and Nixon convinced that their government's actions—their action, that is, multiplied by the immense collective power of the federal government—could make over the world, at home and abroad. Now they had been burned. It was not just that they had learned how much harder it is to change the world than the elite they had listened to had told them. The lesson was more painful than that. They had learned there was moral ambiguity where they had once thought the issues of right and wrong were clearest; that their own motives were not above suspicion; and that there seemed little that political action could achieve, however idealistic in its intentions, without invoking unforeseen and unwanted reaction. (494)

Malick witnessed and lived the disintegration of the Ideology of Liberal Consensus as a college student, graduate student, and young instructor at M.I.T.

One indication of Malick's response to his era can be traced to his time in England. While Malick was in England as a Rhodes Scholar in 1967, he and fifty other American Rhodes Scholars signed a letter challenging Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration over the Vietnam War. In the letter, published and covered in the *New York Times*, some of the best and brightest future leaders in the U.S. responded to the crisis of the Vietnam War. By signing it, Malick expressed his agreement with its perspective.

According to Dana Adams Schmidt's special to the *New York Times* on January 26th, American Rhodes Scholars sent President Johnson a letter sharply questioning United States' policy in Vietnam. The letter followed a similar but more generally formulated open letter addressed to the President by student leaders from 100 colleges and universities in the United States on Dec. 29. The Rhodes Scholars' letter, handed to an American Embassy official, says the Scholars have found that their "feelings of conscience and national obligation counsel skepticism and concern, not active support, of the Government's Vietnam policy" and that "we have found it increasingly difficult to justify our government's policy in Vietnam both to ourselves and to foreign students" (Schmidt A2).

The tone of the letter is thoughtful, not argumentative, and the Scholars explain that "because they lack access to vital information, they chose to ask questions rather than make criticisms or recommendations" (Schmidt A2). The letter is divided into three broad categories: the role of China; the strategic alternatives for America; and the prospects for a negotiated settlement. In the letter, they note their frustration with the loss of lives, the misguided foreign policy objectives, and the economic strain on America,

and they ask the President if the Administration's statement about the threat of communist aggression can be considered as a "precise analogy" between contemporary China and Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia. The letter concludes with a basic thought to the President:

> In the State of the Union Message, you also called for a great deal of patience, declaring that the United States as well as the people of South Vietnam are being tested. We doubt, however, the wisdom of attempting to reduce this complicated war to such a contest. And we share the fears of many in our generation that this struggle has acquired a life of its own, that diplomatic positions on both sides have become frozen, and that we can expect only wider war in the months to come. The test now is not just one of will between two adversaries, nor of the patience of the South Vietnamese and American people, but of the imagination, flexibility, and courage which the Government can command in seeking what seems to us the only humane and realistic alternative in Vietnam—a negotiated peace.
>
> (Schmidt A2)

In the letter, the Rhodes Scholars evaluate the facts about the policy in Vietnam as they were laid out by President Johnson, and then ask questions about those facts in order to expose discrepancies in what the Administration has stated about the War. It seems that the Scholars aim to address the facts so as to realign the Administration's perspective on them—all to reduce confusion and stubbornness on both sides in order to reach a unanimity regarding the aims of the war in Vietnam. Here we see Malick, a future leader in America, concerned about his times, proposing with the other signatories that

imagination and flexibility be used to come to terms with contradictory positions and perspectives in American culture by asking questions rather than making judgments in order to achieve, more broadly, unanimity and peace. As we shall see, this orientation, stressing imagination and intellectual flexibility, would later become evident in Malick's movies.

Malick and Horizon in Husserl and Heidegger

Prior to his Rhodes Scholar period, Malick completed his undergraduate thesis, *The Concept of Horizon in Husserl and Heidegger*, on April 1, 1966. In the acknowledgements, Malick thanks film scholar Stanley Cavell, Heidegger scholar Bert Dreyfus, phenomenologist Dagfin Follesdal, and philosopher and former Cavell student Jack McNees. He expresses gratitude to Belgian priest and professor H.L. van Breda and German philosopher and phenomenologist Rudolf Boehm for allowing him to see and quote from the manuscripts at the Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium. He also notes that he is grateful to Martin Heidegger for granting him an interview and answering his questions. The thesis is sixty-eight pages long, including the author's notes and an annotated bibliography. After an Introduction, the thesis is divided into two sections: Part I addresses the development of the concept of horizon in Husserl, and Part II addresses the same concept as it is extended by Heidegger. The thesis ends with a brief conclusion.

Malick begins the thesis by acknowledging the difficulty in understanding the concept of horizon. He notes that those who have read either Husserl or Heidegger know that their discussion of the concept of horizon is "vague and desultory" (2). He argues, however, that "the concept represents something telling and formidable in their work,

perhaps something pivotal, since it is only in terms of this concept that their work can be understood and the questions they leave us with can become legitimate problems" (2). He admits that the concept "may be the least accessible point of departure" for a study of each philosopher's work, but that "it seems to me the most illuminating" (2).

In the thesis, Malick aims to clarify the logic of the concept of horizon, and along the way, he contends with the following questions: How did the two philosophers' understanding of the concept of horizon develop over time? What role does the concept play in their thought? Why was the concept so troublesome? And last, what are the difficulties that the concept presents? (2). Ultimately, says Malick, he will not answer these questions, but he will raise them in a way that would make it possible to settle them (2).

In the Husserl section, Part I, Malick works to clarify Husserl's development of the concept of horizon. Malick explains that Husserl identified William James as the only early thinker to acknowledge the concept of horizon; however, he also writes that Husserl believed that an investigation of the concept could only begin to become clear through phenomenological study. A horizon is a structure that lets us all live in the same life world and explains how we have a world in common. According to Malick, Husserl addresses the structures of experience that all human beings share. We cannot understand who we are if we only look at the world from subjective or objective perspectives; rather, we must look through both. For Husserl, says Malick, a horizon is somewhat like, yet broader than, a point of view; a horizon becomes evident when we see its limits, and that "like rules, limits reveal themselves for what they are only when they are transgressed. We can get a fix on a limit by violating it in different ways. If we conceive the limit of a

world (or horizon) as a border, then it is an unmarked border that we back over and mark by backing over. We only know we have trespassed beyond it when we find ourselves talking nonsense or at a loss or deserted" (21).

Malick argues that "Husserl is convinced that our horizons never differ so radically as to make mutual understanding impossible" (29). According to Malick, a cornerstone of Husserl's thought is that there is a universal horizon which embraces all others and that "there is always a level at which we could reach unanimity" (29). In other words, says Malick, Husserl believed that there is a universal horizon that encompasses all other horizons. However, the question of how we reach unanimity where our horizons differ, Malick notes, is an extremely difficult one:

> You might try to expose "discrepancies" within my horizon, but they are really only discrepancies given your own. Or you might try to fault my "judgment" by arguing that it rests on some sort of interpretation, but from my horizon it seems more like a matter of description than of judgment. Religious divergence is a case in point. Perhaps the only legitimate procedure open to you is to take my problems and find correlates for them within your horizon where they can be resolved on your terms, if only because they are not problems on your terms. (28-9)

Here, much as we saw in the Rhodes Scholar letter, Malick explains ways in which those with differing horizons may be able to achieve unanimity, a universal horizon that surpasses group differences.

Malick goes on to clarify the difficulty of grasping the concept of horizon in Part II by explaining how Heidegger understands and ultimately extends Husserl's thought.

According to Malick, Heidegger thinks we have difficulty discussing horizons because philosophical tradition has neglected to teach us how to ask the proper questions about them (41-2). In his thesis, Malick writes that Heidegger identifies his own work as "fundamental ontology," which seeks to establish "ontological knowledge"—that is, knowledge about the nature of being. Malick explains that ontological knowledge "discloses" or "holds open" the horizon of the matter we seek to investigate and that ontological knowledge successfully discloses the horizon of those things (33). As Malick sees it, "what Heidegger wants to do is to read our understanding of the world out of the way we behave toward things within it, particularly the way we behave when the world fails to provide us sufficient context to deal with those things at all. He wants to disclose the horizons of that understanding and thereby establish ontological knowledge of the world" (34).

To understand Heidegger's notion about the disclosure of horizons, however, we must, says Malick, clarify the nature of things within the world. Malick explains that Heidegger believes we treat the things in our everyday world as instruments or "implements" designed to meet our ends. For example, we use a hammer to drive nails, to bind the rafters, to support the roof, to shelter someone (34). Malick says, the hammer has a "system of reference" or horizon within which it is defined. To talk about the properties of the implement is largely to talk about its several references or ways of being applied to given ends: what Heidegger calls its "assignments" (34). The system of reference specific to an implement ultimately refers back to the person whose end it serves:

> The horizonal character of things reveals itself when their systems of reference are disturbed. Things "ready to hand" (things with horizons) seem to become "present at hand" (lose their horizons). The assignments that define an implement emerge from their inconspicuousness within its horizons and become explicit. We no longer know what to do with the implement because for a while it lacks the horizon that would make it possible to do anything with it at all. (36)

One way that a horizon is disclosed—or the "horizonal character of things reveals itself"—occurs when we discover that an implement is not properly adapted to the use we had for it; it becomes useless. Or, we may discover that an implement we want to use is not there for our use. As a result, the uselessness or the absence of the implements in the system of reference renders the other implements "in the way"—they cannot be used according to their assignment, thus revealing their horizons.

According to Heidegger, another way that the horizonal character of things is revealed to us is through the feeling of "dread" (38). Dread is a feeling that indicates the "collapse of the world" and suggests that things within the world are withdrawing from us; we clutch at them, but they elude our grasp. As Malick says, only because we realize that we have a world do things within it have claim and significance to us (40). In other words, when the world breaks down for us, we feel dread, and, as a result, horizons are disclosed to us.

In his undergraduate thesis, Malick argues that Heidegger's concept of horizon is laced up with his understanding of "world," which is also a key concept in Heidegger's

Essence of Reasons (xiv).[21] World, argues Malick, is one of the primary concepts in Heidegger's thinking:

> The world "encompasses us and reveals itself to us as horizon." But at the same time it conceals something of itself. To the extent that it reveals itself as horizon, it conceals itself as world. It conceals itself as world because there is no greater horizon within which it could reveal itself to us…For "world and horizon differ only with respect to what stands in each." The world embraces (all) horizons and horizons embrace things. (42-3)

Here, we see Heidegger's thought paralleling that of Husserl's. As Malick stated earlier, Husserl's universal horizon encompasses all others; here, Heidegger's concept of world embraces all horizons.

To clarify, Malick states that world is that "general horizon out of which *Dasein* [man] understands both the 'totality of things which can be present at hand within the world' and itself" (32). According to Heidegger, says Malick, world is "not the 'totality of things' but that in terms of which we understand them, that which gives them measure and purpose and validity in our schemes" (Introduction xiv-xv). Malick explains that Heidegger likely offers a definition of world to clarify "why we must, and no less how we can, share certain notions about the measure and purpose and validity of things. And

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[21] One critic of Malick's translation, for example, quarrels with this point, claiming "Malick's assertion that the essay is fundamentally concerned with the theme of 'world' is only quantitatively true. Its deeper interest is surely to go beyond the world and to explain its roots in transcendence and freedom. The most important part of the book is Part III in which the finite and groundless character of *Dasein's* freedom-transcendence is thematized" (J.D.C., *The Review of Metaphysics* 742).

presumably it is important to have that explanation because sometimes we do not, or do not seem to, share such notions" (xv).

In both his undergraduate thesis implicitly and his critical introduction explicitly , Malick cautions that

> Where Heidegger talks about "world," he will often appear to be talking about a pervasive interpretation or point of view which we bring to the things of the world. This, in any case, has been the view of many commentators. But there is little sense in speaking of "a point of view" here since precisely what Heidegger wants to indicate with the concept is that none other is possible. And there is no more sense in speaking of an interpretation when, instead of an interpretation, the "world" is meant to be that which can keep us from seeing, or force us to see, that what we have is one. (xv)

As he did in discussing Husserl's concept of horizon, Malick explains that Heidegger's understanding of world is not a particular stance that individuals hold; rather, the concept is a more fundamental shared disclosure of things within which they find themselves in all their thoughts, cultural practices, and beliefs (31-34). In other words, Heidegger does not mean for the concept of world to mean any particular entity or class of things; it is that presupposed and unthought of space of familiarity and recognition within which all beings around us show themselves to us. Heidegger's concept of world is a fundamental understanding within which things, people, and history all cohere within a shared horizon, a shared understanding of significances and purposes.

Overall, Heidegger's ontological philosophy aims to hold open a horizon to expose to us in the age of modernity our self-willing mode of being, one where we have become forgetful of what it means to be human, forgetful of our relation to Being. As we will learn, Malick's work, like Heidegger's, celebrates art and the belief that an artist—a "poet in destitute times"—can potentially redeem the era. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger says that the work of art is to disclose truth, to open up a world, a human dwelling place. Malick's understanding of Heidegger ultimately shapes his perspective on the world as a young citizen, philosopher, and soon to be filmmaker.

Malick and MLK

Malick's understanding of Heidegger is linked to his emerging social and political life and views during the 1960s, and we see a window into that connection in an essay that Malick co-wrote with Jacob Brackman for the "Notes and Comment" section of the *New Yorker* on April 13, 1968, responding to the death of Martin Luther King. In his interview with Michel Ciment, Malick explains that he quit Magdalen College before finishing his degree and went to work for the *New Yorker*. While working for the magazine, Malick states that he traveled to Bolivia to write an article on Che Guevara's rebellion and the trial of Regis Debray: "I stayed there for four months, but I didn't publish anything, even though I'd written other articles for the *New Yorker* during the course of eight months, like obituaries for Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy" (30).

Erin Overbey validates Malick's claim, noting that "Terrence Malick did indeed write for the *New Yorker*, but his byline never appeared in the magazine. His only article for us was a 'Notes and Comment' piece on the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr., co-written with Jacob Brackman and published in the April 13, 1968, issue."[22] Malick and Brackman's piece provides a poignant first-person plural account of the days just after King's assassination. The piece runs three full pages.

As we have learned, Malick witnessed and lived through the disintegration of the Ideology of the Liberal Consensus. In the piece on King's death, Malick and Brackman refer to this breakdown, alluding to the hopelessness of the era in which a self-willing America has lost its way:

> [O]ver the past several years, we have learned to accept the fact that our destiny is not entirely what we make of ourselves. But in these last weeks, perhaps for the first time since the Second World War, we've had a sense of being submerged in history, and of becoming inured to its stupefactions. About the time of the Tet offensive, one was close to despair. Then, with Eugene McCarthy's victory in New Hampshire and Robert Kennedy's announcement that he would run for the Presidency, with President Johnson's announcement of a bombing halt and then his announcement that he would not run again, followed by a direct peace overture from North Vietnam, one began to feel that suddenly, just when things were darkest, America had found her way back to the path. Now Dr. King's death comes to us as a reproach. We had let ourselves drift

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[22] According to the *New Yorker's* head librarians, Jon Michaud and Erin Overbey, the magazine's "Notes and Comment" section was not signed by writers "in those days," adding that "it is easy to see how this piece might have escaped the notice of Malick fans" (http://emdashes.com/ask-the-librarians/Jan 11, 2007). Michaud and Overbey answer questions about the *New Yorker's* past and present in their bimonthly column "Ask the Librarians."

away from the reality of our trouble. Finding the path will not be so easy" (35).

We see Malick and Brackman establishing their thoughts about the despair, and brief hopes, during a turbulent era in American history, one which had seen the assassination of JFK and the progression of the Vietnam War. They explain that America has grown dulled by and accustomed to the unpleasant times, times which have revealed that man can no longer will his own destiny. They note their disbelief over the death of King and suggest that his death further indicates the breakdown of America in the late 1960s, a situation wherein "one can no longer *imagine* what form the solutions to our problems will assume. One isn't even sure what a solution would look like" (35).

Amidst this "historical hurricane," they suggest that the news media ordinarily provide clues about a solution. But the relevances America seeks, they suggest, are no longer buried in news stories. They explain that "Friday, the *Times* ran an eight-column headline on Dr. King's death. It ran eight-column headlines Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, too. Tucked inside Friday's paper were many stories about Dr. King's career. Their assumption seemed to be that by reentering his past we might get a running start into our future without him" (35).

Here, we see Malick and Brackman's understanding of America at that time paralleling Heidegger's belief about the destitute times of modernity, an age in which science and technology have distorted the world, transforming it into objects or implements to meet man's own ends. In these destitute times, Heidegger argues that we have grown accustomed to seeing ourselves as gods independent of time and history and

of the culture that has shaped us; we have forgotten the knowledge of our own mortality, forgotten to ask questions about human being or *Dasein* (Singer and Dunn 123).

According to Heidegger's thought, however, authentic *Dasein* "acknowledges its mortality and its situation in time and history; authentic *Dasein* is sensitive to the process of becoming through which Being reveals itself" (Singer and Dunn 123). In the "Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger argues that art can redeem the era, art can hold open the horizon we wish to investigate to expose to us in a destitute age our mode of being, a Western mode of self-assertion and technocratic rationality. Heidegger believes that the artist in particular can help us surpass such self-assertion to "construct a view of the world that is open to the full potential of Being"—an "Open" where things appear in their "unifying oneness."

Malick and Brackman ultimately set up King through his thought, action, eloquent use of language, and his death as an artwork which embodies a legitimate solution to the negative effects of contemporary western culture. They surmise that King was "perhaps the most courteous revolutionary who has ever lived" (37), a "radical in the truest sense"; that is, "he insisted at the same time upon the terrible reality of our problems and upon their solubility, and he rejected everything that was relevant to their solution" (37). Malick and Brackman see King as someone whose mode of being and whose teaching resist the dominant, western productionist mode of understanding.

On three separate occasions, Malick and Brackman refer to moments in which King recognizes his own mortality and situation in time and history—something he spoke reluctantly about at the prompting of journalists—an action that parallels Heidegger's call for authentic *Dasein* in the contemporary era. Near the beginning of the article, Malick

and Brackman explain that they last saw the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King in August 1967 at the Ebenezer church in Atlanta, just "down the block" from where he was born, noting that during their conversation King told of a recent threat against his life: "'It has been given to me to die when the Lord calls me,' he said, digressing from his narrative. 'The Lord called me into life and He will call me into death. I've known the fear of dying. Yes, I lived with that fear in Montgomery and in Birmingham, down in the state of Alabama, when brother fell upon brother in 1963'" (35). Later, King continues: "'I've stood on the banks of the Jordan and looked into the promised land…Maybe I won't make the journey, but I know that my *people* are going to make the journey, because I've stood and looked. So it doesn't *particularly* matter anymore. I've conquered the fear of dying, and a man that's conquered the fear of dying has conquered everything. I don't have to fear *any* man'" (35).

And finally,

> He spoke of having (like Moses) "been to the mountaintop" and there become reconciled. "And then I got into Memphis, and some began to talk about the threats that were out," Dr. King said. "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land." (36)

Malick and Brackman continue by explaining that King identifies his destiny—one of "his most urgent tasks: *preparing* his apostles, and his public, for their loss of him" (36).

Here, King does not see himself as a god independent of history and the culture that has shaped him. Malick and Brackman depict King as an example of human Dasein—an inevitable mortality and being unto death. King is a model for any authentic understanding of being, specifically the historical legacy of a particular people, Americans, in a particular time in history. King is sensitive to the process of becoming through which Being reveals itself.

Malick and Brackman agree that King opened a "doorway"—his life was an ethical and religious response to hatred and fear. King fostered and unified a "coalition of conscience." In doing so, they discuss King's language, his oratory, calling attention to King's poetic language, speeches, and way of speaking, much as Heidegger argues that art can redeem the era, that art can hold open the horizon we wish to investigate to expose to western culture in a destitute age our mode of being. For example, Malick and Brackman note King's urging to unite "body force with *soul* force" (36) and his critique of "the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace, which is the absence of tension, to a positive peace, which is the presence of justice" (36).

Here, Malick and Brackman propose that King's language and way of speaking possess the potential to disclose a world, a world which unifies both black and white. For Heidegger, language is not used as a way to manipulate the world; rather, language is a space or "Opening" where the world reveals or discloses itself. The poet is the person who can call his audience's attention to the opening that language specifically and culture generally provide. For that reason, Heidegger claims that poetry provides the basic model for all artistic endeavors (Heidegger, "What Are Poets For" 92). Malick attempts

to summon MLK as the site of resistance to the subjugation of being—the subjugation of blacks—to theoretical knowledge or control and manipulation. King's speeches, as they wrench us out of the everyday, traditional consciousness and habits of perception that have blinded us, provide a primary sense of community and meaning in contemporary America.

In his dying, what Malick and Brackman call a "radicalizing event, for both races" (37), they see the possibility that King's teaching can maintain a power of disclosure, that King, like Heidegger's artist, can help us surpass such self-assertion to "construct a view of the world that is open to the full potential of Being," an "Open" where things appear in their "unifying oneness" (Singer and Dunn 123). The conclusion of the piece sets up a world of unanimity, one led to through destitute times by a poet; it also shows Malick's concerns and establishes him, too, as a future poet with particular concerns:

> [B]y Sunday--Palm Sunday--things had changed. As marchers gathered, twenty abreast and eventually seven dense blocks long, at 145th Street and Seventh Avenue, and as they marched…black and white, arms linked, down Seventh Avenue, there was a sense that the non-violent…were returning in force to civil rights. It seemed that Dr. King's people, of both races, were assembling again from everywhere, to resume where they left off after Mississippi….The march was informal--no marshals and no leaders…. Little boys standing at the entrance to [Central] Park put their feet in the line of the march, as though testing the water, and then joined in […] The Mall, by the time the marchers got to it, was filled with a crowd

> several times the size of the march itself…. We stood on the hill in back of the Mall and watched the two crowds merge. They did so almost silently, and totally, in great waves…and [from the distance] it was hard to tell who was black and who was white. (37)

The effect of King's death is that of "unifying oneness," an effect that Malick and Brackman see as possibly offering the genuine refounding of history for the American people. They explain that King was "true to his own vision" (36), and in a struggle in which hatred is often met with hatred, King, they say, was "genuine in loving the human being, however he deplored the deed. To the last, Dr. King assumed that when the legal and extra-legal barriers to communication between races were hewn down, people would begin to see their brotherhood beneath the skin and begin to know 'the majestic heights of being obedient to the unenforceable'" (37). One sees in this assertion the authors' hope that King's vision would help redirect the American "destitution" and turbulence toward a more humane world open to the potential of all citizens. Ultimately, the MLK piece reveals Malick's growing perspective, his concern for problems plaguing America yet his belief that a solution to the problems facing America is possible.

Malick and Brackman note that just after King's assassination was announced on television, several broadcasting accidents occurred which, as a result, created a jarring effect on the American viewer: "Curiously, what gave us a stronger sense of tragedy than anything our leaders said was the disorder on the networks; the missed cues and fades" (35). Here, we see the disorder after King's death calling to mind an idea that Malick discusses in his undergraduate thesis: "The horizonal character of things reveals itself when their systems of reference are disturbed. Things 'ready to hand' (things with

horizons) seem to become 'present at hand' (lose their horizons). The assignments that define an implement emerge from their inconspicuousness within its horizons and become explicit" (36). In other words, after King's death, the confusion and mistakes of the telecasts reporting on his death called attention to the conventions of the newscast format, the invisible style used by the news to present its product to the viewer. Most importantly, King's death revealed the horizonal character of things because the newscasts' system of reference was disturbed. As we will see, Malick's aesthetic fundamentally relies on replicating such disorder, violating Hollywood conventions in order to disrupt the viewers' habits of perception and calling attention to the implemental nature of Hollywood cinema—all designed to reveal the horizons of our mode of being in the world. In his calling attention to the disruptions of television news coverage following the MLK assassination, we can sense the seeds of a new vocation that Malick was considering in the late 1960s: filmmaking.

Malick, M.I.T. and the American Film Institute

As we have learned, Malick actually "authored" several documents, discussed above, during his young adulthood which help to shed light on his developing concern for and preoccupation with specific problems in the world. Other documents include articles published during the late 1960s in the student newspaper at M.I.T, where Malick taught philosophy in 1968-69, which describe the many changes and conflicts occurring during his time at the school. These documents suggest that although Malick witnessed and lived the disintegration of the Ideology of the Liberal Consensus as a college student, graduate student, and writer for the *New Yorker*, this experience continued during his time as a young instructor at M.I.T.

In the Spring semester of 1968—during which time Malick was writing for the *New Yorker*— Malick taught a class on Phenomenology at M.I.T., a philosophy course offered by the philosophy section of the Humanities Department. According to an announcement in *The Tech*, the M.I.T. student newspaper, Malick filled in to teach the class which had previously been cancelled or marked "not offered," because Professor Hubert Dreyfus, who had originally taught the class, took a position at the University of California, Irvine ("Announcement" 8). For the Fall semester, 1969, Malick had planned to teach a sophomore course entitled Existentialism, which, according to an announcement in the Friday, January 17, 1969, edition of the school's newspaper, involved a "consideration of certain related problems in the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty" ("Announcement" 3).[23] Ultimately, Malick never taught the course on Existentialism because he left the school to attend the American Film Institute. It is unclear whether he left because, as he has explained, "I was not a very good teacher; I didn't have the sort of edge one should have on the students" ("Do-It-Yourself Movies" 5) or because he had his sights set on becoming a filmmaker; it is clear, however, that there was also turbulence in the Humanities Department's philosophy section while he was there.

While Malick was at M.I.T., he witnessed several conflicts at the school. Perhaps most importantly, he witnessed turmoil within the Philosophy section in which he taught. According to *The Tech*, while Malick taught at the school, the philosophy section was comprised of two branches, the analytical section and the existential and

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[23] According to the announcement, those interested in taking the course were supposed to contact "Mr. Malick in room 39-6 25."

phenomenological section. From 1966 until the end of the decade, however, the philosophy section underwent changes which included building a high-powered department of analytic philosophy at the expense of the existential and phenomenological branch. As a result of this trouble within the Department, Hubert Dreyfus left the school, leaving a void in the Philosophy section that Malick temporarily filled.[24]

While Malick admitted that he'd "always liked the movies in some kind of naïve way " (Walker 82), in an interview by telephone the morning after *Badlands* premiered at the New York Film Festival, Malick reveals that "I became addicted to films when I was in college and after that as a graduate student. I loved the experience of going to the movies, loved practically everything I saw. But I had no technical interest in films then" (82). According to Malick, his involvement with filmmaking occurred "almost by accident," saying "I audited a course at M.I.T. when I was teaching there that was taught by Ed Pincus (filmmaker and author of *Guide to Filmmaking*)" ("AFI Report" 48) and cinema verite / direct cinema documentary filmmaker Richard Leacock (Ciment 33). While Malick was at M.I.T., Richard Leacock created the "Film Lab" ("The Arts at MIT" 9) in the film section of the Architecture Department, which had been started by Associate Professor Edward Pincus. According to Leacock, his teaching philosophy included "finding people who want to use film in relation to their outside knowledge"—rather than training an "army of technicians" (Moore 3). This fact seems to coincide with Malick's interest in philosophy. During the time that Malick was teaching at the school,

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[24] Also, Hubert Dreyfus, Noam Chomsky, and John McNees, one of the professors on Malick's undergraduate thesis committee, all took out an ad in the student newspaper openly opposing American military involvement in Vietnam and supporting all those who chose to actively resist involvement by refusing to cooperate with the Selective Service System (*The Tech* 2 –May 17, 1968).

Pincus and Leacock were also conducting studies on the use of non-synchronous sound in film using lightweight cameras, a practice that, we will learn, Malick adopted and continues to use in interesting ways in his own work.

After leaving M.I.T., Malick was accepted at the American Film Institute, saying "I dropped it all to come out here [Los Angeles]. Why? I'm not sure. Except that I wanted to make a living from something I was enthusiastic for" ("Do-It-Yourself Movies" 5). Ironically, Lyndon B. Johnson, whose foreign policy Malick, along with other Rhodes Scholars, questioned, was the one who signed the National Arts and Humanities Act, signaling the advent of the American Film Institute. In his remarks at the White House's Rose Garden, Johnson indicated that a new national institute would be created to foster and promote progress in the art of film, stating, "We will create an American Film Institute bringing together leading artists of the film industry, outstanding educators, and young men and women who wish to pursue this twentieth century art form as their life's work" (AFI, *The First Ten Years* 4).

While Malick was at the American Film Institute, he experienced problems similar to those at M.I.T., explaining that "the 2 years I was there [at the AFI], there were problems but not nearly as many as I experienced as an academic, as a teacher at a university prior to coming to the AFI. So, I am saying in effect that these problems and disagreements are inevitable and that they should be looked upon as a sign of health not as in any way discrediting the institution" ("To Create" 91-2). Malick acknowledges the problems, but he also seems to believe that the conflicts ultimately were productive, as did director George Stevens, who admitted that "we created a situation, as we discovered later, which made learning very difficult. The first entrants were justly proud to have

been chosen, but some apparently soon began to consider that learning was secondary and that the centre existed simply to provide resources and equipment for film-making" (*Education* 166).

At the American Film Institute, Malick took auteur-based film courses from 1969-1971 as part of its first class of scholarship filmmakers. According to George Stevens in *The Education of the Film-Maker: An International View*, the center accepted its first students in the autumn of 1969, "having selected from 300 applicants the twenty presumed to be the most talented" (164). The first two years were "for all of us staff and students alike an intensive period of learning" (164), and the aim of the center "was to provide a structure in which talented young people could learn under individual guidance and define and expand their own talents. The curriculum included film screenings, seminars with professional film-makers, and production of films with tutorial guidance from professional advisers and staff from the centre" (164).

In the American Film Institute's publication *A First Year*, Stevens explains that "the Center's goal will be to train the filmmaker—the principal guiding force of a film, whether as producer, director, or writer—rather than specialized craftsmen or technicians" (20). Learning at the Institute was organized into five overlapping sectors: script-writing; directing actors; photography and production design; editing; and sound and music. Students explored each aspect of cinematic and narrative style through the screening and analysis of a wide array of films. The film analysis, says Stevens, was at the heart of the learning process and led by three permanent staff members who were joined by professional writers and directors in working with students on their own screenplays. There were seminars once or twice a week with guests including noted

directors such as Federico Fellini, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, and Jean Renoir, as well as writers, set designers, cameramen, editors, musicians, and special effects experts (AFI, *The Education of the Film-Maker: An International View* 166). By the time a fellow leaves the Institute, says Stevens, he will "have had experience in all areas of film" (20). Likewise, Malick validates the school's objectives, stating that the Institute provided a valuable learning experience: "I attended the AFI studies in Los Angeles in 1969, graduated in 1971 and have since been working professionally in the movies as a writer and director. I can state categorically that were it not for the training that I received at the center, this direction would not have been possible for me, nor could any other school really have replaced the institute and the service it provided" ("To Create" 87).

Conclusion

Terrence Malick is an unusual Hollywood filmmaker who has developed a unique artistic style and vision with just four films in thirty-five years. Though he has worked slowly, film scholars regard Malick as an auteur and describe him as such in most thorough studies on the history of American film and its directors. To provide the most coherent and effective means for understanding Malick's body of work, my auteur study will explore how attention to film form, Hollywood genres, American cultural myths, and key concepts in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger can help illuminate Malick and his films. At the beginning of the chapters that each address a specific film, I will historically situate Malick and that film within an industrial context that has evolved in response to varying social and cultural forces. Some of these forces led to the Hollywood Renaissance (1967-1975), an artistically fertile era when formally trained directors like

Malick were given increased freedom to shape their own projects. Other forces subsequently helped initiate what film scholar Thomas Schatz calls the New Hollywood, our present era of the high-priced blockbuster—a less inviting environment for serious filmmakers. Although Hollywood's industrial structure has changed, of course, since his work appeared in the early 1970s, Malick still writes his own scripts and works closely with his editors, cinematographers, and sound mixers, maintaining a great deal of control over his projects—even with their lackluster box-office performance in a commercially driven film industry.

While I plan to conduct a formalist analysis of voiceover, montage, natural landscape, cinematography, sound and other narrative and stylistic elements, the focus of my study will be an examination of how Malick uses Heideggerian philosophy as an instrument to critique American cultural myths, which he engages through popular Hollywood genres.

I aim to offer a close analysis and probing look at the key features of Malick's films—with chapters on *Badlands* (1973), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Thin Red Line* (1998), *The New World* (2005), and a conclusion on *The Tree of Life* (2011)—providing an original and insightful critical perspective on an American director whose aesthetic has established his reputation as an auteur, yet has not been adequately examined in the field of film studies.

Chapter III
An Architect's Message Left Unread: Unfolding "Blueprints" and Horizons in *Badlands*

Along the bloody path that begins in a quiet South Dakota town and ends in the wide-open Badlands of Montana, outlaw lovers Kit Carruthers (Martin Sheen) and Holly Sargis (Sissy Spacek) happen upon a "rich man's house" where they drop in for supplies, suspending for a "couple of hours, maybe," their high-speed race and the growing "country-wide" chase for what lies on the horizon just ahead. After having subdued the rich man and his deaf maid, Kit and Holly wander within the large Victorian mansion among the stately rooms and baroque antiques, gazing and poking at decorative murals, busts, musical instruments, furniture, and dining ware made of crystal and silver. In what must be the couple's first time amid such luxury and wealth, the man's house and its surfeit of objects embody an ideal depicted in movies, books, and magazines—much like the pastoral scenes in the murals and paintings which ornament the rich man's walls. Their child-like curiosity quickly wanes, however, and they drift apart into different rooms, becoming, it seems, just as disconnected from each other as are the disparate objects that surround them. When alone, each character conveys a languishing in ways unique to each character: Holly picks up a walking cane and slips out back for a stroll on the lawn, holding the cane by its middle much like the baton she twirled earlier in the film. Meanwhile, Kit remains inside, where he, as always, moves and fidgets restlessly about: he records a message on a Dictaphone; tries out the rich man's chair; flips through a magazine—then, silence, except for the ticking of a clock on the mantel. The ticking of time, however, is broken by the sound of the doorbell, which springs Kit into motion from the chair. Kit opens the front door to find a Visitor, played by Terrence Malick (in

one his two brief appearances in *Badlands*), holding architectural blueprints under his arm, who sees Kit and asks, “Hi... ah, Mister Scarborough here?”

KIT
Yeah, but the thing about him, he’s down with the flu. He’s sick.

VISITOR
Really?

KIT
Yeah. I’d invite you inside, except it’s contagious. Don’t want to start an epidemic.

VISITOR
No, of course not. It’s only that he called last night and asked if I could come by.

KIT
Well, he didn’t have it last night.

The Visitor is puzzled by Kit’s presence in the house, and even more by his behavior. He takes out a note pad.

KIT
What’s that?

VISITOR
Well, I’d like to leave a message, if that’s okay.

KIT
Sure.

The Visitor jots something down and hands the note to Kit.

KIT
You have to excuse me now. I have to go back inside. Bye.

Kit closes the door.

INT. STAIRWELL

Kit hides the Visitor’s note in a vase and bounds up the stairs to the first landing.

KIT
We're out of here, Tex.
(*Badlands* Script Final Version Dialogue and Continuity)

Leading up to this "message" scene, the viewer has witnessed a simplistic story about two outlaw lovers on the run, one in which cinematic style has served to complicate the road movie genre popularized in a number of other Renaissance films. Yet, this "message" scene is a poignant one for a number of reasons. In the scene, we see a rare instance in the film where Malick adheres to classical conventions of editing and framing. The scene transpires according to Hollywood's classical shot-reverse shot editing, and Malick frames the sequence with both Kit and the Visitor using medium shots. In order to convey the information in the scene in the most economical manner possible, Malick here relies on classical Hollywood conventions of editing and framing. Most importantly, however, the Visitor is actually an architect—as we can see from the rolled up blueprints under his arm—and as that architect, Malick, the writer, director, and producer—the "architect" of the film—would like to leave a message. That is, Malick subtly delivers a message right before our eyes, yet one that Kit does not read. Ultimately, the viewer, like Kit, quickly springs into motion—a frantic reaction to The Visitor and desire for the next step of the causal chain. This scene illuminates the whole; that is, as we will see, just as Kit neglects to read the architect's message, so have viewers and critics neglected to "read" Malick's.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to Malick's first film, *Badlands*. After situating briefly the social, historical, industrial, and production contexts in which Malick made *Badlands*, I offer an analysis of the film's narrative and stylistic systems, arguing that it employs conventions of the road movie, teen rebellion, or "outlaw lovers on the run" film

that became popular during the Hollywood Renaissance. However, Malick ultimately uses the popular genres to explore his larger concern of exposing the inherent contradictions in the frontier myth and the Adamic myth, and he also subtly critiques the empty moral landscape, obsession with celebrity, and failure of the counterculture in the waning years of the Vietnam War. An understanding of Heidegger illuminates the fact that Kit and Holly are estranged from their own actions in a way that indicates a disconnection from being. That is, they treat things and people as objects that they manipulate and consume in their murderous mode of self-assertion as they search for meaning and identity that is absent in their world. Interestingly, *Badlands* is Malick's only film that does not employ Heideggerian concepts as a way to affirm an alternative mode of being in the world.

Context

The social and cultural context in which Malick made *Badlands* helps illuminate the film. As we have learned, Malick witnessed and lived the disintegration of the Ideology of the Liberal Consensus as a college student, graduate student, and young instructor at M.I.T. He responded actively to his era first during his time in England as a Rhodes Scholar in the letter he signed challenging Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration over the Vietnam War, and then as a writer for the *New Yorker* in his obituary to Martin Luther King. In the piece on King's death, Malick and Brackman establish their thoughts about the despair, and brief hopes, that accompanied a turbulent era in American history, one which had seen the assassination of JFK and the escalation

of the Vietnam War. In each instance, we see Malick, a future leader in America,[25] concerned about his times, proposing that imagination and flexibility be used to come to terms with contradictory positions and perspectives in United States culture.

The late 1960s and early 1970s—when Malick was in film school at the AFI and making *Badlands*—were years of extraordinary upheaval in American society, an era that saw a polarization of American culture and the decline of American consensus. While not everyone was directly involved in events such as the Civil Rights movement, race riots, the counterculture, Vietnam War protests, student radicalization, feminism, and demands for gay rights, the assassination of JFK, RFK, and MLK, the shooting of students at Kent State, withdrawal from Vietnam, Nixon, Watergate, and the oil crisis, these events had a profound effect on American culture, not least through their coverage in the media. What is perhaps most striking about this period, however, are the number and depth of crises and upheavals Americans experienced, and their cumulative impact in such a short period of time which ultimately challenged American values and cultural assumptions. According to Hodgson, "What happened in the age of Kennedy and Nixon was something more than an acceleration in the pace of change. There was a real break in the continuity of American experience [;] the great conflicts of the age of Kennedy and Nixon challenged the central premise of American life" (14-15). As we will see, Malick's films address concerns with the "American experience," and in *Badlands*, he engages with several of the root problems facing America.

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[25] Hereafter, when I mention American, this indicates the United States.

As Malick was trying to get his first feature film production off the ground, a number of factors within the film industry created conditions that permitted inexperienced filmmakers such as Malick to make lower budget, more challenging movies. By the end of the 1960s, the studio system that ran the film industry was in a crisis. Part of the trouble included competition from television, which had helped to erode significantly the film industry's audience. The industry had also instituted a new ratings classification system in 1968 and, by doing so, recognized that every film need not be suitable for every viewer. Other trouble within Hollywood resulted from the antitrust action of the late 1940s, which had ended the studios' hold over the theatre chains that had controlled movie exhibition. The film industry's conservatism and reluctance to take risks left it with a diminished audience: it continued to pump out expensive, star-laden pictures that failed to connect with the generation that had grown up during the 1960s. In fact, by 1970-1971, 75% of movie goers were under thirty years old, and this younger audience, which had come of age during the changes, conflicts, and upheavals of the previous decade, had no desire to watch the "parent films," or what John Belton describes as conservative, middle-aged, mainstream, big budget historical spectacles, lavish musicals, and Disney family pictures (Belton 344-345). Many such films, particularly musicals, flopped in the late 1960s—*Dr. Dolittle* (Richard Fleischer, 1967), which cost $20 million and made $6 million; *Star* (Robert Wise, 1968), which cost $15 million and made $4 million; and *Hello, Dolly* (Barbra Streisand, 1969), which cost $24 million and made $15 million, for example.

As some of the big expensive musicals were bombing, some of the younger, more liberal viewers were drawn away from their parents' movies to films such as *The*

Graduate (Mike Nichols, 1967), *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967), and *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969). These films attempted to address an under-thirty age group. They were relatively inexpensive yet made huge profits, which in turn made it more commonplace for some companies and investors to turn to young and relatively inexperienced filmmakers. This led to what some film historians call the Hollywood Renaissance, which began in 1967 with *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* and, according to most, ended in 1975 with the failure of *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975) and the overwhelming box-office success of *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975). From the counterculture to Watergate, the events of the 1960s and early 1970s had a distinct influence on the films of the Hollywood Renaissance, and many film lovers such as Malick participated in the political revolutions of the 60s, becoming filmmakers at the height of the Vietnam war.[26]

Paralleling the decline in the studio system was the rise of auteurism in popular criticism and journalism. The concept of film authorship was influentially articulated by Francois Truffaut in his 1954 essay for *Cahiers du Cinema*, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." In the essay, Truffaut discusses "les politique des auteurs" (the policy of authors), which contends that film should be a personal artistic expression for its director who writes with the camera as an author writes with a pen. Truffaut's notion of the auteur privileged certain Hollywood directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, and Orson Welles who achieved a personal vision in their films despite working within the constraints of the Hollywood studio system.

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[26] See Gerald Mast's chapter "Hollywood Renaissance: 1964-1976" in *A Short History of the Movies*.

However, not until the 1960s did the notion of the auteur appear in critical discussion in America, when Andrew Sarris coined the term "the auteur theory" in a 1962 article in *Film Comment* and employed it in his publication in 1968 of *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions*. While Sarris' auteur theory initially met resistance from American critics such as Pauline Kael,[27] the theory crested in the early 1970s following debates between Kael and Sarris and became for a time the dominant mode of aesthetic criticism among American film critics. Ultimately, the idea of the film director as auteur was institutionalized as the primary mode of study at film schools, which grew in number throughout America during the late 60s and early 70s. As we have learned, Malick, a film fellow at AFI from 1969-1971, was trained through a curriculum that relied heavily on the auteur approach.

Production History

A filmmaker's position, experience, and status within the film industry work to determine in part the level of constraints under which he works, and during the Hollywood Renaissance, Malick exercised an unusually high level of creative control on his first film. Malick was able to gain so much control over his first film due to the problems within Hollywood at the time and because of his filmmaking experience at the American Film Institute. During his time at the AFI, Malick wrote, directed, and acted in *Lanton Mills* (1970), a comedy involving two cowboys planning to rob a bank in Texas.[28] At AFI, Malick made many connections, including one with Mike Medavoy, who would

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[27] See Kael's essay, "Circles and Squares."

[28] The seventeen-minute film starred Warren Oates, Harry Dean Stanton, and Paula Mandel. An article on the rarely seen film can be found in "Can Terry Malick Tell a Joke?: The Serious and the Absurd in Terrence Malick's *Lanton Mills*" by Theresa Schwartzman.

become his first agent. After graduating from the AFI, Malick took script-doctoring jobs for movies, including *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971),[29] and did uncredited work on the screenplay *Drive, He Said* (1971), Jack Nicholson's directorial debut. He also sold an original screenplay called *Deadhead Miles* (Vernon Zimmerman, 1972), a quirky story of a long-distance truck driver, and he adapted a screenplay entitled *Pocket Money* (Stuart Rosenberg, 1972), based on J.P.S. Brown's 1970 novel, *Jim Kane*, for his first screenwriting credit. Thanks to his achievements, the opportunities granted young filmmakers, and his experience making films at the AFI, the twenty-nine-year-old Malick gained a chance to write and direct his own film with a high degree of artistic freedom.

Malick's involvement with *Badlands'* film production extends from the initial conceptualization of the film through the entire production process. From conception to completion, Malick says *Badlands* took two years to make. He started writing the film in the fall of 1971 and finished post-production on the film in the fall of 1973. Malick scouted locations himself and shot the film entirely on-location in the southeastern part of Colorado (*Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 3). In an interview with G. Richardson Cook, Malick noted he didn't manage, however, to stay on schedule during shooting. Nevertheless, this fact was not a major problem for Malick: "you don't have to worry about going over schedule on an independent picture the same way you do with a studio picture since you can always whittle down the size of the crew. Going over *schedule* needn't force you over *budget*. We shot the whole last month with four people" (31).

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[29] According to an early script, Malick was tabbed to act in the film, playing a mechanic. The original film was entitled *Dead Right*, set to star Frank Sinatra and to be directed by Irv Kershner, whom Malick worked with on the screenplay.

Malick has always managed to maintain artistic control over his films—they have always been auteur projects. Despite discovering he was "woefully ignorant" as a filmmaker—one who wished he'd made more short films at the AFI[30]—he was fortunate that the shifting nature of the film industry in the late 60s and early 70s provided opportunities for inexperienced film school graduates like the twenty-nine-year-old screenwriter to make low-budget feature films.[31] For *Badlands*, Malick raised much of the money himself, and despite being employed at the time by Warner Bros., he never approached the studio when trying to raise money, noting, "they wouldn't even look at me. Although they employed me as a screenwriter they wouldn't even think of employing me as a director. And also, I wouldn't have had any control over the picture, and I thought that I wanted to have that" (*Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 17).

In order to gain control over the picture, Malick raised the money himself, meeting with potential investors in the afternoons (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 5). Raising money, however, proved difficult for Malick:

> I went to everybody that I heard had money. At first, I tried to be elegant about it; then finally I was almost like a panhandler. It's not that I was above it but it wasn't effective to really be desperate. You've got to convey that you've got something which is valuable, even a pearl of great

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[30] While making *Badlands*, Malick relished the help he received from the AFI, saying, "They were a kind of island to which I felt I could always retreat . . . When I didn't have the money to rent the video equipment for casting, I borrowed some from them. They also helped toward the end by allowing us to use their mix room for a temp dub" (Cook, G. Richardson 31-2).

[31] While at the AFI–"a marvelous place"– Malick began scriptwriting to help finance his studies: "My wife was going to law school and I was working for a time as a rewrite man–two days on *Drive, He Said*, five weeks on . . .*Dirty Harry* at a time when Brando was going to do it.. . . .Then we all got fired by Warners." (Wakeman 473-479).

> price, and if you don't give that impression nobody wants to invest. The thing you've got to remember with them, and I kept forgetting, is that they're not going on the script exactly or the actors or any of that. They're not considering this as a business proposition; they're just going on the conviction and the passion that you convey about the project. So it's very important the way you present yourself. I don't mean in the way you dress but the—it's very important that you be absolutely convinced about what you're doing, because people will be able to detect whether you are or not. This might not make sense to you until you actually try and do it, but it was a big surprise. I'm not putting my finger on just exactly what was surprising. I thought it would be like a proposal. It's something else. (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 7-8)

Malick raised $150,000 himself—including $45,000 from a lawyer in Boston, and $50,000 from a Los Angeles industrialist, who "said he didn't understand the script, didn't think it would be a good movie, he just did it anyway[32]— then Ed Pressman,[33] who came along and put up the other $150,000" (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 8). Ultimately, *Badlands* was financed on a limited partnership basis with several small investors providing small amounts of money which were combined to make up the budget of the film. Malick says, "You know, raising money this way, even if you don't

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[32] The industrialist, Max Palevsky, worked for XEROX. At the Terrence Malick Film Festival in 2005 in Los Angeles, Palevsky introduced *Badlands*, taking credit for getting the picture made.

[33] *Badlands* and Brian DePalma's *Sisters* were two of Pressman's early films, but he's since produced many films, including some interesting work by indie directors, including *Das Boot*, *Walker*, *Talk Radio*, *American Psycho*, *Thank You for Smoking*, and *Amazing Grace*. Very recently, he produced *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*—after having done the original *Wall Street* in the 1980s.

have it in your contract you have a kind of de facto control because none of the investors know one another, they're all so divided that you sort of can walk in and have all the cutting rights you want" (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 6, 17).

To achieve control over the film, Malick admits that he became "far too involved" in the various elements of the film. He wrote his own script, argued with and lost two cameramen, interviewed the actors, and helped to edit the film. Malick says he wrote the script in the mornings, a process which took about seven or eight months up to the time he began shooting. According to Malick, the entire picture was planned from the beginning, even Holly's voiceover narration:

> Well, I felt that people frown on voiceover, it's just a stupid thing. You think of the pictures that had voiceover, and they're the best pictures ever. I mean, *Citizen Kane*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Jules and Jim*. *Jules and Jim* is 90% voiceover…So that, "Show it, don't tell it," I think is a stupid reaction. You can be inventive in an independent picture with a voiceover, and it's one thing you can do that in a large studio picture, it's not that they can't but they aren't likely to do. And voiceover also helps you cover an enormous amount of time. You can just skip around without having all these functional scenes. (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 43)

According to Malick, he shot the film out of sequence, which he thinks was a bad idea for a first-time filmmaker because "if you're learning you can't—you can change things if you're shooting in sequence; you adapt and see how things are going, and I never felt that I could do that. It was more like executing a blueprint than shooting a picture" (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 5).

Three cameramen worked on the film, each shooting about a third; however, Malick had disagreements with the first two cameramen which led to their departures. According to Malick, the first cameraman, Brian Probyn, "refused to make a shot that I asked him to make, saying that the screen direction was wrong" (*Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 3). Ultimately, says Malick, shooting the film was difficult:

> I mean, he [Probyn] is 55 years old or so, and I was just a kid. And I didn't know what I was doing; this was on the job training. But I should right then and there have taken things in hand, and I didn't, and then the same thing sort of happened with the second person [Tak Fujimoto]. We sort of mutually got fed up with each other. And the third person [Steve Larner], who used to be an instructor here [at the AFI], was my instructor in cinematography. I just got on wonderfully with [him], and he shot the last third of the picture….He was a cameraman with a documentary background. (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 3)

Malick also interviewed the actors, who were selected for the movie after the script had been written, saying, "You know, I knew they'd both have to be unknown because we couldn't afford anybody that was known, and nobody that was known would entrust their fate to a greenhorn, except Warren Oates, and I was a friend of his from before, and he did this picture very much against the advice of his agents and just as an act of friendship" (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 12). Ultimately, says Malick, he wasted a lot of time because he interviewed all of the actors in the movie himself, and that he made the decision to get a casting director, who eventually located Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek.

Malick says that it took him ten months for post-production of *Badlands*, but that he ran out of money during the editing and, as a result, had to write scripts to cover the cost. Malick says that what "took the longest in post-production was the looping and sound effects,[34] and that just went on and on and on. And Foley, you know…I worked as a cutter myself on the thing, and that was a terrible mistake, as a sound cutter, cutting lines in, just to save money, and you get totally lost inside the thing. I regretted that" (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 47).

Ultimately, says Malick, he was "far too involved" in the making of *Badlands*. He says he got "stuck inside the picture and I couldn't see it with any clarity, or, I felt I couldn't. I think it's a good idea just to go in every other day or so and see the picture. But I would sit there over the editor's shoulder and say, 'Why don't you cut it a little farther down?' Or 'Cut it a little farther up.' Or, 'Take six frames off.' And that was a mistake" (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 46).

Finally, Warner Bros took a risk and made a distribution deal, paying just under $1 million dollars up front for the movie, a non-returnable advance against its earnings. Malick compares Warner's involvement with his film to the oil business,

> where they send down these wells, they don't know which one is going to hit but if one is not hitting right away they just write it off and go on to the next one. You know, it was a fate that befell me. I'm not complaining. I was thrilled with what happened to the picture and what happened. I was

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[34] According to Malick, "we tried to keep sounds faithful to the locations…For instance, from the Audubon Society we got tapes of birds that are peculiar to the region and that would naturally appear at that time of year: sage grouse, prairie chickens, nighthawks, prairie falcons, sandhill cranes, etc" (Cook, G. Richardson 32).

> thrilled with the treatment that Warner Brothers did give it, because they gave it a good push in New York and Europe and did everything they said they would. (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 12)

In sum, Malick had much control over his film's production context due to the various socio-historical and industrial conditions that existed within Hollywood at the time. *Badlands* could not have been made had Malick not attended film school at a time heavily influenced by the auteur approach and during the Hollywood Renaissance. Attention to the production history of *Badlands* is a key consideration as one seeks to understand the film.

Probing the Blueprint

In *Badlands*, Malick articulates the problems of existence intrinsic to contemporary life—the violence against ourselves, slavish materialism, and the yearning for redemption, all emanating from the celebration of a self-propelling individualism—as he makes a subtle critique of America's empty moral landscape, obsession with celebrity, family, the notion of identity and self-discovery, and the failure of the counter culture in the waning years of the Vietnam War. His first film attempts to enact this experience by drawing on key features of the concept of horizon in Heideggerian philosophy and engaging with American cultural myths to organize a distinctly "ontological" aesthetic—that is, one which attempts to provoke in viewers a reflexive questioning by juxtaposing contrary ideas, emotions, and filmic conventions and sustaining these contraries in a lasting, unresolved tension. In holding such contraries unresolved, *Badlands* exposes those incompatible American values and myths that Hollywood films repeatedly seem to reconcile and naturalize in an effort to confirm America's belief in an idealized cultural

self-image (Ray 57). To this end, Malick's aesthetic serves as a critical exploration of the ideological contradictions crippling a perspective which many Americans blindly accept as the literal truth. To expose this illusion, Malick's first film disorients habits of perception to elicit a questioning and feeling of loss and uncertainty that can awaken a fresh sense of our place in relation to ourselves, other humans, nature, and Being.

In *Badlands*, I argue that Malick subverts classical Hollywood's narrative, stylistic, and generic conventions as well as the viability of central American cultural myths by employing the Heideggerian concept of horizon—that is, that which is determined by our pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, those pre-existing attitudes and beliefs which bind us to the world in which we live—to challenge the ways in which we understand and behave in the world so that we may gain deeper ontological knowledge into the nature of being. As Malick explained in his undergraduate thesis, a horizon becomes evident when we see its limits and "like rules, limits reveal themselves for what they are only when they are transgressed. We can get a fix on a limit by violating it in different ways. If we conceive the limit of a world (or horizon) as a border, then it is an unmarked border that we back over and mark by backing over. We only know we have trespassed beyond it when we find ourselves talking nonsense or at a loss or deserted" (21). In *Badlands*, and each of his other films, we will learn that Malick does not talk "nonsense"; he exposes rules and limits by transgressing and violating them. In his first film, we will learn that Malick is "backing over" classical Hollywood cinematic, generic, and mythic conventions so that we may gain ontological knowledge, an awareness of our pre-existing attitudes and beliefs that bind us to the world.

Since Malick "backs over" cinematic and generic conventions, I plan to develop the rest of the section by showing how the film is unconventional, one that deviates from the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema. I also intend to indicate how the film uses unconventional narrative and stylistic elements to develop certain critical meanings or themes. Malick thereby creates an emotional tone that distances us from the characters and invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

According to Bordwell and Thompson, the aim of the classical Hollywood inema is to tell the narrative as smoothly and absorbingly as possible, drawing the audience into the fictional story while using an "invisible" cinematic style to do so. Classical Hollywood narratives tend to include a clearly defined individual protagonist (usually male), a romantic double of the opposite sex, and a clearly defined individual or group antagonist. These narratives often include a linear plot where events are placed in chronological order, where the primary conflict is relatively obvious and usually related to the protagonist's desire or goal being frustrated, and where a character or group inhibits the protagonist from fulfilling his desire or achieving his goal. Finally, the ending of classical Hollywood narratives are closed; that is, the conflicts are clearly resolved and very often support the status quo.[35]

In *Badlands*, however, Malick undermines many of these classical Hollywood conventions. For example, in the film, the narrative is not told as smoothly and absorbingly as possible, and does not use an "invisible" cinematic style. There is not a

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[35] See Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 9th edition, pp. 102-104 and 396-408. With Janet Staiger, they develop these ideas more fully in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (NY: Columbia UP, 1985), especially chapters 15-16.

clearly defined individual male protagonist; that is, Holly, the female romantic double, tells the story as a voiceover narrator about her and Kit, suggesting that perhaps she, not Kit, is the "protagonist" in the film. Most interestingly, the film does not possess a clearly defined individual or group antagonist. While the narrative does include a linear plot, the plot is episodic, and the primary conflict is far from obvious: the protagonists' desires or goals are not well-defined, and the police—the group which inhibits Kit and Holly from reaching the mountains of Saskatchewan—do not truly frustrate any clearly defined goals. In fact, Kit and Holly don't seem to be negatively portrayed, as Hamer, for example, is in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Finally, the ending of *Badlands* is not closed; we learn the fate of Kit and Holly through Holly's voiceover, but the film does not support the status quo. That is, Malick's film neglects to make a comment on the moral integrity of its two leading characters.

Without question, *Badlands* employs, yet undermines, conventions of the outlaw-couple or road movie popularized by movies such as *They Drive by Night* (Raoul Walsh, 1940), *Two Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971), and *The Sugarland Express* (Steven Spielberg, 1974). The genre is usually marked by a protagonist that is on the move—or in the case of the outlaw-couple movie, a couple protagonist—going from point A to point B in finite and chronological time. The iconography in a road movie typically includes a car and wide-open spaces. In many ways, the genre shares traits and conventions of the Western in that the road movie's protagonist is known for his restlessness and rugged individualism, and he moves, following an ordered chain of events that ultimately concludes with a discovery—or self-discovery. In *Badlands*, Malick ultimately uses these popular genres to explore his larger concern of exposing the

inherent contradictions and failures/limitations of American cultural myths. In doing so, the film exposes the problems with these myths which make it difficult for those who accept these myths to find the nature of being.

American Studies scholar Richard Slotkin—best known for his historical study of the Western myth in books like *Gunfighter Nation*—contends that such "primary myths" become "self conscious narratives" that mask dominant ideology through culture industries like Hollywood cinema (20). In other words, the individual hero—the hero that Kit *poses* as throughout *Badlands*—was granted dominion over the whole American garden, establishing the cultural and historical codes of the New World, which still persist today. Slotkin says that these myths serve with equal facility the requirements of conservatives and liberals. Drawn from society's history, these myths have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing our ideology and dramatizing our moral consciousness—with all the complexities and contradictions which they contain (5). Like Slotkin, Malick is suspicious of American cultural myths. Although Malick does not specifically identify Hollywood as the source, the implication is clear, for the Hollywood film industry maintains and perpetuates these myths in the form of genres, popular formulas that Malick loosely works through in his first film in order to address his larger concerns. Malick's aesthetic thus attends to both America and the Hollywood film industry.

Malick's first film exposes the problems with myths such as the Adamic myth, the myth of the frontier, and the myth of regeneration through violence which Malick's films argue make it difficult to find the nature of being. According to R.W.B. Lewis, for example, the Adamic myth of the nineteenth century featured a "hopeful," heroic and

self-reliant Adam (5). The frontier myth, in turn, can be described as a mythic part of American self-representation, a deeply ingrained trope in which Americans have conceptualized and legitimated the heroic conquest of open spaces and the acquisitive expansionism that is at the root of both individual and social American aspiration. Finally, the myth of regeneration through violence involves the idea that carrying out morally justified violence has a redemptive or regenerative effect on the person or group that carries out the violence. For example, the first colonists saw in America an opportunity to expand their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation; but the means to that expansion ultimately required the use of violence against those who obstructed the colonists, and the myth of regeneration through violence became a structuring metaphor of the American experience (Slotkin 5). In *Badlands* and each of Malick's other films, we see him subtly exposing the contradictions in these American cultural myths, contradictions which cripple and blind America from reaching its potential, a new way of being in the world.

Distancing Horizons

The narrative of *Badlands* helps Malick develop these concerns. The film loosely parallels the story of a twenty-year-old dropout, Charles Starkweather, his notorious murder spree through various Nebraska and Wyoming towns in the late 1950s, and his relationship with his fourteen-year-old girlfriend, Caril Ann Fugate. While *Badlands* does

not use the characters' names or follow the same chain of events as the Starkweather-Fugate rampage, the story is similar enough to be recognized as a retelling.[36]

As is indicated by the film's trailer, *Badlands* imitates the classical Hollywood cinematic mode—that of the road movie—involving two outlaw lovers on the run who undergo self-discovery and spout advice and wisdom throughout their escape from the law. Actually, however, the film depicts Kit Carruthers at first as a garbage man in Fort Dupree, South Dakota. Kit becomes a loose causal agent who sets the narrative into motion after he meets Holly Sargis, a fifteen-year-old high school student who lives with her father. During a brief courtship, they seem to fall in love. Holly's disapproving father seems to block Kit's desires, however, and, as a result, Kit kills him. Kit then burns down Holly's house—and Holly's father's body—recording a "suicide" note for the police, and they make the decision to flee to the road.

At first, life appears better for Kit and Holly when they take respite at a tree house that they build together in a remote wooded area. For a while, they live happily in this new home, decorating it with items they took from Holly's former home. They also hunt and fish and do chores each day and even build traps and underground tunnels to protect themselves from any outside intruders. After three "bounty hunters" invade their new home, however, Kit kills them, and they go on the run again.

They stop briefly to see Cato, Kit's old acquaintance, whom he worked with as a garbage collector. At Cato's home, they eat lunch and go in search of gold coins. They

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[36] Malick has claimed his film only borrows minor elements from the infamous Starkweather-Fugate crime spree (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 56).

also spend time looking at all of the "junk" which decorates Cato's house. After Cato grows suspicious of Kit, he tries to make a break for safety, yet Kit shoots and kills him, and later, possibly two teenagers who come to visit Cato. After disposing of Cato's body in a barn/railroad car, Kit and Holly then go back on the road.

They stop again, this time at a Rich Man's house, whom they subdue along with his deaf maid. At the Rich Man's house, Kit and Holly look at the fine objects that ornament his home. Kit records a message on a Dictaphone for his police pursuers. After taking some supplies for their journey, they get back on the road. They stop briefly for some gasoline in the Badlands, and there Holly refuses to keep running with Kit. She is picked up by a police helicopter. Kit continues on with his murderous rampage but is eventually caught after a car chase with the police. The film concludes with Kit and Holly both captured, escorted away by airplane. We learn from Holly's voiceover narration, used throughout the film, that Kit died in the electric chair and that she married the son of the lawyer who defended her. The trajectory of the film, organized by temporary stays in homes and then trips on the road/in the wilderness, looks like this:

1. Fort Dupree, South Dakota (Holly's House and Neighborhood)
2. The Road
3. Tree House
4. The Road
5. Cato's House
6. The Road
7. The Rich Man's House
8. The Road, Holly's capture, Kit's capture
9. National Guard Armory/Airport[37]

[37] For a more detailed plot segmentation of *Badlands* (and Malick's next three films) see the appendix.

In *Badlands*, unconventional narrative elements such as ambiguous protagonists with unmotivated behavior/actions who possess unclear goals amid unclear conflicts; undefined antagonists; and an episodic plot expose America's fixation on celebrity and create an emotional tone of uncertainty and questioning that distances us from the characters and invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

As we have learned, there is no clearly defined individual protagonist in the film, as is the case in most classical Hollywood films, and Malick's ambiguous protagonists discourage viewer identification with the central characters. Holly, who ordinarily would be considered the romantic partner, narrates the film in voiceover, suggesting that she, not her boyfriend Kit, is the film's protagonist. Holly's narration is presented in retrospect—she recounts the story of the film from memory, which we know because we see her in the film's first shot in voiceover as she tells us how the story began and unfolds:

> My mother died of pneumonia when I was just a kid. My father kept their wedding cake in the freezer for ten whole years. After the funeral, he gave it to the yardman. He tried to act cheerful but he could never be consoled by the little stranger he found in his house. Then one day, hoping to begin a new life away from the scene of all his memories, he moved us from Texas to Fort Dupree, South Dakota . . . . Little did I realize that what began in the alleys and backways of this quiet town would end in the Badlands of Montana.

Based on Holly's introduction as the film's sole voiceover narrator, we would assume that she will be the film's protagonist simply because she is the first character we see and

hear and because she initially divulges information about her early life, her relationship with her father, and the story of her journey from "the alleys and backways of this quiet town" in Fort Dupree, South Dakota, "to the Badlands of Montana." In addition, Holly's young age, sex, and small-town roots, as well as her Texas accent, initially encourage identification for the viewer. Yet by speaking throughout the film in past tense, Holly distances the audience and subdues their emotional involvement, placing them outside the action as onlookers. Holly's voiceover creates a sense of inevitability to the actions we witness.

However, despite Holly's intermittent authorial moments, such as the one in the opening of the film, as the film's narrator, Kit soon becomes the "driving" force—at least physically—that propels the narrative forward. This happens after the film's main titles appear, when Kit sees Holly in front of her house twirling her baton. After seeing Holly, Kit crosses the street, walks into her front yard, and introduces himself, responding with confidence and bravado to Holly's passive resplies: "Hi, I'm Kit…What's your name? I said mine…you want to take a walk with me?...I got some stuff to say. Guess I'm kind of lucky that way. Most people don't have anything on their minds, do they?" Here, in these opening moments, Kit establishes himself as what at first glance appears to be the dominant force in the film, especially when we consider how meek Holly's rejoinders are to Kit. Kit actively approaches Holly, asks her questions, and asserts things about himself that he thinks she'd like to know.

When he approaches Holly, Kit sets the film's causal chain into motion, yet throughout the film, he will continue to mouth trite sayings, recount mundane facts and make conventional observations, all of which undermine his character's own authority as

the film's protagonist, and his inhabiting the space of a frontier hero or an American Adam. While on his garbage route, for example, Kit says, "I'll give you a dollar to eat this Collie," and as he looks through a trashcan, he says, "This lady don't ever pay her bills. She gonna get in trouble if she doesn't watch out." And when he walks with Holly in downtown Fort Dupree, he says, "Somebody dropped a bag on the sidewalk. If everybody did that, the whole town'd be a mess." Kit has such a high sense of his own importance that he "faked his signature whenever he used it to keep other people from forgin' important papers with his name." Ultimately, Kit is someone who simply likes to hear himself talk; he is not someone trying to express some deep identity. For much of the remainder of the film, Holly will remain a passive "passenger" as Kit drives the narrative forward; however, while Holly remains passive, she is the character who narrates the film.[38] As a result, Malick creates two blurry protagonists, two characters who both drive the film in some ways yet undermine that distinction at the same time. As a result, the audience is distanced from each character, failing to sympathize with either Kit or Holly, leaving the audience in a reflective and distanced space, questioning who they are supposed to care for. For the most part, the audience is left caring for neither.

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[38] The alienation from Holly which viewers may feel is attributable to the way in which Malick characterizes her:

> Holly's Southernness is essential to taking her right. She isn't indifferent about her father's death. She might have cried buckets of tears, but she wouldn't think of telling you about it. It wouldn't be proper. You should always feel there are large parts of her experience she is not including because she has a strong, if misplaced, sense of propriety….Kit….is a closed book, not a rare trait in people who have tasted more than their fair share of bitterness in life. The movies have kept up a myth that suffering makes you deep. It inclines you to say deep things . . . . People who've suffered go around in movies with long, thoughtful faces, as though everything had caved in just yesterday. It's not that way in real life though, not always. Suffering can make you shallow, and just the opposite of vulnerable, dense. (Walker 82)

In the film, Kit and Holly repeatedly demonstrate unmotivated behavior/actions and unclear goals. Unlike the clear character motivations of classical Hollywood cinema, Kit and Holly's behavior and actions are unmotivated. Kit and Holly treat things and people as objects that they manipulate and consume in their murderous mode of self-assertion. They seemingly sidle about and yearn for meaning and identity that is absent in their world. We see an example of their unmotivated actions when Kit shoots Cato. While this action seems completely uncalled for, perhaps their most unusual behavior occurs just after Kit shoots Cato. In the scene, Kit walks in calmly to Cato's place and picks up a photo on the bureau and sets it down, saying to Cato, "You never told me about her," commenting coolly on a picture that Cato has of a female friend. As Cato awkwardly sits on his bed in the bedroom, he is still conscious, but his breathing is heavy. Clearly, he is dying. Kit walks back to Holly's side while she casually smokes a cigarette and looks through a catalogue. Kit tells her, "Why don't you go in there and keep him company for a while?" Holly walks into the bedroom, sits down and asks an expiring Cato, "That your spider in there? In that bottle? What do you feed him? Does he bite?" In this scene, Kit and Holly both seem unfazed by the fact that Kit has fatally wounded someone, and their nonchalant, insensitive, and bizarre responses to Cato's dying make no sense at all. Kit and Holly never panic or try to help Cato; they aimlessly wander about as he slowly dies. Kit and Holly have no awareness of the barbaric nature of their acts and no reason for doing them except perhaps for the fact that the accumulating murders lead to a desire to keep running from the law. While Holly informs us that "Kit was the most trigger happy person I'd ever met. He claimed that as long as you're playing for keeps and the law is coming at you, it's considered okay to

shoot all witnesses," the film itself does not try to explain the causes of the characters' violent behaviors, as the psychiatrist tries to explain Norman Bates at the end of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960).

We also see evidence of their unmotivated actions after they first have sex, an act they perform in a way that seems void of any true emotional desire to be with one another. Just after they have had sex, Holly asks, "Did it go the way it's supposed to?" Kit responds, "Yeah" and Holly states, "Is that all there is to it?" And Kit replies, "Yeah." Holly says, "Gosh, what was everybody talkin' about?" Kit shrugs and says, "Don't ask me." She bases her question on preconceived notions of sex, likely notions garnered from teen magazines we see her read in the film. For Kit and Holly, sex is not the result of some emotional desire or longing; it's something that's talked about and elevated by gossip but is neither important nor meaningful.

We witness other unmotivated behavior, for example, the killing of Holly's father and the bounty hunters, yet these acts also do not make logical sense or indicate the result of any true desires of the characters. According to Bignell, "The film shows attempts by the couple to fit their behavior into story structures, like teen romance or the outlaw pursuit, but the characters and their actions cannot carry the mythological weight of grandeur and notoriety they aim for" (Gibbs and Pye 46). Ultimately, the film neither looks for nor provides any explanation of the characters' actions, which, again, undermines their authority as mythological heroes.

Similarly, the film lacks a clearly defined individual or group antagonist, generating a puzzling moral perspective. Granted, Kit and Holly seem to run up against three vague antagonists, or at least, three instances in which forces block their

progression along the causal chain of events. Early in the film, for example, Kit and Holly come into conflict with Holly's father, Mr. Sargis, a conflict that lasts the first third of the film. The first time Holly meets Kit, she actually lies to her father about who Kit is, saying that he "Just wanted to know if we needed any yardwork done....I said no, and for him not to bother us." After her lie, the conflict worsens, however, as her relationship with Kit progresses, and Holly explains that she deceived her father: "Of course I had to keep all this a secret from my dad. He would've had a fit, since Kit was ten years older than me and came from the wrong side of the tracks, so called. Then, sure enough, Dad found out I'd been running around behind his back. He was madder than I'd ever seen him. As punishment for deceiving him, he went and shot my dog." As a result of Holly's deception, her father even makes her take extra clarinet lessons. In an effort to resolve this developing conflict, a conflict that many young couples naturally face when they begin dating, Kit approaches Holly's father one day as he's painting a sign, saying, "Listen. I got a lot of respect for her, sir [again, merely enacting a performance from the romantic fictions of movies]. That's about as good a one as I know to tell you." Holly's father says, "Well, it's not good enough. Just what do you think would happen to her if she stuck around with you, Kit? Guy like you,…" before he concludes, "You get out of here. I don't want you hanging around any more. You understand?" Aside from the fact that Holly's father shoots his daughter's dog, clearly an extreme reaction to his daughter's deception [and perhaps just another example of how the characters in the film react in an unusually violent and unmotivated manner to events], he reacts to Kit in this scene much as any father would. He does not see Kit as an upstanding individual, someone worthy of his daughter, and he tells him to leave his daughter alone. This

conflict, however, is unusually resolved when Kit, unprovoked, shoots and Kills Holly's father. This extreme, immoral, self-defeating, and unmotivated action is surprising because Kit could have used any number of methods to mollify the situation without resorting to violence.

Kit and Holly also run into other unclear antagonists along the way, such as their run-in with Cato and the teenage couple at Cato's place. Perhaps the briefest of these involves bounty hunters in the woods. Apparently—at least according to Kit—bounty hunters come looking for the two, hoping to cash in on reward money. For all we know, the "bounty hunters" are merely men hunting in the woods. In fact, the stage direction in the script indicates that we first see "a hunter, carrying a gun" (*Badlands* Script Final Version Dialogue and Continuity). Nevertheless, Holly tries to explain away Kit's unusual method of resolving a conflict that seemingly could have been avoided or may not have existed at all: "Kit felt bad about shooting those men in the backs, but he said they'd come in like that, and they would've played it as down and dirty as they could, and besides, he'd overheard them whispering about how they were only interested in the reward money. With lawmen it would've been different. They were out there to get a job done and they deserved a fair chance. But not a bounty hunter." We never see Kit overhear them talking about the reward money. Each of Kit's murders, which occur to eliminate some unclear conflict that could have been approached more safely, convey befuddlement and, at times, revulsion. We never feel the kind of righteous satisfaction that one might experience at the end of the conventional Western, such as in *Stagecoach* when Ringo kills the Plummer Brothers. The film does not look for any explanation to the characters' actions and also provides no didactic moral judgment on the society that

produced them; the film ultimately lumps together Kit and Holly with the society that mobilizes to stop their murderous rampage/search for celebrity. That is, the film suggests that society possesses the same fixation on celebrity as do Kit and Holly.

Many events in the film can be best understood as being caused not by characters but by larger forces such as social dynamics and nature. In a sense, Malick is saying that both of the protagonists are slaves to circumstances and a way of being that is beyond them, out of their control. Kit and Holly both are the products of social forces–the breakdown in consensus, the self-willing of America, and the obsession with both celebrity and material possessions. Furthermore, the public, which mobilizes to oppose Kit and Holly's rampage, poses and postures for still photos just as Kit does. The end of the film makes this most clear—the way that even some of the police want to be seen with Kit because he's now "famous." Kit's mayhem is the product of a larger society, but Malick doesn't directly criticize that society. Larger society is part of the mayhem, too. In the film, Malick acknowledges or treats various elements: home, celebrity fixation, and American cultural myths—regeneration through violence, the Adamic myth, the myth of self-discovery and transformation. Overall, Malick's film backs over these thematic meanings to reveal for us the problems at the root of American culture. In doing so, he leaves the viewer wondering who the antagonist in the film is or, at least, why there is no clearly defined protagonist, distancing and leaving the viewer in an uncertain state of questioning.

The narrative presents its plotline in an episodic manner, an episodic plot is not necessarily a goal-oriented, causally-driven plot. According to Thompson and Bordwell, the classical Hollywood cinema's conception of narrative depends on the assumption that

the action will spring primarily from individual characters as causal agents. As we have learned, however, this narrative does not center on personal psychological causes such as decisions, choices, and traits of character. Kit and Holly are utterly devoid of self-awareness or reflection and remain oblivious to their actions. For example, Kit tries out the rich man's parlor chair, aping an action, which, according to the pathological causal-chain logic central to Kit (Malick's distortion of our own existence) ought to result naturally in his becoming the fulfilled person that he knows the rich man must be. Kit bounds into whatever is in front of him in order to try to initiate the causal-chain logic implicit to America (from its settler past to the present), American culture, and the Hollywood film industry.

In essence, Kit and Holly just go—and they respond illogically to what's in front of them. That is, Malick depicts *effects* but removes *causes* from the characters' actions. The episodes for the most part depict Holly and Kit's shifting relationship as it develops over time. We learn that the couple had "bad moments like any couple. Kit accused me of only bein' along for the ride. While, at times, I wished he'd fall in the river and drown, so I could watch." Yet Holly says at another time, "Mostly, though, we got along fine and stayed in love." The narrative also wanders at times, depicting scenes that do not appear to advance the narrative. For example, after Holly's father has been killed, Holly comes up the stairs, smoking a cigarette. She walks to her bedroom window. Outside, under the street lamp, she can see two boys trading secrets or fighting with each other. In this strange scene, the viewers wonder what the boys are discussing and why she is even watching their discussion. The scene doesn't advance the narrative and seems like a superfluous moment. In this scene, and as we will learn in the style section about

many others, the narrative structure prompts viewers to look beyond the characters' plotlines and to search for Malick's larger issues. We never really know what Holly or Kit is seeking, although we will see that Malick's distinctive cinematic style aims to lead the viewer closer to notions of being and behaving in the world.

Whereas a film's narrative will typically resolve its causal issues by bringing the development to a high point or climax, the "climax" of the film does not really resolve conflicts or close off the chains of cause and effect as Hollywood films ordinarily do. As we have seen, *Badlands* lacks a tight causal chain of events. Holly and Kit wander aimlessly through the movie and never reach their external destination—the mountains of Saskatchewan (which we see in the distance, always beyond their reach no matter how long they've been driving)—or any internal destination—a sense of peace or insight or satisfied desire. In fact, Malick sheds light on the outcome of their journey when Holly reads aloud to Kit at the tree house. Reading from *Kon-Tiki: Across the Pacific by Raft*, by Thor Heyerdahl, Holly says, "The Kon-Tiki's motion was a little different from what it usually was in such conditions. We had become sensitive to changes in the rhythm of the logs. I thought of the suction of a coast, which was drawing near, and was continually out on the deck and up the mast." Kit says, "He was nervous."[39] Holly continues, "Time passed. At dawn, just before 6:00 Torstein came hurrying down from the masthead. He could see a whole line of small palm-clad islands far ahead." At this point in the book, the men have just spotted land on the horizon, yet they discover that paradise is farther away than they thought due to a huge barrier reef that prevents them

[39] Omitted here is the line: "Nothing but sea was visible. But I could get no quiet sleep."

from crossing to the Polynesian island. In other words, in this segment, we see a parallel between Kit and Holly, who glimpse paradise; they, however, are unaware of the barrier just ahead on their journey.

Kit's failed journey to "paradise" concludes after a high speed chase, when Kit gives up driving, gets out of his car, shoots a hole in the tire of the Cadillac, then climbs up on the hood. He checks his pulse, jumps down, and scurries around collecting rocks from the shoulder as the police approach from the distance. He makes a stack of the rocks to mark the site of his capture for posterity, finishing just as the police car skids to a stop. Kit throws up his hands and walks forward to meet them. Kit then says, "I could've held off an army if I could've gotten behind a rock in the mountains…Long as my ammo held out... Right there's where you caught me." Kit nods at the stack of rocks. The Sheriff frisks him as the Deputy holsters his pistol and walks forward to inspect their prize. To the Sheriff, the Deputy says, "Hell, he ain't no bigger than I am." While leading Kit to the car, the Deputy draws his pistol and fires a shot into the field next to them. Kit is startled. The Deputy makes the same motion, this time without firing, saying, "Hup!" Here, the "climax" of the film does not resolve any true conflicts. Kit does not reach an external destination or any insight or satisfied desire. Kit does not reach the mountains for a heroic shoot-out with the police as Roy "Mad Dog" Earle does in *High Sierra* (Raoul Walsh, 1941). Kit's capture thus undermines the notion of the American Adam and the frontier hero. In addition, the Deputy shows a fascination with Kit, whom he perceives as "famous." And, by drawing his pistol and firing—and making the same motion again and saying, "Hup"—Malick shows us that the Deputy is just as enamored by fame (the fame of catching Kit) as is Kit. Ultimately, Malick is linking together Kit

with the society—in this case the police—that produced his self-willing, ego-driven behavior.

While each character's fate is sealed by the end of the film, neither character undergoes a legitimate change, and the audience does not feel dejected when Kit and Holly finally separate. The ending is odd: Kit is captured, and he's chatty and undefensive as he talks to the policemen who are about to turn him over to the justice system. In the scene, Kit stands on the wing of a plane, inside a large hangar at an airport. He is shackled in a vest and takes souvenirs out of his pockets and tosses them out to a crowd of Montana State Troopers and National Guardsmen milling around on the tarmac below him. A mechanic asks, "How you doing there, Kit?" Offscreen, Kit answers, "Fine as can be expected. Just locked up, can't move." The mechanic says, "That's a nice little coat you got on there." Kit says, "You think?... it's leather." Kit takes out his cigarette lighter and says, "Hey, now here's a real prize. I must've had this about ten years. Who's going to get it?" A voice answers, "Gimme that sombitch." Kit asks if anyone wants his comb and later his pen, taking each out of his pocket and pitching them down to somebody. An offscreen voice asks Kit if he's ever been to Kansas. Others ask who his favorite singer is, how old he is, and if he's ever been married. Again, in this scene, we see that Kit is no different than he was at the film's beginning. Kit, like the policemen who stand around the plane, is obsessed with material possessions and fixated on celebrity. Kit is the product of social forces that enslave him, someone not dissimilar from the policeman and other citizens who have mobilized to capture him. We learn that Holly will marry a lawyer who is involved in Kit's trial. And we don't end with the devastating disappointment at Bonnie and Clyde's murder, for

example, but with a voiceover that mentions that Kit is eventually executed and Holly settles into the bland middle-class existence that both seemed to want to flee at the start of the movie.

At the end of the film, we have a kind of closure in that we do learn the fate of each character. However, we do not witness the fate of each character, and we are still left with a sense that the film is not closed. For example, Holly explains, "Kit and I were taken back to South Dakota. They kept him in solitary, so he didn't have a chance to get acquainted with the other inmates, though he was sure they'd like him, especially the murderers. Myself, I got off with probation and a lot of nasty looks. Later I married the son of the lawyer who defended me. Kit went to sleep in the courtroom while his confession was being read, and he was sentenced to die in the electric chair. On a warm spring night, six months later, after donating his body to science, he did." Once again, we see Kit striving to leave a mark on the world, something to demonstrate that he has had an effect on the world. In the film, the climax and ending do not produce a narrative where heroic identity or self-discovery is realized. Malick is saying instead that the wide-open landscapes are not a Garden of Eden where self-transformation is experienced as in the Adamic myth or the myth of the individual frontier hero. Ordinarily, in a classical Hollywood film, the wide-open Badlands wilderness is a mythic space where self/identity could be carved out, where the open landscape would be a mythic place of self-discovery. The film, not least through the ending, subverts assumptions about self-discovery in the road movie and about the frontier as a place to locate identity. Overall, the various narrative elements in the film distance us from the characters, undercut conventional cultural myths, and create feelings of uncertainty and questioning.

Framing the Badlands

In *Badlands*, unconventional use of stylistic elements such as natural lighting, costumes, facial expressions and figure movements, loose framing, long takes, intellectual montage, music, and non-diegetic voiceover work to expose America's fixation on celebrity, undercut American cultural myths, and create an emotional tone of uncertainty and questioning that initiates an aesthetic distance which invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

The classical Hollywood cinematic style, sometimes called the "invisible style," employs several characteristics as it aims to subordinate itself to the narrative by presenting that narrative as smoothly and as unobtrusively as possible. In classical Hollywood cinematic style, lighting is unobtrusive, appropriate to the action being presented. The sets and costumes are used according to the conventions of the genre, aiming to provide the story with plausibility or an illusion of reality. The framing is also generally centered on the principal action of the scene, with straight-on angles most commonly used. The camera distance in classical Hollywood cinema is usually dependent on the aims of the moment; that is, heightened emotion is most often accompanied by tighter shots. The camera movements are motivated by the actions of the characters instead of moving independently, and the five conventions of continuity editing—180 degree rule, establishing shot/breakdown, shot/reverse shot, eyeline match, and match on action—are followed almost religiously. Finally, convincing diegetic sounds are used and non-diegetic sounds, most often music, are employed at key points to

cue the audience into the emotional atmosphere of particular scenes and to help audiences identify with some characters and distance themselves from others.[40]

A number of stylistic devices, some of which violate classical Hollywood norms, are central to cinematic style in *Badlands*; after listing these devices in this paragraph, we can examine each in more detail to see how these stylistic devices help Malick achieve his aims in the film. In the film, lighting is unobtrusive; however, the film adheres primarily to the use of natural light. The sets and costumes are used according to the conventions of the road movie film. In fact, Kit's costumes are nearly obsessive in their adherence to the genre. That is, he appears so much like James Dean that Malick is obviously calling attention to his use of the Dean-hero archetype. In fact, Holly even says, "He was handsomer than anybody I'd ever seen. He looked just like James Dean." In *Badlands*, rather than trying to heighten emotion by using tighter shots, Malick instead chooses to keep his camera at a distance, forcing us to watch Kit and Holly from a calculated distance so that we are unable to become emotionally involved in their plight. In addition, camera movements are not motivated by the actions of the characters. Malick also does not adhere to the conventions of continuity editing; instead of cutting in a conventional way, he often invites the viewer to mull over what has been just witnessed and, more broadly, the significance of the characters' words and actions through long takes, a key alternative to continuity editing. Finally, although Malick does use convincing diegetic sound, and some diegetic music, he relies more heavily on Holly's non-diegetic voiceover narration than is typical in classical Hollywood films.

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[40] See Chapters 16-18 in Bordwell and Thompson's *CHC* and pp. 236-50 in *Film Art* (on continuity editing).

Malick's distinctive and original use of cinematic style functions to subvert American cultural myths to invite us to wonder about the nature of being. Take, for example, Malick's use of natural lighting. In the scene in which Kit burns down Holly's father's house, we watch Kit pour gasoline all over the house, dousing the piano, couch, and floor. In the scene, the only light illuminating the room comes from a small lamp and some overhead lights (an artificial light which we see reflected in the window as Kit pours the gas). When Malick cuts to outside, the only light on the set is that from a glowing light above the back door from the kitchen. After some time, Kit walks into the frame holding a table lamp that he places above the record player that he will play for the district attorney to find. As a result, the scene is dark and nearly wholly black, save for the lattice around the doorway. Holly and Kit are lit only from below, giving a noir-ish look to the scene. In other words, we see a low level of illumination with high-contrast pools of light. Kit also strikes a pack of matches which further enhances the low-angled lighting. We can barely make out the taillights from Kit's Studebaker as he and Holly leave the house.

Malick continues to use natural lighting to shoot the scene as the house burns down, and this scene works to challenge the myth of regeneration through violence and create a questioning in the viewer. In a scene that lasts an extremely long one minute eighteen seconds, we hear the minimal plinking of a xylophone and a haunting chorus of children from Carl Orff's composition "Passion." Flames engulf pictures, feathers, furniture, the piano, Holly's bedroom, her dolls and dollhouse. The flames also roar over Holly's father's signs and body, and Malick cuts inside and outside of the house, enhancing the drama of the scene, using multiple cameras, showing the flames as they

caress the house. In these shots, Malick uses an array of tilts, pans, and cuts from closeups to medium shots to long shots of the house, using only the flames to illuminate the scene. As the scene concludes, we see only the light of a fireman's flashlight moving around in the pitch black of the frame. Malick uses natural light in dozens of other scenes—such as when Kit kills Holly's father, those moments outdoors in the Badlands, and the headlights from the car during the nighttime dance to Nat King Cole's "When a Blossom Fell."[41] In the scene just described above, we are left wondering whether Malick is suggesting that by killing Holly's father and burning his house, Kit experiences a kind of regeneration through violence, although Malick ultimately undermines the viability of violence as redemptive because Holly's father has not been a clear antagonist in the film. Indeed, violence begets more violence without ever providing a satisfaction of desires for Kit and Holly or the viewer. We may wonder why the house burning scene last so long—so much longer than other scenes we have watched to this point. The

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[41] The following lyrics to "A Blossom Fell" work in counterpoint to the seemingly emotional scene between Kit and Holly as they dance in the Cadillac's headlights. Kit seems taken by the moment, yet Holly appears to be elsewhere:

A blossom fell from off a tree
It settled softly on the lips you turned to me
The gypsies say and I know why
"A falling blossom only touches lips that lie"

A blossom fell and very soon
I saw you kissing someone new beneath the moon
I thought you loved me, you said you loved me
We planned together to dream forever
The dream has ended, for true love died
The night a blossom fell and touched two lips that lied

A blossom fell and very soon
I saw you kissing someone new beneath the moon
I thought you loved me, you said you loved me
We planned together to dream forever
The dream has ended, for true love died
The night a blossom fell and touched two lips that lied

lighting in the scene is beautiful and haunting and the song, "Passion," works to create this tone in the scene, yet the cinematic style overall leaves us wondering why Malick chose to spend so much time depicting the fire and what it ultimately means.

Sets and costumes are used more conventionally and as is typical of the road movie film. For example, in the opening scene of the film, when Kit first meets Holly, his appearance is modeled on that of James Dean: he has similar thick, dark, combed back hair and wears blue jeans and a white t-shirt. At other times, we see him in a denim jacket. In the first scene, he also copies Dean's mannerisms—that is, he fidgets like Dean. Kit looks down when he talks, shuffles around, and keeps his hands in his pockets. Kit also mimics some of Dean's cool detachment. In two of the most obvious examples, we see Kit standing looking at the horizon, posed scarecrow-like with a rifle over his shoulders exactly as Jett Rink does in *Giant* (George Stevens, 1956), and after Kit's capture, the Deputy responds, "I'll kiss your ass if he don't look just like James Dean," as Holly reads a movie magazine with James Dean on the cover.

However, while Dean's behavior suggests some depth beneath the surface, Kit's is all surface and posture. Kit just looks like Dean. According to Malick, "Movies have kept up a myth that suffering makes you deep . . . . Suffering can make you shallow and just the opposite of vulnerable, dense. It's had this effect on Kit" (Walker 83). In other words, Kit apes the suffering of Dean, yet without the conflicts with his father and classmates that trouble Jim Stark, for example, in *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955). Overall, Malick uses Kit's costumes and encourages Kit's performance to comment on the emptiness of the Adamic myth. Malick undermines the Adamic myth wherein Kit presents himself as an American Adam, "an individual standing alone, self-

reliant and self-propelling….fundamentally innocent." Here, and throughout the film, Kit is just following a template shown in fictions before him. Kit just enacts a performance, like a puppet.

Ultimately, Kit's actions and behaviors don't ever possess the authenticity of real life; rather, his actions are constructed through the plot devices of fiction and movies. Kit needs to record what he sees as his important life, as we witness many times in the film. In the record, he says, "I can't deny we've had fun though. And, er, that's more than I can say for some." In the Dictaphone, he intones, "Listen to your parents and teachers. They got a line on most things; so don't treat'em like enemies. There's always an outside chance you could learn something." Referring to the rock next to them after they have sex, he comments, "we should crunch our hands with this stone. That way we'd never forget what happened today." Of the items they bury, Holly observes, "Kit took and buried some of our things in a bucket. He said that nobody else would know where we'd put 'em." In the items they send aloft, she comments, "Kit made a solemn vow that he would always stand beside me and let nothing come between us. He wrote this out in writing, put the paper in a box with some of our little tokens and things, then sent it off in a balloon he'd found while on the garbage route." Talking to the police about the rocks after his capture, Kit says, "this here's where you caught me." Finally, we have already noted the pen and comb Kit leaves for the policemen; and his body that he leaves for science. Kit's obsession with leaving a record as demonstrated through the various props, indicates a desire for celebrity, a hope to construct significance from an empty life. Nevertheless, in his depiction, Malick creates an unsympathetic character, leaving us at a

distance from Kit and wondering why the character is depicted in such an unconventional and unusual manner.

Holly's costumes and Spacek's performance make the character a puppet as well. This, as with his depiction of Kit, helps Malick further his central concerns. In fact, we actually discover this in the tree house sequence when Holly says in voiceover, "One day, I carried thirty pounds of wood a distance of five miles." At that moment, we see that she is carrying cords of wood like a marionette, a wooden brace behind her neck with ropes down each side of her arms for holding the wood. When we first meet her, she is wearing a navy t-shirt and white shorts, and she is barefoot, further emphasizing her girlish innocence. After the sex scene, we see her in a yellow dress with white socks. Nevertheless, Holly does not emote, thus distancing us from her young, innocent depiction. When her father is shot, for example, she runs to him as he lies on his back and asks, "Are you ok? This is Holly." She does not cry; she does not show any emotion—her brows do not furrow and her mouth does not change. We see the same thing when Holly tells Kit that she's not going to continue running with him. As she squats behind an oil rig, she tells Kit, "I just don't wanna go." As she says this, her face is blank, just as blank as it is after each killing; she does not show any remorse over or sadness at her decision to part with Kit. Her flat emotions or inability to convey any emotions through her eyes, brows, and mouth simply discourage identification and create a puzzling tone. Ultimately, this repeated questioning is a device that Malick uses, a device whereby Malick "backs over" ordinary depictions of characters designed to get us to ask larger questions.

In *Badlands*, Malick also uses camera distance and camera movements to slow down the pace of the film. That is, rather than try to heighten emotion by using tighter shots, Malick chooses to keep his camera at a distance, using loose framing, forcing us to watch Kit and Holly from a calculated distance so that we are discouraged from becoming emotionally involved in their plight. In addition, camera movements are motivated by the actions of the characters. In other words, the camera almost never moves or cuts to closeups at times that would ordinarily be considered more highly emotional. This, for example, starkly contrasts to Spielberg's use of the camera in his road movie of the same era, *The Sugarland Express*.

Malick's loose framing emphasizes open space (that Kit bumbles through with off-kilter purpose). His cinematic style disrupts Hollywood's generic conventions to create a distancing effect which challenges the visions produced by America's Adamic myth that is nonetheless perpetuated in Holly's daydreams, Kit's emulations, and Hollywood film. For example, Malick uses long shots during emotional times when Kit shoots both Holly's father and Cato. In addition, when Holly kneels at her father's side after Kit shoots him—a scene which could easily have included close-ups of both Holly and her father—Malick shoots the scene in a medium long shot. The camera distance reinforces Holly's blank emotional response to her father's impending death. Also, earlier in the film, during Kit and Holly's sex scene, clearly what is ordinarily an emotional experience for young lovers, Malick refuses to show any closeups or medium closeups of their experience. In fact, once they've concluded having sex, Malick shoots the scene in long shot, further distancing them from viewers, just as they seem distanced from each other and the experience themselves.

Malick also uses framing and camera movement to engage the audience in some of his central ideas, ideas such as man's disconnection from and connection to being. For example, after Kit and Holly have burned down her father's house and Holly has retrieved her books from school, Carl Orff's playful piece "Gassenhauer" begins on the sound track as Malick slow dissolves from Kit and Holly driving away in their Studebaker to a shot of a dead tree drifting in a river. The music and its xylophones continue to play as the camera tracks, dollying in the water, circling the floating tree. Then, in voiceover, Holly says, "We hid out in the wilderness, down by a river in a grove of cottonwoods. It being the flood season, we built our house in the trees with tamarisk walls and willows laid side by side to make a floor. There wasn't a plant in the forest that didn't come in handy." At this point, Malick cuts to an extreme closeup of a brown-green plant in shallow focus, then slowly tilts upward. While sustaining shallow focus, he cuts to another extreme closeup of a tree limb, then to an extreme closeup of a black beetle on a cactus-like plant, and then to an evergreen tree, racking focus to a limb on a different tree. He cuts to an extreme closeup of bagworms. Up to this point in the film, we've seen no closeups, let alone extreme closeups of any of the characters. Here, however, Malick gives us five extreme closeups in a row, heightening the experience of watching each element, using camera distance and camera movement—a tilt, tracking, and a zoom—in unusual ways. Without question, Malick's seemingly unmotivated attention to these aspects of nature is perplexing, especially considering that Malick presents them while Kit and Holly are seeking to escape from the law and wondering what their new "house" will look like. Granted, Holly has noted in voiceover that "there

wasn't a plant in the forest that didn't come in handy"; however, the viewer recognizes that the beetle and bagworms are not things that serve their use, though they are "handy."

After a few moments, Holly continues in voiceover: "Another day, while hiding in the forest, I covered my eyes with makeup to see how they'd come out. At this point, Malick cuts to an extreme close-up of Holly painting her eyes with black makeup. Then, Mickey and Sylvia's playful song "Love Is Strange"[42] begins to play, which sound bridges from Holly's eyes to an extreme closeup of her feet dancing barefoot. As the camera pans, we see that the music is diegetic, coming from a radio. In this scene, we see Malick offer the first example of a human in extreme closeup, demonstrating that Holly, like the beetle and aspects of nature that we have just witnessed, are all stories that are unfolding in the world. Holly and Kit are not dissimilar from the bugs and other creatures that inhabit the world. In other words, Malick chooses to use tighter shots to equate Holly and Kit and the natural elements. Malick includes these extreme close-ups of nature to suggest that there are other stories unfolding, stories and actions equally as significant as the one which Kit and Holly are engaged in, which, as we shall see, recurs often in Malick's later films. Malick's cuts to each of these elements appearing in nature

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[42] Love, love is strange
Lot of people take it for a game
Once you get it
You'll never wanna quit (no, no)
After you've had it (yeah, yeah)
You're in an awful fix
Many people
Don't understand (no, no)
They think loving (yeah, yeah)
Is money in the hand
Your sweet loving
Is better than a kiss
When you leave me
Sweet kisses I miss

don't advance the narrative in any way; in fact, they delay and even minimize the story of Kit and Holly, and ultimately they undermine again the notion of man as the American Adam. In other words, the scene deemphasizes man's sense of his own self-importance in the world. During these shots and moments, Malick's aesthetic encourages viewers to reflect on the nature of the film where we see Malick investigating the nature of being, backing over the rules and limits of classical Hollywood cinema, seducing the viewer into a questioning and uncertainty and prompting a revelation of the nature of being. Overall, however, the camera distance and camera movement—along with Holly's voiceover, music, mise-en-scene, and cuts function to perplex the viewer yet also provide clues regarding Malick's central ideas in the film.

Malick also does not adhere to the conventions of continuity editing, choosing instead to use long takes, a key alternative to continuity editing, a move that encourages the viewer to mull over events just presented and, more broadly, the significance of the characters' words and actions. Two of the most interesting and perplexing examples of long takes occur when we see Holly by herself at the river and when we see Kit and Holly cooking by a campfire out in the Badlands. These two long takes provide representative examples of Malick's use of long takes in the film. The former scene lasts fifteen seconds. In the scene, Malick cuts from a shot of Holly reading to Kit to a high-angled, extreme long shot of Holly standing barefoot along the bank of the river. She has what looks like a damp white sheet wrapped around her body and holds her arms crossed and close to her chest, embracing herself as if vulnerable. She gazes in the distance down the river and walks slowly. We can hear the natural sound of the rushing water and "Gassenhauer" begins, a playful counterpoint to Holly's somber mood (as we will learn,

Malick progressively develops his use of sound/image counterpoint in each of his subsequent films, a device that works to complicate further the viewer's understanding of each scene).

In the latter scene, which lasts twenty-four seconds, Kit and Holly are cooking by a campfire in the Badlands. In another high-angled, extreme longshot that includes their car, they are dwarfed by the vast countryside—the barren tufts of grass in the Badlands fill the bottom third of the frame and the cloudy sky at sunset fills the top two thirds. As the scene transpires, Holly holding a map says, "That's Montana over there," pointing in the distance. Kit replies, "I never been to Montana. Acquaintance of mine has been there. But I hadn't. Never had any reason to." Holly, appearing to ignore Kit's statement, says, "The state bird's the meadowlark." In each scene, Malick cuts to a shot with characters in an extreme long shot. Ordinarily, these seeming establishing shots would be followed by a break down—we might see, for example, a cut to a medium long shot of Holly or the campfire. In addition, a conventional Hollywood film would show an eyeline match of what Holly sees as she gazes down the river, or of Holly's point of view of the vista that she points to with Kit. Also, in the scene with Kit and Holly, Malick refuses to use shot/reverse shots to depict Kit and Holly's conversation. In his refusing to use this convention, we sense the emptiness of their dialogue with each other and the distance between each character as they are dwarfed by their surroundings. Malick refuses to break down shots or show eyeline matches, thus thwarting the conventions of continuity editing and using loose framing and long takes to make comments on Holly and Kit's plight. In both scenes, Holly and Kit have left society, and

now are spending time in a world governed by nature. The film uses the natural world to show their increasingly lost and desperate condition.

The visual transition in the Badlands over time mimics the deteriorating state of Kit and Holly's relationship. As they continually run from the law, they are dwarfed by a wide-open vista walking alone or cooking by a tiny campfire against the vast empty desert. The barrenness of nature parallels the dwindling romance between the two. In these long takes near the tree house and in the Badlands, we see the characters on the edge of civilized society—just as when Holly's father paints a billboard in the wide open space of South Dakota. The region's untamed wilderness, empty of human life, gives the film a mythic quality, yet in these two scenes just discussed, Malick undercuts the viability of the myth of the frontier, the notion of the heroic conquest of open spaces. For Kit and Holly are no heroes; they do not command medium closeups at the least; that is, they are framed at a distance, dwarfed by the landscape around them, ambling through a world and oblivious to the power of other forces that govern their behaviors.

While the previous examples demonstrate Malick's use of long takes to elucidate his central concerns, other scenes use many cuts in a form of intellectual montage to convey these ideas. For example, in one scene Malick pairs Kit with the natural surroundings. At dusk, the camera slowly pans across the grass, showing the whole natural horizon before stopping on Kit. As Kit looks around at the mountains on the horizon, seeming to look with yearning at the direction they are headed, Malick cuts to animals and scenes from nature on the plains around him—a guinea fowl, an iguana, lightning in deep dark clouds, an eagle; interestingly, all the animals are perched in exactly the same stance as Kit. While the film does not suggest that Kit is a wild animal,

the cuts from Kit to the animals make a subtle connection between the character's nature and the natural world. In addition, Malick again emphasizes the notion that there are other stories in the world besides Kit's. In other words, the animals receive the same attention in these moments as Kit, devaluing the conventional Hollywood film's notion that the leading male who inhabits the wild frontier is a heroic individual who takes dominion over his environment.

Malick uses convincing diegetic sounds such as diegetic music, and he relies more on Holly's non-diegetic voiceover narration than is typical in most classical Hollywood films. As a voiceover narrator, Holly is an innocent out of her depth. Further, Holly's southern, naïve, unaffected, disconnected, and clichéd voiceover narration functions in a more conventional way, serving to move the plot forward, than voice-over does in later Malick films. For example, when discussing her blossoming romance with Kit—at the same time we see Holly whispering in Kit's ear—Holly states, "He wanted to die with me…And I dreamed of being lost forever in his arms," making her romance with Kit seem like the center of the universe. For Malick, Holly (and Kit) use clichés to indicate that "in struggling to reach what's most personal about them they could only come up with what's most public" (Walker 83). Holly's language is the language of exaggeration.

While Holly most often provides more information than viewers need to construct the main events of the plot, at times, however, there is an affected, almost poetic quality to Holly's descriptions, descriptions that elaborate on ideas that move beyond simple commentary on the plot. In one scene at the tree house, for example, Malick uses many cuts where the content of the voiceover interplays in interesting ways with the

Stereopticon images. The precise timing of the cutting develops his thematic concerns. Much like the nature shots at the tree house and the scenes in which townspeople mobilize to capture Kit and Holly, the Stereopticon scene demonstrates Malick using a form of intellectual montage, using cuts and voiceover to shed light on some of his larger concerns such as the damaging nature of America's cultural myths. For example, we cut to a llama walking in the woods and hear a voiceover from Holly: "I grew to love the forest. The cooin' of the doves and the hum of the dragonflies in the air made it seem lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone. " We see a shot of Holly looking through binoculars and Kit eating an apple, laughing, and reading *National Geographic* in a tree. Holly's voiceover begins again, "When the leaves rustled overhead it was like the spirits were whispering about all the little things that bothered them." In these moments, Holly's voiceover takes on a more serious, thought-provoking tone than have her other voiceovers in the film, voiceovers which have, for the most part, merely commented on the action that we witness. At the precise time that she and Kit have constructed a life somewhat like that of the typical 1950s couple that moved to the suburbs, living in a tree house much like a dream house, Holly's thoughts seem to be elsewhere, ruminating on feeling lonely and disconnected and aware of "spirits" and their disenchantment with the world. In these moments, Malick actually depicts Holly reflecting on the nature of being akin to the way that he invites the viewer to do.

As the scene continues, we see closeups of Stereopticon slides in the grass—which Holly picks up:

Image	Holly's Voiceover
1. Track into a Stereopticon image of a palm-	"One day, while taking a look at some

fringed canal in Rio de Janeiro.	vistas in Dad's stereopticon it hit me that I was just this little girl, born in Texas whose father was a sign painter, who had only just so many years to live."
2. Track into a Stereopticon image of a palm-fringed canal in Rio de Janeiro.	This sent a chill down my spine and I thought: Where would I be at this very moment if Kit had never met me?
3. Cut to the Sphinx and pyramid in Egypt.	Or killed anybody?
4. Cut to cows and boats on a river in a canyon.	This very moment?
5. Cut to a scratched picture of a woman holding a baby.	If my mom had never met my dad?
6. Cut to a picture of two women by a piano.	If she'd never died?
7. Cut to a picture of many people picnicking/playing in the front yard of a house.	And what's the man I'll marry gonna look like?
8. Cut to a picture of a military man kissing or whispering to a farm girl in a field.	What's he doin' right this minute?
9. Zoom into the photo.	Is he thinkin' about me now, by some coincidence even though he doesn't know me? Does it show on his face?
10. Cut to a shot of Kit fishing for carp	For days afterward I lived in dread. Sometimes I wished I could fall asleep and be taken off to some magical land but this never happened."
11. Orff music fades out to the natural sounds of Kit fishing in the water.	

In the sequence just described, Holly asks nine questions, without answering any of them, and the voiceover, images, and Orff's music that Malick uses seem unrelated and quite

distant from the questions that Holly asks. In addition, when Holly looks at her father's Stereopticon (which we had seen him looking at earlier in the film when he was painting a sign), she explains that it was her father's, yet she does not show any remorse about her father's murder, asking "What if my mom had never met my dad" or Kit had never "killed anybody." Interestingly, she doesn't mention her father's death, only asking, "What if my mother never died?" In other words, she seems concerned about her mother (who died when she was "just a kid"), yet unconcerned about her father, who was murdered presumably days or weeks earlier. Without question, Holly's neglect to include her father's death—or to show any remorse for it—perplexes the viewer, further distancing him from Holly's character, especially at a time that her voiceover is most intimate and thoughtful.

In the sequence, Holly also asks a series of other questions that work to perplex the viewer. The voiceover and images and Orff's "Gassenhauer" (from his *Musica Poetica*),[43] which includes playful wooden xylophone and tympani that has been used to this point to add a delightful, naïve rhythm and harmony as well as a romantic quality to the rather insipid inception and blossoming of Kit and Holly's relationship, work here to counterpoint the serious and thoughtfulness of Holly's ruminations.[44] Again, just at the time when Holly and Kit appear to be building a kind of middle-class existence (a home

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[43] "Gassenhauer" means popular melody and is a short piece from Carl Orff's *Schulwerk Volume 1: Musica Poetica*. The full title of the song, "Gassenhauer nach Hans Neusiedler," indicates the song is inspired by a much older work by the lute player Hans Neusiedler from 1536. The song is credited to Orff's longtime collaborator, Gunild Keetman, who is cited in the film's closing credits (allmovies.com).

[44] The songs in *Musica Poetica* include ancient rhymes to the poetry of Sophocles, Goethe, and Hölderlin—to whom Heidegger refers to in some of his work. *Musica Poetica* is an example of Orff's *Schulwerk*, music to be played and sung by children. Orff's *Schulwerk* became popular in educational work and was based on Orff's belief that children should not be taught music in isolation from kinetic movement, theater, and speech (allmovie.com).

with chores and play), Holly asks, "And what's the man I'll marry gonna look like?" "What's he doin' right this minute?" "Is he thinkin' about me now, by some coincidence even though he doesn't know me? Does it show on his face?" She doesn't ask the questions and then answer them; she simply wonders out loud, which seems even more unusual given the strange content of the Stereopticon slides. Holly already seems to have excluded Kit from her life, despite the fact that their "new" life together has just begun.

Granted, Holly asks, "Where would I be at this very moment if Kit had never met me?" at the same time she sees the Sphinx and pyramid in Egypt, suggesting that Holly might be in some other place or exotic locale had she not met Kit. However, when we cut to a picture of two women by a piano, Holly asks where she'd be if her mother had never died. Without question, the viewer wonders what the connection is between the two women by the piano and her mother, images that seem completely unrelated to each.

Here, Malick uses cuts, music, camera distance, camera zooms, and Holly's voiceover to bring us the closest we'll get to Holly in the film. However, despite the intimacy of her thoughts, she's completely disengaged from Kit, with whom she lives in the paradisial tree house with no current conflict in the world. In a conventional Hollywood film, Kit would be considered the frontier hero—out in the wilderness with his girlfriend helping her live in the wild. However, just when things seem their best, Holly does not show support for her lover; she feels dread.

It is interesting that Holly uses the word "dread," because it brings to mind the concept as Malick foregrounded it in his undergraduate thesis. In the thesis, Malick claims that another way that a horizon is disclosed—or the horizonal character of things is revealed to us—is through the feeling of "dread" (38). Dread is a feeling that indicates

the "collapse of the world" and suggests that things within the world are withdrawing from us; we clutch at them, but they elude our grasp. Malick says only because we realize that we have a world do things within it have claim and significance to us (40). In other words, when the world breaks down for us, we feel dread, and as a result, horizons are disclosed to us. In the film, we see Holly feeling a similar sense of dread; that is, Holly is clutching at the world, but things elude her grasp, and as a result the world which had once been significant to Holly is breaking down, resulting in dread. In this feeling, Malick again demonstrates the unreliability of American cultural myths (in fact, the myth of romantic love has also failed, sex was not significant, desire for a romantic partner isn't evident and diminishes as the film wears on). Whereas Hollywood films would ordinarily privilege the frontier hero, the American Adam, who has built a tree house and created an existence for himself and his romantic double, Holly would actually prefer to be somewhere else, undermining the heroic male that Kit apes in the film. In addition, whereas the viewer perhaps thought that burning Holly's house would lead to a regeneration through violence with their establishing their own home in the woods, we see here that violence has only begot emptiness, loneliness, and a desire to be somewhere else with someone else. Ultimately, the sequence concludes with the murder of the hunters—more violence that leads to another stream of alienated thoughts from Holly.

In another scene, Malick's use of music and voiceover further his central concerns. At the Rich Man's house—another respite that would seem to provide a satisfying middle-class existence for the outlaw couple—Holly seems to still hold onto her feeling of dread, as the world further eludes her grasp. As the meditative sounds of piano, xylophone, and violins, Holly picks up a cane and in voiceover says, "I left Kit in

the parlor and went for a stroll outside the house." In these moments, we see Holly slink outside, taking one of the Rich Man's canes with her. She carries the cane, holding it in the middle much as she had the baton at the film's beginning. In those early scenes, Holly is alone, twirling the baton, and skipping playfully in the street. At the Rich Man's house, again she finds herself alone, yet she no longer twirls the "baton," and while "the day was quiet and serene," she says, "I didn't notice, for I was deep in thought and not even thinking about how to slip off….The world was like a faraway planet to which I could never return….I thought what a fine place it was, full of things for people to look into and enjoy." Supported by thought provoking, meditative melodic music (unlike the sound/image counterpoint between "Gassenhauer" in the Stereopticon and "When a Blossom Fell" scenes), Holly seems to recognize that her girlish innocence has been lost, that she is now inhabiting a world that is beyond the world of her existence in Fort Dupree. For Holly, the world was like a "faraway planet," "full of things for people to look into and enjoy." In other words, what may seem to be an apotheosis—staying at the Rich Man's house with its surfeit of objects and beautiful "things" to look into—merely perpetuates Holly's feelings of dread, demonstrating for the viewer the emptiness of both material possessions and the fixation on celebrity that have propelled Kit and Holly through the film. Again, Malick shows the limitations of American cultural myths, using Holly's reflective, disconnected voiceover and complimentary sounds of thoughtful meditative music to question the outlaw lovers' plight, as well as inviting viewers to reflect on their own way of being and behaving in the world.

Conclusion

In *Badlands*, Malick makes his first statement as an auteur. The film is the most simple of Malick films, not yet delving into the natural world or the investigation of being with the same intensity as do his later films. Nevertheless, Malick consistently employs his concept of horizon, "backing over" cinematic and generic conventions: his first film's unconventional narrative and stylistic form and his burgeoning thematic concern with incessant questioning and with exposing American cultural myths debut the key traits of his aesthetic. The film introduces Malick's proclivity for voiceover narration and pictorial landscapes, and as we will see, these traits will recur and evolve as his aesthetic develops. Malick distances the viewers from his characters' psychological motives yet makes the choice not to exploit the characters' emotions so as to invite a questioning in the audience. *Badlands* avoids depicting the pathological subjectivity that drives the American Adam and the frontier hero in conventional Hollywood films. Instead, his films aim to depict the landscape and man's ongoing relationship to themselves, other beings, and things in the world. Malick's aesthetic attends to both American myth and classical Hollywood conventions, where myths are typically communicated through genres that most often reinforce this idealized cultural self-image. His narrative and cinematic style here disrupts Hollywood's generic conventions to create a distancing effect which challenges the visions produced by America's Adamic myth as perpetuated in Holly's daydreams, Kit's imitations, and classical Hollywood film. Rather than bringing the audience into the psyches of his characters, Malick's first film invites viewers to forego their conventional viewing experiences and investigate the wonders of the universe and man's relationship with Being.

At the beginning of the chapter, we learned that Malick played an architect—as we see from the rolled up blueprints under his arm—and as that architect, Malick the writer, director, and producer—the "architect" of the film—leaves a message, one that Kit, viewers, and critics have neglected to read. I would argue that Malick leaves a clear though complex message; that is, he seeks to destabilize that which is determined by our pre-existing attitudes and beliefs which bind us to the world we live in; his message is to challenge the ways in which we understand and behave in the world so that, as a result, we may gain deeper ontological knowledge into the nature of being. As we will see, that message continues to be articulated five years later in 1978 in his second film, *Days of Heaven*.

Chapter IV
"Pointing" Toward Horizons in *Days of Heaven*

Fleeing the city after Bill (Richard Gere) fatally wounds a foreman (Stuart Margolin) at the mill where he worked, Bill, his girlfriend Abby (Brooke Adams), and his little sister Linda (Linda Manz) go on the run to the Texas Panhandle for a better life. After having toiled for several weeks harvesting wheat as sackers, Bill and Abby gain a chance to continue their search for the American Dream when a dying farmer (Sam Shepard) asks all three of them to stay on the farm. Subsequently, the tension of a classic love triangle develops as Bill and Abby secretly plot for Abby to marry the dying farmer so that, as a result of his death, they can acquire his wealth through her inheritance. The farmer begins to feel jealousy once he finds clues that Abby may be sneaking around with Bill.

At this point, a key "pointing" scene occurs, one that provides us an inroad into understanding the significance of *Days of Heaven*. Noticing the rising conflict, Linda says in voiceover, "Just when things were about to blow, this flyin' circus come in. After six weeks on this wheat patch, I needed a breath of fresh air." And, so, one particular evening when the circus is at the farm, we see Linda, Bill, Abby, and the farmer together watching the circus members perform in a theatre-like setting. After a midget (Frenchie Lemond) wrestles a gorilla, a belly dancer (Sahbra Markus) performs to some lively music, which continues while Linda's voiceover stitches together the next five shots.

Image	Linda's Voiceover
12. MS of belly dancer dancing, Taj Mahal backdrop, crane down to focus on midriff	"The devil just sittin' there laughin'.

13. MCU from Chaplin's *The Immigrant*—the tramp and seven other passengers look offscreen right.	He's glad when people does
14. Eyeline match to ELS of the Statue of Liberty—an unidentified shadow of an arm and hand intrude, the forefinger pointing directly at the statue. The shadow lingers slightly into next shot.	bad. Then he sends 'em to the
15. MLS of a customs official roping off the immigrants in shot 2, pushing them back into a corner.	snake house. He just sits there an' laughs and watch when you're sittin' there all tied up and
16. MS reaction shot of Farmer and Linda and Abby watching the movie, the movie camera whirring in the background. Slow dolly in to a CU of Linda's enthralled or petrified reaction.	snakes are eatin' your eyes out. They go down your throat and eat all your systems out."

Although the music that accompanied the belly dancer continues, Malick cuts to a long shot of a gazebo shrouded in a thin translucent curtain. Bill and Abby are visible in it with several circus people. Then, in a backlit closeup of the couple, Bill whispers sweetly in Abby's ear, "I'm losing you, you know—it's driving me crazy. I don't know if I'm comin' or goin'," and she replies, smiling, "you never did." Ominously, Malick cuts to a long shot of the farmer walking near the gazebo and noticing them, followed by two subjective shots of Bill and Abby kissing and flirting, interspersed with two closeup reaction shots of the farmer watching from outside of the gazebo, jealous at their transgression, then walking off. As Malick cuts to an exterior extreme long shot of his bedroom window, Linda's final voiceover punctuates the scene: "I think the devil was on the farm."

Leading up to this "pointing" scene, in which an unidentified person points toward the image of the Statue of Liberty, the viewer has witnessed, for the most part, a simplistic story about three people on the run, one in which cinematic style has served primarily to complicate the historical romance/western genre. Yet, this "pointing" scene is a pertinent one for a number of reasons. In the scene, we see a rare instance in the film in which Malick adheres to classical conventions of editing. The scene—thirteen shots in fifty-seven seconds from the last shot of the dancer to the exterior of the bedroom window—transpires using quick cuts, eyeline matches, reaction shots, and subjective shots. In other words, in order to convey the information in the scene in the most economical manner possible, Malick relies on classical Hollywood conventions of editing rather than using longer takes as he customarily prefers. In addition, Malick uses the three shots from *The Immigrant* to depict the optimistic hopes of the immigrants arrival to America, the land of Liberty, their desire to live the American dream, and their fears of a darker side of the American reality, thus further undercutting this American cultural myth.

In this scene, we also see Malick using a more sophisticated voiceover narration than he used in *Badlands*. With Linda's thick Brooklyn accent, her naïve, affectless, and disconnected voiceover narration functions in a more complex way than Holly's does in *Badlands*, wherein the voiceover served to move the plot forward while providing relatively simple commentary on it.[45] In contrast, in Malick's second film, Linda's voiceovers have a more worldly and almost poetic quality, revealing much more

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[45] Granted, Holly does speak in more poetic terms at the forest hideaway; however, for the most part, her voiceover merely comments on the action in the film.

sophisticated insight. In this case, her voiceovers articulate the way the devil relishes in and punishes those who act unethically in the world, those enslaved by internal and external forces, in this case Bill, Abby, and even the farmer. Ultimately, Malick uses Linda's voiceover narration to demonstrate a moralistic vision that permeates the film.

Most importantly, in this scene the identity of the person pointing at the Statue of Liberty—or, more precisely, the arm and finger of a man—is left unknown; we never see who he is. While the man pointing his finger may not be named, I would argue that the finger belongs—at least figuratively—to Malick, the writer and director and blossoming auteur of *Days of Heaven*. Much as he did in the "message" scene as an architect in *Badlands*, Malick is sending another message in *Days of Heaven*. Here, Malick subtly delivers another message right before our eyes, one much more clearly articulated than the message in *Badlands*. Ultimately, this scene functions to illuminate one of Malick's primary concerns in the film: America is not a place where the frontier hero triumphs or Horatio Alger succeeds. Throughout the film, Malick undercuts these American cultural myths as he depicts a spiritually empty world.

In *Days of Heaven*, I argue that Malick continues to subvert classical Hollywood's narrative, stylistic, and generic conventions as well as the sustainability of central American cultural myths by employing elements of literary naturalism, a movement that exposed the dark harshness of life, human vice, and misery. Several characteristics of naturalism are evident in *Days of Heaven.* One characteristic of literary naturalism is detachment from the story whereby the author creates a tone that is experienced as "objective." This puts the focus on what happens to the character, such as his greed and sexual desire, rather than on the subjective aspects of the character (Abrams

262). Another characteristic of naturalism is determinism, the opposite of free will. Determinism rejects the idea that individual characters are causal agents in their own lives (which is typical according to the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema) and replaces it with a focus on biological and social nature, the way that inner and outer forces dictate the lives of human beings. Naturalism also posits that nature itself is indifferent to human struggle, and humans are usually slaves to compulsions and frequently die tragic deaths (Abrams 261-62).

In addition, Malick interweaves aspects of naturalism with the Heideggerian concept of horizon—that is, that which is determined by our pre-existing attitudes and beliefs which connect us to the world in which we live—to challenge the ways in which we comport ourselves in the world so that, as a result, we may gain deeper ontological knowledge into being in the world. In *Days of Heaven*, Malick wants to hold open a horizon to expose to us in these "destitute times" our mode of being, a Western mode of self-assertion and instrumental thinking that has distorted the world, transforming it into objects to be manipulated and consumed. In this mode of self-assertion, say both Heidegger and Malick's film, we have become forgetful of what it means to be human, forgetful of our relation to Being, that generative source that remains always and necessarily beyond our ability to comprehend it fully.

In this chapter, I will examine how the narrative and stylistic systems in *Days of Heaven* function to communicate its primary meanings. The film does in fact show an America in its final moments of transformation from an agrarian republic into an industrialized nation, and I agree that it also employs conventions of a love story and that love stories, like other genres, help sell tickets. More central to my concerns, however, is

that Malick again makes a cultural critique of the frontier myth, arguing that regeneration through violence is a fallacious belief that ultimately leads to loss—the loss of the pastoral depicted in the final destruction of the wheat farm. In addition, the film's time setting—the eve of the American entry into WWI—helps undercut or invalidate the frontier myth because the frontier was closed by 1890 with the Oklahoma land rush—no more free land was available to reward courageous souls willing to uproot and head west in hopes of staking a claim on free land. While both Bill and the farmer are consumed, albeit in unique ways, by industrialization and economic growth, Malick uses cinematography and the montage of beautiful nature shots to emphasize the loss of the Panhandle's Eden, the emptiness of American cultural myths, and to demonstrate to the viewer that there is an alternative way of situating *Dasein* in the world, a way that the characters, like Kit and Holly in *Badlands*, are blind to in this world.

In *Days of Heaven*, a conventional, linear story combines with both ambiguous protagonists and antagonists, an episodic plot which employs structural parallelism, an ambiguous ending, and an intellectual style of montage that connects nature shots with elements of the narrative form, other techniques of cinematic style, and a haunting voiceover commentary to create a naturalistic cautionary tale. This tale offers a melancholy look at people unable to maintain moral and ethical codes against the inner and outer forces that shape and compel their behavior. In doing so, the film exposes the problems with American cultural myths such as the success myth—what Richard Slotkin called the "American dream of perpetual self-improvement and transcendence" (22),—the myth of romantic love, and the myth of regeneration through violence. Malick

engages and undercuts all of these myths to create a questioning that distances us from the characters and invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

Context

As Malick was trying to get his second feature film production underway, a number of factors within the film industry created conditions whereby newer filmmakers such as Malick could still make lower budget, more challenging movies. In the mid to late 1970s, we saw what some film historians note as the decline of the American Film Renaissance, which, as we have learned, began in 1967 with *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate* and, according to most, began to diminish in 1975 with the failure of *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975) and the overwhelming box-office success of *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975).

Between 1975 and 1980, a series of films that carry on some of the characteristics of the American Film Renaissance appeared (including *Days of Heaven*) while the industry, building on the huge success of *Jaws* and *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977), was starting to return to familiar genres and more affirmative movies. Hollywood was beginning a seismic shift from the American Film Renaissance to what Thomas Schatz calls "The New Hollywood" in the years in which Malick made *Days of Heaven*, and the film provides a good example of one of the American Film Renaissance influenced films that came out at a time when Hollywood was quickly shifting in a different direction.

Days of Heaven was released on September 13, 1978, just over two years after *Jaws*' forty-week run at the box-office and shortly after *Star Wars* became a huge hit, demonstrating that conventional American action films could make enormous amounts of money. *Days of Heaven*, however, was completely different. Clearly, the film was not a

film of the New Hollywood but one of the American Film Renaissance, partly because the film was conceived during the Renaissance in 1975, took a long time to make because of post-production, and was made under a small budget.

Malick initially conceived of the film in Cuba when his friend Jacob Brackman introduced Malick to legendary independent film producer Bert Schneider (a producer known for providing directors with creative control as long as the director stayed under budget).[46] According to Peter Biskind, Schneider agreed to produce the film and guaranteed the budget for the film with Paramount, telling the studio he was willing to take responsibility for any overages in the budget. Ultimately, Malick ran $800,000 dollars over a budget of around two million dollars, creating a rift between himself and Schneider, forcing Schneider to go to Paramount CEO Barry Diller to cover the overages (Biskind 296-297). Nevertheless, the film was made for a modest amount of money.

During the era, American movies reflected the split between auteurism, art cinema, and countercultural values, on the one hand, and more commercial mainstream cinema, on the other. At this time, Hollywood shifted toward films that emphasized the small town and suburban values offered by George Lucas (*Star Wars*) and Steven Spielberg (*Jaws* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977). As a result, film audiences returned to familiar genres such as the science fiction film, the musical, and the melodrama, although some films that challenged the socio-political environment continued to appear (Massood 182). Some of the films made after *Badlands* and which came out around the time of *Days of Heaven* include traditional genre films and/or

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[46] Schneider was a key figure in BBS films, which folded in 1972. He was involved in producing *Easy Rider*, *Five Easy Pieces*, and *The Last Picture Show*, all acclaimed American Film Renaissance movies.

blockbusters such as *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Saturday Night Fever* (Jon Badham, 1977), and *Grease* (Randal Kleiser, 1978). Some of the more auteurist films include *The Godfather Part II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), *Nashville*, *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976), *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978), and *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, 1978). Although the dominant trend at the time was films moving toward safer, more conventional narratives, *Days of Heaven* contrasts to these more conventional films, and falls under the category of more auteurist films. Conceived during a time wherein there was disillusionment about Watergate and distrust of public officials, Malick's second film also interrogates and finds lacking various cultural myths that followed the trends of the time. The film makes reference to genres yet undercuts them, rendering them not viable.

From the counterculture to Watergate, the cinematic shifts of the mid to late 1970s had a distinct influence on the waning of the Hollywood Renaissance and the blossoming of the New Hollywood. In the cusp of this shift, Malick had one more opportunity to make an auteurist personal film, *Days of Heaven*.

Production History

A filmmaker's position, experience, and status within the film industry determine in important ways the level of constraints under which he works, and during the time in between the Hollywood Renaissance and the inception of the New Hollywood, Malick managed to exercise an unusually high level of creative control on his second film. Malick was able to gain so much control over *Days of Heaven* because he had one

acclaimed film under his belt,[47] and when shooting began on the second film in 1976, some directors were still being given control of their more personal projects.

As in *Badlands*, Malick's involvement with *Days of Heaven*'s film production extended from the initial conceptualization of the film in 1975 through the entire production process until the film's release in 1978. From conception to completion, *Days of Heaven* took about two and a half years to make and was shot on-location, primarily in southern Alberta, Canada.

Much like his experience with *Badlands*, Malick managed to maintain artistic control over his second film, and the shifting nature of the film industry in the mid to late 1970s still provided limited opportunities for less experienced filmmakers to make low-budget feature films. To achieve control over the film, Malick maintained heavy involvement in the various elements of the film. He wrote his own script (which he ultimately didn't follow, choosing instead to improvise by adding voiceover in the editing room), worked with two cameramen, and helped to edit the film.

As we have learned, Malick loves voiceover narration and has said that the best pictures ever have voiceover and that voiceover helps a director cover an enormous amount of time (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 43). In other words, voiceover narration can stitch together scenes that are thematically continuous but separated by time. In any

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[47] At the box office, *Badlands* didn't make any money. In fact, according to Malick, Warner Brothers ended up "about $75,000 behind—they bought the picture for one million dollars (AFI, *Terry Malick AFI Seminar* 11). Nevertheless, Malick got support for *Days of Heaven* because he already had a film under his belt, and because *Badlands* received great critical attention. According to David Thompson, for example, *Badlands* was one of the most impressive film debuts since *Citizen Kane*, an often repeated judgment (Morrison and Schur 132).

case, it was hard to script dialogue for Linda Manz.[48] Crittenden auditioned an enormous number of people before finding Linda.[49] According to editor Billy Weber, Linda's voiceover narration was improvised: "We recorded about sixty hours of Linda doing voiceover. I think there's fifteen minutes [of her voiceover] in the movie." Malick would shoot a scene, says Weber, and then ask Linda what had happened in the scene; she'd just say what she thought happened, and Malick would use it. For example, Weber explains that Linda's telling of the apocalypse in the film came from the Bible, a story that people Linda had stayed with one night had told her. A lot of that improvisation became voiceover in the film. In the editing room, Weber says Malick would take one line of Linda's voiceovers, play ten minutes of film footage, and look for any place where it would work. Weber also said Malick tried using recordings with Linda that they considered creative mistakes (Weber Commentary, *Days of Heaven* DVD).

Evidence from the production of *Days of Heaven* suggests that Malick's filmmaking consists of an interesting blend of improvisation and some firm ideas about how the film should look and sound. As we see from the above, Malick likes improvising with actors and with editing and sound design in post-production, but he also has a very fixed idea of the overall visual design of the film and the way that the narrative

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[48] Casting director Dianne Crittenden found Manz living in New York in a laundromat with her mother, and she hadn't acted before.

[49] Casting raised other issues, too. According to Crittenden, she preferred Tommy Lee Jones from Texas for the role of the farmer, but Malick liked Shepard because he was an unknown film actor, a choice that Malick has continued to strive for in his subsequent films. Crittenden says Malick was a perfectionist and wanted the perfect person for each role; he wanted people transparent enough so you had a character instead of simply an actor playing the character. Crittenden also noted, however, that Malick wanted Dustin Hoffman, Al Pacino, or John Travolta to play Richard Gere's role (Biskind 296). Malick even said that he'd give up all his points in the film to Aaron Spelling (who was producing *Welcome Back Kotter*, starring Travolta) to get Travolta. Getting Travolta didn't work out, and Malick settled on Gere. According to Crittenden, Malick made up a lot of the lines on the set, deviating heavily from his script, and let the actors loose to redo the lines themselves.

and images of nature blend. Weber explains that Malick is willing to let people on the crew experiment. Malick himself experiments and doesn't ridicule other people for doing the same. Indeed, Malick feels like he gets ideas from improvising and directing spontaneously. At the same time, even though Malick never uses storyboards, he still knows exactly what his bigger picture is, what his plan for the movie is on the set. Further, according to Weber, Malick loves post-production, and that's where he makes a movie. Does the image convey the story? Can we do it without the dialogue? He also does not care about continuity. Malick's period of post-production lasts much longer than that of many film directors, and he's very involved and willing to experiment (Weber Commentary, *Days of Heaven* DVD).

Malick shot the film for fourteen to sixteen weeks. Two cameramen worked on the film: Spanish/Cuban cinematographer Nestor Almendros and Haskell Wexler. Almendros was losing his eyesight by the time shooting began, and the production ran so long that he had to leave due to a prior commitment to François Truffaut's *The Man Who Loved Women* (1977)—a film that actually came out one year before *Days of Heaven* because Malick spent two years editing his film (Almendros). After Almendros left, producer Bert Schneider asked his friend Wexler to come on the shoot. Almendros and Wexler worked together for a week so that Wexler could get familiar with the film's visual style. Wexler then shot all of the interiors in the film. Apparently, Malick got along fine with Wexler but loved Almendros. According to Almendros, he worked on the set for fifty-three days and Wexler for nineteen: "Haskell was wonderful, because as well as producing unbelievably beautiful images, he adjusted perfectly to the style we had established" (Almendros).

Comparing Malick to John Ford, King Vidor, and Josef von Sternberg, Almendros said Malick had an exceptional knowledge of philosophy, music, painting, photography, and how to use light:

> Communication between a director and cinematographer is sometimes ambiguous and confused, because many directors know nothing about the technical and visual aspects. With Terry, however, it was easy to establish a dialogue. He immediately went to the heart of each problem, and not only allowed me to do what I wanted—which was to use hardly any studio lighting in this period film—but encouraged me. It was therefore very exciting to work with him. (Almendros)

Almendros has also explained that Malick made references in the film to Wyeth, Hopper, and other American artists.[50] But, he said, as the credits indicate, "we were particularly inspired by the great photo-reporters of the turn of the century, whose books Malick had a plentiful supply of. Thanks to Bill Weber's editing, our images took on an almost musical rhythm, like a symphony, with andantes, maestosos, staccatos, tremolos, etc" (Almendros).

Much as was the case in shooting *Badlands*, Almendros explained, the crew was made up of old-guard, Hollywood professionals who were accustomed to a glossy style of photography. The gaffer and grip would prepare the lighting, but, according to Almendros, "I would have to ask them to turn off everything they had prepared for me. I

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[50] Some sources for the film's visual imagery include painters such as Johannes Vermeer, Edward Hopper, particularly his *House by the Railroad* (1925) and *American Landscape* (1920), and Andrew Wyeth's most well-known painting, *Christina's World* (1948) as well as photographs by such photo-journalists as Lewis W. Hine from the turn of the century.

realized that this annoyed them; some of them began saying openly that we [Almendros and Malick] weren't professional" (Almendros). Almendros was young compared to the other professionals in the crew, and most of his previous work had been outside the Hollywood system. Born in 1930, he was in his mid to late 40s when he shot the film, but most of his work over the previous decade had been in France with Truffaut and other directors.[51] Again, as in *Badlands*, Malick showed an inclination to do things his own way. Malick, who was involved in all of the camera shooting, even spent time laying the dolly tracks and telling the technicians where they should be running during scenes. Speaking of himself, art director Jack Fisk, and costume designer Patricia Norris, Almendros said:

> All our individual efforts were unified by Terry's great talent, his technical knowledge, and his infallible taste. For Malick would never let anyone do anything that went against his own ideas. Before filming began, he laid down a series of principles. The style of the movie was outlined in such a way that each member of the crew had to follow the guidelines, the most basic of which was to remain as close to reality as possible. (Almendros)

Jack Fisk, the art director, has worked with Malick on each of his films. According to Fisk, the film was shot in Los Angeles, Alberta, and Montana. The steel mill sequence was shot in one weekend outside of Los Angeles (Malick appears briefly shoveling coal at the mill).[52] Aside from the nature shots (which were shot in

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[51] Almendros shot *Claire's Knee* for Eric Rohmer, for example.

[52] Costume Designer Patricia Norris also helped Malick on the film. Norris made the clothes for the film over a three-week period, soaking the white materials in tea in her bathtub at the hotel to give the look of

Montana),[53] the rest of the film was shot in Southern Alberta, Canada, where, says Fisk, Malick wanted a Belvedere-style, Victorian house that Fisk built with the help of Hutterite farmers.[54] The Hutterites grew wheat that was four feet tall (in contrast to the wheat in the United States which grows to around two and a half feet). Malick knew about and wanted to photograph the taller wheat as part of the film. The nature shots weren't written into the script but they were always intended, says Weber.[55]

According to Fisk, "Terry is able to guide things without micro-managing . . . Terry's like a bulldog when he starts shooting, though. He's tireless…the most exhausted I've been on a film." Fisk says that Malick "asks for nothing but expects everything" and that "Terry's totally unpredictable and you never know what he's going to shoot." Fisk also notes that although Malick doesn't sleep and remembers everything, he's "the most humble person I know. As brilliant as he is, he never flaunts it" (Fisk Commentary, *Days of Heaven* DVD).

According to Weber, Malick took about a year and a half for post-production of *Days of Heaven*; Paramount didn't focus on how long the editing was taking on *Days of Heaven*, so Malick and Weber didn't feel pressure to finish at a specific time. At the

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authenticity to the costumes. Norris said she'd never seen any period film done the way Malick made *Days of Heaven*. Norris also built haystacks to hide props because they couldn't move them on the farm (Norris Commentary, *Days of Heaven* DVD).

[53] Most of the nature shots were done in Montana, and all the locust closeups were shot in Montana, too. Fisk says that some of the locusts were glued to the wheat to give the impression they were eating the wheat and to provide better shots of the locusts for the camera. According to Fisk, they dropped Sycamore shells from a helicopter and then reverse loaded the sequence in the camera to give the effect that the swarm of locusts was rising from and descending on the wheat (Fisk Commentary, Days of Heaven DVD).

[54] Hutterites were a pacifist and communal religious sect that came to the U.S. beginning in 1873, fleeing a military conscription law in Russia.

[55] Weber says Malick bought the sprouting plant—in the scene that indicates the change of seasons—from the *Secret Life of Plants*, a Walon Green movie.

time, Paramount was experiencing success with *Saturday Night Fever*, so the company didn't express concern about how much time they were taking. *Days of Heaven* cost three million dollars, says Weber. The film, however, didn't make a profit.[56] Nevertheless, that didn't matter to Paramount President Charles Bluhdorn, who loved it and thought Malick was a great artist, saying, "I don't care if your movies never make a nickel. You'll always make movies for me." Unfortunately for Malick, Bluhdorn died shortly thereafter, and as we will learn in *The Thin Red Line* chapter, his absence amid the changing climate in Hollywood helped contribute to Malick's twenty-year absence from filmmaking (Fisk Commentary, *Days of Heaven* DVD).

In sum, Malick had much control over his second feature film due to the various socio-historical and industrial conditions that existed within Hollywood at the time. Again, as was the case with *Badlands*, Malick would likely have had a more difficult time making the film a few years later, after the Hollywood Renaissance, an anomalous era when formally trained directors were often given unprecedented freedom to shape their own projects and pursue their own interests so long as their budgets were small. Attention to the production history of *Days of Heaven* is a key consideration as one seeks to understand the film.

Driven by Forces

In *Days of Heaven* Malick still "backs over" generic and cinematic conventions. A close look at the film will demonstrate how the film is unconventional, one that deviates from the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema; instead, the film uses

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[56] While the film didn't make a profit at the theater, to date the film has grossed $3,446,749, making, then, nearly $500,000 (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077405/business).

unique narrative and stylistic elements to develop certain critical meanings or themes and create an emotional tone that distances us from the characters and invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

Without question, *Days of Heaven* employs, yet thwarts, conventions of the western and romance genres. In many ways, the film shares traits and conventions of the Western; the protagonist is known for his restlessness and rugged individualism, and his actions follow an ordered chain of events that ultimately concludes with some sort of discovery. In the western, there is ordinarily a wide-open vista which is pitted against the encroachment of civilization. In terms of the romance genre, a romantic triangle is central to the plot, but the narrative fails to allow the central romantic couple, Bill and Abby, to reconcile and achieve a happy satisfaction of their desires in the film's end, thwarting the common trajectory in many conventional romances. In *Badlands*, Malick ultimately uses these popular genres to explore his larger concern of exposing the limitations of American cultural myths. In doing so, the film exposes the problems with these myths which make it difficult for those who accept these myths to find the nature of being.

The narrative of *Days of Heaven* helps Malick develop his concerns. The title and some narrative details loosely parallel two books from the Bible. As Hubert Cohen has noted, the film's title comes from Deuteronomy 11:21 in the Old Testament, where Moses tells God's chosen people that if they love God and follow his commandments that "your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children . . . as the days of heaven upon earth." In addition, the story of Abram and Sarai informs the film (Cohen 48). In the story, a husband and wife pretend that they are brother and sister. Afraid that he

might be killed by an Egyptian wishing to have his beautiful wife, Abram tells others that Sarai is his sister. Then, Pharaoh takes Sarai into his house, which benefits her "brother," Abram. Ultimately, Yahweh causes problems with a plague for Pharaoh and his house. After discovering Abram's deception, Pharaoh returns Sarai, sending them away with the material possessions that they have acquired (Gen.15: 10-20).

The original trailer for *Days of Heaven* misleadingly suggests that the search for the American Dream and this classic love triangle define the film's central meaning. In fact, although much of the critical reception of the film has praised its beauty, many responses have also noted the thinness of plot (Kauffmann 16). On the level indicated by the film's trailer, *Days of Heaven* imitates the classical Hollywood cinematic mode. When the film begins, there is an individual character, Bill, who works as a laborer shoveling coal in a Chicago steel mill. Bill becomes the causal agent who sets the narrative into motion after he argues with the Mill Foreman, strikes him with a pipe (presumably killing him), and makes the decision to flee to Texas with his girlfriend, Abby, as well as his fourteen-year-old sister, Linda. At first, life appears better for Bill and Abby when they are hired as wheat sackers at an expansive Panhandle farm, owned by the farmer,[57] but as they toil through the harvest season, they wear down and become disillusioned with their places in the world.

Meanwhile, the farmer has recognized Abby's beauty and eventually asks her to stay on the farm after the harvest. Although Bill and Abby are lovers, because Bill has overheard that the farmer only has a year to live, he convinces Abby to stay and let the

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[57] The farmer hires migrant workers—they temporarily work for him, then move north as the harvest does, forcing most of them to live as rootless nomads.

farmer court her, thinking that they can inherit his estate once he dies. When the farmer and Abby, however, gradually fall in love, the farmer becomes the antagonist who blocks Bill's desires, creating a conflict between these two men in their desire for Abby. This love triangle is resolved when the farmer jealously attacks Bill, who, in self-defense, stabs and kills the farmer. Bill, Abby, and Linda all flee from the farm, just as they fled from the steel mill at the film's beginning. Bill, however, is finally shot to death by the police; hence, the love triangle ends with two of the three characters dead and the narrative strands involving Abby and Linda left open. A segmentation of the plot looks like this:

C. Credits (25 still images of working-class individuals)[58]

1. Chicago Factory
2. Train Tracks/Train
3. Train Depot
4. Farm
5. Grasshoppers appear on the farm
6. Farmer's House
7. In the Field
8. Farmer's House
9. Riverside
10. On the Boat and Riverside
11. Forest and Riverside
12. Finishing School
13. Train Station
14. Finishing School
15. Train Tracks

In *Days of Heaven*, Malick continues to undermine many classical Hollywood narrative conventions. For example, in the film, the narrative is not told as absorbingly as

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[58] Specific images from Hines that seem linked to *Days of Heaven* include *The Factory*, *Miners*, and *A* Variety of Jobs. Similar images to the ones we see in the film can be found at http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/. Also, for an excellent analysis on the significance of the film's opening images, see Carol Zucker, "'God Don't Even Hear You,' or Paradise Lost: Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Volume 29, Issue 1, 2001.

is possible, and it is not told through an "invisible" cinematic style. There is no clearly defined individual male protagonist; that is, Bill and Linda both serve as kinds of dual protagonists, and Linda, a female adolescent, tells the story as a voiceover narrator about herself, Bill, the farmer, and Abby, suggesting that perhaps she, not the other characters, is the true "protagonist" in the film. The film also lacks a clearly defined individual or group antagonist; instead, it relies on aspects of naturalism wherein internal, social and natural forces seem to be the primary antagonists in the film. While the narrative is linear, the plot is elliptical and episodic. However, unlike the case in *Badlands*, the primary conflict in the film is obvious—the protagonists' desires or goals are well-defined. Finally, the ending of *Days of Heaven* is not closed; we witness the fate of Bill, the farmer, and, to some extent, Abby; however, Linda, perhaps the final central character, is left walking down railroad tracks at the end of the film, unaware of what she will do next in the world.

Since *Days of Heaven* lacks a clearly defined individual protagonist that is usually central in most classical Hollywood films, Malick's vague protagonists complicate viewer identification with the central characters. The film is, for the most part, neither character nor plot driven, and Malick avoids empathetic characterizations. Ultimately, the character we care the most for, Linda, is also the least involved in the events that advance the narrative; however, she narrates the film in voiceover, suggesting that she, not her brother Bill, is the film's protagonist. Linda's narration begins when she maps out her relationship with her brother and Abby:

> Me and my brother, it just used to be me and my brother. We used to do things together. We used to have fun. We used to roam the streets. There

> was people sufferin' of pain and hunger. Some people, their tongues were hangin' out of their mouth. He used to juggle apples. He was—he used to amuse us. He used to entertain us. . . . In fact, all three of us been going places. Lookin' for things, searchin' for things. Goin' on adventures. They told everybody they were brother and sister. My brother didn't want nobody to know. You know how people are. You tell them somethin', they start talkin'.

Based on Linda's introduction as the film's sole voiceover narrator, we would assume that she could perhaps be the film's protagonist simply because she is the first character we see (in the twenty-fifth and final still photograph at the beginning of the film) and hear and because she initially reveals information about her early life, her relationship with both her brother and Abby, and their "adventures." Also, Linda's young age, sex, innocence, and her thick Brooklyn accent initially encourage the viewer to identify with her. In speaking throughout the film, Linda's narration is simultaneously more and less accessible. That is, she both distances the audience and engages their emotional involvement, placing us both outside and inside of the actions in the film.

However, despite Linda's authorial moments, such as the one in the opening of the film as the film's narrator, we quickly learn that Bill will become the dominant force that propels the narrative forward, a fact that we witness at the beginning of the film when we see Bill working in the mill, fighting with the Mill Foreman, and sitting with Abby at the train depot, explaining to her that they're going to get "fixed up"—or achieve a better way of living. Here, in these opening moments, Bill establishes himself as what appears to be the dominant force in the film, especially when we consider how passive

Abby is in response to Bill. Bill is the "provider" (he works), he fights and kills, and he explains to a quiet Abby that an easier life is on the horizon. His forceful action and decision to head west could lead us to think he will become a conventional frontier hero. His promises of a better life tempt us to believe that the American success myth will structure the story.

When he kills the Mill Foreman, Bill sets the film's causal chain into motion. Throughout the film, however, he continues to let his impulsive behavior get the best of him. He exits the film in the climax and leaves us "early" when the police shoot him dead, undermining his character's own authority as the film's protagonist and undercutting the idea that he is a frontier hero. Ultimately, Bill is someone who simply is driven by and acts upon his inner impulses: his anger, greed, and dissatisfaction with his place as a laborer in the world. For example, Linda explains the reason Bill wants Abby to marry the farmer:

> He was tired of livin' like the rest of them, nosin' around like a pig in the gutter. He wasn't in the mood no more. He figured there must be somethin' wrong with him, the way they always got no luck, and they ought to get it straightened out. He figured some people need more than they got, other people got more than they need. Just a matter of gettin' us all together.

Because Bill is tired of "nosin' around like a pig in the gutter," he is not someone who conducts himself in an ethical manner, and due to this, he does not encourage the audience to empathize with or care much for him (and, after all, he presumably kills the Mill Foreman in a blind rage of anger).

For much of the remainder of the film, Linda remains a passive observer as Bill propels the narrative forward. However, while Linda remains passive, she narrates the film and comments on the world in sophisticated ways; she clearly articulates a moral code that is otherwise absent in the film. As a result, Malick creates two ambiguous protagonists, two characters who both advance the film in some ways yet undermine that distinction at the same time. As a result, the audience is distanced from each character, leaving us in a reflective and distanced space, questioning who we are supposed to care for.

Following the clear character motivations of classical Hollywood cinema, in the film, Bill and Abby's behavior and interactions are motivated and defined by clear goals—even though their actions and motivations are reprehensible. Ultimately, these despicable behaviors offer a melancholy look at people unable to maintain moral and ethical codes against the inner and outer forces that shape and compel their behavior. Nevertheless, the film does not possess a clearly defined individual or group antagonist, leaving viewers further perplexed by this fact.

Granted, Bill perceives the farmer as a kind of vague antagonist, or, at least, a rival who blocks his goals—a loving relationship with Abby and money to support them—in the causal chain of events. For example, Bill develops a conflict with the farmer, a conflict that lasts for a portion of the film that lasts from segment 4 to segment 8. At first, it seems like a good idea for Bill to convince Abby to be with the farmer. After all, the farmer is dying, and his death would allow Abby to inherit his estate. Once the farmer actually falls in love with Abby, however, Linda says, "Instead of getting sicker, he just stayed the same." Realizing his mistake, Bill is frustrated with the farmer

and Abby's developing relationship. Bill grows jealous, and as a result, the farmer becomes a dual block to Bill's goals: he has married Abby, and his inheritance is out of Bill's reach because the farmer is not getting sicker (love and money are two chief desires in many Hollywood films, and Bill is thwarted in both desires because of his misguided plan). Linda recognizes Bill's frustration: "He'd seen how it all was. She loves the farmer."

Despite this conflict, in the film many events can be best understood as being caused not by characters but by larger forces such as uncontrollable impulses, social dynamics, and an indifferent nature. In a way, Malick suggests that the characters are slaves to circumstances and a way of being that is beyond them, out of their control. In fact, forces beyond the control of the characters serve as the primary antagonist in the film, and Malick depicts these forces in a naturalistic way that leads to melancholy emotions, exposes the problems with American cultural myths, and invites the viewer into a reflection on being. In the film, Bill, Abby, and the farmer are subject to powerful forces. In the case of each, the outer and inner forces don't merely disturb a carefree or uncomplicated existence; instead, they overwhelm the relatively puny attempts of characters to act ethically and morally. For example, one day after work, Bill and Abby go walking in a shallow pond. Bill has learned that the farmer, whom Bill heard is dying, would like Abby to stay after the harvest season to continue working small jobs for the same pay. As Bill and Abby flirt in the water, Bill says, "He's [the farmer] stuck on you. He doesn't have any family either. Why don't you tell him you'll stay?" Abby responds by asking, "What for?" Bill continues, "I don't know, something might happen. What's your mouth hanging open for? Don't tell me, I already know—on account of your

unhappy life and all that shit. Well, I'm telling you we got to do something about it. Can't expect anybody else to."

As he did in the film's first scene when he killed the foreman, here Bill acts upon impulse, in this case trying to reduce the misery of their existence. Abby seems to be morally offended by Bill's suggestion. She indignantly drops her mouth open and backs away from him, implying that she thinks his suggestion is morally wrong. Then, we see Bill step toward her, and interestingly, Malick cuts to a close-up of Bill, who, while attempting to persuade Abby, actually speaks directly to the camera (the only such shot in the film), indicating to us the power of Bill's own impulsive force in the midst of this ethical dilemma.[59] Ultimately, they both ignore the ethical question, and it quickly becomes obvious that escaping their lives of misery is more important than adhering to a set of ethics, since they do decide to stay on the farm.

Later, after Abby has told Bill that the farmer is in love with her, Bill further hints at the idea that Abby should stay on with the farmer. In the barn scene in segment 4, which is a long take that lasts an extremely lengthy one minute fifty-four seconds (besides long takes, Malick, we will learn, also uses alternative forms of editing to convey his concerns), the camera tracks in to a medium shot of both Bill and Abby, and Bill says, "I never thought he had the guts. Who'd know but you and me? Nobody. That's all that matters, isn't it?" Abby answers, "You talk like it was all right," and Bill says, "You have every chance to enjoy his money anyway." Abby asks, "What makes

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[59] This scene is shot using the Panaglide camera, Panavision's early version of the now popular Steadicam or Glidecam (Almendros 176). The mobility of the Panaglide enabled rapid and fluid movement without the use of dolly tracks. In this scene, the movement toward Abby with the Panaglide camera works to emphasize the power of Bill's impulsive force. In other words, Malick does not track and pan based on the actions of the characters; rather, the camera movements almost serve to parallel Bill's point-of-view.

you think we're talking about just a couple months?" to which he replies, "The man's got one foot on a banana peel and the other on a roller skate. We'll all be gone in a couple of years—whose gonna care that we acted perfect?" Again, Bill and Abby discuss an ethical issue, and again Abby takes at least a marginal stance against what seems wrong. However, because they reason that the farmer only has a few months to live and nobody else will know that they have committed a wrong, Bill and Abby are able to dismiss this ethical quandary: in the next scene, Abby marries the farmer. In other words, in this long take, ethical and moral dilemmas are pushed away in favor of addressing their desire to live in less miserable conditions. They capitulate to their desire to escape suffering and even use the powerful force of mortality that is bearing down on the farmer as a justification for not acting honorably. Here, Bill and Abby act in a way that shows the happy satisfaction of their desires, thwarting the common trajectory in many conventional romance films. In these actions, the characters demonstrate a mode of self-assertion and instrumental thinking that transforms people into objects to be manipulated and consumed, showing that they have become forgetful of what it means to be human, forgetful of their relation to Being.

Even the farmer, who is a quintessentially good man, has internal forces acting upon him: "He knew he was gonna die. He knew there was nothing that could be done." In the shadow of his mortality, he still allows himself to be overtaken by the inner forces of desire for love and of jealousy. He admits to Abby that he had always thought that being alone was something that a man had to get used to. Up until this point in his life the forces of class have been in his favor and have protected him from an existence like Bill and Abby's. As Linda says, "This farmer, he had a big spread, and a lot of money."

However, as soon as he sees Abby, he develops a powerful desire for her. Says Linda, "This farmer, he didn't know when he first saw her, or what it was about her that caught his eye. Maybe it was the way the wind blew through her hair." Ultimately, he tries to control his jealousy and desire, believing in Abby's goodness, but eventually succumbs to these forces. We are encouraged to pay attention to this type of exposition within the primary narrative—to understand the characters' actions from a naturalistic perspective that sees behavior as determined by outer forces or compulsive instincts rather than an ethical code (Abrams 261)—because, as we will see, of the association with that idea established by the intellectual montage.

In the film, many events can be best understood as being caused not by characters but by larger forces. The characters are the products of social forces, yet Malick doesn't directly criticize the characters and their behaviors. Overall, Malick's film backs over these thematic meanings in order to reveal for us the problems at the root of American culture, exposing the futility of the American dream and the inadequacy of the frontier hero. For here, there is no honor in the way that Bill tries to rise to the top. In depicting characters striving for something better in the face of forces that are out of their control (jealousy, miserable working conditions, mortality), Malick leaves the viewer wondering who the antagonist in the film is or, at least, why there is no clearly defined protagonist, distancing the viewer once again and leaving him dangling in an uncertain state to reflect on the nature of our own place in the world and how we comport ourselves in the world.

The narrative presents its plotline in an episodic manner, and the episodic plot is not necessarily a goal-oriented, causally driven plot. According to Bordwell and Thompson, the classical Hollywood cinema's conception of narrative depends on the

assumption that the action will spring primarily from individual characters as causal agents. While Bill, Abby, and the farmer demonstrate goals, Malick also makes use of a technique, structural parallelism, to help us understand the basic plot elements of the film, and, more importantly, to highlight the impulses and feelings that ultimately push the characters to make destructive choices and abandon their attempts to act ethically. One set of repeated scenes demonstrates Bill's inability to control himself when provoked by others. As explained earlier, the narrative is set in motion when Bill kills the Mill Foreman at the hellish Chicago mill and flees in search of a better life to the pastoral wheat fields in the Panhandle. Malick repeats this scene near the film's end, in essence, when Bill kills the farmer and flees the prairie. Although Bill's actions drive the narrative, Malick seems most focused on what he strikes out against. Bill cannot tolerate other men who try to assert their power over him, thus emphasizing the degree to which Bill futilely attempts to maintain control over his own existence, despite the greater forces of social class that have thwarted his pursuit of success.

Another series of structural parallels involves the two men's love for Abby: Malick shows both men in affectionate love scenes with Abby in which they reveal the feelings that first drew them to her and show them taking care of her. For example, we witness Bill gently washing dirt from Abby's leg and foot in the pond, and the farmer, just after President Woodrow Wilson's whistle-stop tour, adjusts Abby's shoe before helping her into the carriage. The shared quality of love that they feel for her situates them against each other, and eventually it produces the jealousy that ends up overwhelming the farmer and causing him to assert his power over Bill. This is exactly the action that Bill is unable to ignore, and thus it ignites Bill's violent impulses, one of

the forces in him that is stronger than his conscience, since it provokes him to abandon his decision to back off, to accept his loss, and to allow Abby and the farmer to enjoy their love.

Whereas Bordwell and Thompson state that a film's narrative will typically resolve its causal issues by bringing the development to a high point or climax, the "climax" of the film does not really resolve conflicts or close off the chains of cause and effect as Hollywood films ordinarily do. In a conventional western, the frontier hero would kill an antagonist in a morally justified way, creating a satisfying closed ending. However, in *Days of Heaven*, we don't gain any catharsis from the death of either Bill or the farmer, partly because we don't necessarily think completely positively or negatively about either. This contrasts to the sympathy we feel for Will Munny, for example, and the anger we feel toward Little Bill in the climactic scene of *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992).

The climax of *Days of Heaven* thwarts any sense of audience satisfaction and undercuts the myth of regeneration through violence, the success myth, and the myth of romantic love. The morning after the fire, we see Bill out on a hill tinkering with his motorcycle. The farmer rides up on a horse, holding a gun pointed at Bill. Bill, surprised, watches as the farmer approaches with the gun shaking in his hand. The farmer appears unable to shoot the gun, however, and as he closes in on Bill, Bill stabs him in the chest with a screwdriver. Bill tries to remove the screwdriver, but the farmer rolls away, ready to die. After killing the farmer, Bill, Abby, and Linda go on the run. Eventually, however, the farm Foreman (Robert Wilke) catches up with Bill by a river far

from the farmer's estate. As Bill tries to flee from the Foreman and the police, he runs into a river. A policeman fires a shot and hits Bill in the back, killing him.

This surprising and unexpected climax violates the classical Hollywood convention of the closed ending, thwarts viewer expectations, and undercuts American cultural myths. No romantic couple is united at the end of the film, undercutting the myth of romantic love. Bill's murder of the farmer provides no sense of regeneration through violence: because of his willingness to plot with his lover's body for the farmer's wealth and because the farmer is not a clearly defined antagonist, Bill is not the morally justified frontier hero. He's merely acting desperately in a desperate naturalistic world. In it, inner and outer forces compel and control behavior, leaving us perplexed by the two males who dominate the film. Bill's impulses drive him to get "fixed up" for a better way of living in the world, and the farmer seeks merely to maintain his status as the richest man in the Panhandle. Their deaths leave us wondering about the way that we conduct ourselves in the world, wondering whether we are actually also slaves to inner and outer forces and don't actually live according to free will in our pursuit of the American Dream. Challenging such myths, the film suggests that social and natural forces in our world, rather than our individual effort and desire to succeed and our reason and morality, determine our place in the world. Exposing the fraudulence of American cultural myths, Malick, we will learn, guides us through his beautiful cinematography of the natural environment to reflect on the nature of being.

At the end of the film, we have a partial closure: we do learn the fate of Bill and the farmer in the film's "climax"—the farmer is killed by Bill, and Bill is shot down by the police. However, we do not witness the fate of Abby and Linda, and we are still left

with a sense that the film is not closed. Near the end of the film, Abby and Linda walk out of the finishing school (an extremely unlikely place for Linda to be), a place where Abby leaves Linda, choosing to abandon her "sister" so that she can rebound, most likely, into another situation with another lover. Abby is dressed with great style. She wears a clean dark brown wool jacket and skirt, a brown scarf, and a nice black hat. She wears a brooch on her scarf and has a gold watch chain dangling from her waist, the watch fitted into her pocket. She is dressed cleanly and smartly, much as she dressed when she was with the farmer. In other words, Abby has clearly acquired some of the farmer's wealth—or at least still holds onto the jewels and clothes that she wore with the farmer. She is not dressed shabbily with tangled hair as we saw her when she worked in the wheat fields.

Linda, too, is dressed well, wearing a grey skirt and black wool jacket; her hair is neatly pulled back and tucked away in a ponytail, quite unlike the way she dressed when she arrived at the farm. Abby tells her, "It'll work out," and asks with doubt, "Right?" Linda appears forlorn and sad, mumbling "Mmm." Abby, seemingly trying to convince Linda that everything will be great, says, "You'll make lots of friends…You'll be all right. Now turn around and go inside." Here, Abby, presumably days or weeks after the farmer and Bill's death, tries to convince Linda (and herself) that Linda will enjoy her new life at the finishing school. Abby is already dumping Linda at the kind of place that Abby wished she could have attended when she was young (earlier she has said she could've been a dancer and that she learned how to dance from watching the girls dance at "Baker Hall"). While Abby appears to be sad saying goodbye to Linda, she is clearly going to leave alone, by herself. Abby does not appear to leave open the possibility that

Linda could leave with her. Linda is morose; she looks up at Abby with eyes full of longing, and she actively leans into Abby to hug her, closing her eyes and squinting them in dismay.

Moments later, a band plays "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" as Abby watches dozens of young men prepare to leave by train to fight in World War I. She sees soldiers kissing their girlfriends in loving embraces. When the train arrives, Abby springs into motion and walks quickly to the train. As she prepares to jump on the caboose of the train, she smiles at a soldier, looking him up and down in a flirtatious manner. Another soldier helps her onto the train. We see her smiling, and she helps the previous soldier up the stairs onto the train. For the last shot of Abby, she is smiling at the back of the caboose as the train creeps away. In this scene, Malick portrays Abby in an unflattering way without condemning her for her actions—the clear depiction, she is someone who is eager to be taken away by another man. In these closing moments with Abby, she is shown to be just a pawn in the world, one at the mercy of internal and external forces beyond her conscience. As viewers, we are still trying to recover from the death of Bill and the farmer, yet Abby quickly rebounds, abandoning Linda, and going, once again, in search of an even better life with someone else. Her actions leave us perplexed and melancholy, especially considering that she leaves Linda alone, and this is significant because Linda is the character we have most admired in the film and because Abby's actions have indirectly led to the death of Linda's brother Bill.

At the film's end, Abby has left town, leaving Linda all alone at the finishing school. We later see Linda, however, use a rope of bed sheets to sneak out of the school's third floor and escape with her old friend (Jackie Shultis) from the farm. Linda

and her friend run to the train tracks and wait for the girl's boyfriend, who never shows up. In keeping with the film and her character, Linda has somehow, despite being left alone, managed to continue making connections. As they walk down the train tracks which lead into the horizon and away from the camera, Linda states in her final voiceover, "This girl—she didn't know where she was goin' or what she was gonna do. She didn't have no money on her. Maybe she'd meet up with a character. I was hopin' things would work out for her—she was a good friend of mine." When hearing Linda's comments, we are inspired by the fact that she can think of others but, more importantly, because we have grown to admire the way she carries herself despite the tragedy in her world; we can't help from "hopin'" that things will work out for her, too. In other words, Linda continues making connections, thinking of others, despite the fact that she is merely a pawn to outer forces beyond her control. Most importantly, in depicting Linda walking down the train tracks, Malick provides an open ending, leaving us wondering how she will end up in the world.

Framing the Panhandle

In *Days of Heaven*, the narrative elements discussed above combine with intellectual montage that connects nature shots with elements of the narrative form, other techniques of cinematic style, and a haunting voiceover commentary to create a naturalistic cautionary tale that offers a melancholy look at people unable to maintain moral and ethical codes against the inner and outer forces that shape and compel their behavior. In doing so, the film exposes the problems with American cultural myths which prevent us from investigating the nature of being.

A number of stylistic devices, some of which violate classical Hollywood norms, are central to cinematic style in *Days of Heaven*; after listing these devices, we can examine each in more detail to see how these stylistic devices help Malick achieve his aims in the film. In the film, lighting is unobtrusive; however, the film adheres primarily to the use of natural light. The sets/props and costumes are used according to the genre and period setting. In *Days of Heaven*, Malick uses camera distance to slow down the pace of the film. Rather than try to heighten emotion by using tighter shots, Malick instead chooses to keep his camera at a distance, forcing us to watch the characters at a calculated distance so that we are less able to become emotionally involved in their plight. Often Malick eschews the conventions of continuity editing, encouraging the viewer through longer takes to mull over what he has just witnessed and, more broadly, the significance of the characters' words and actions. He also employs elements of intellectual montage. Finally, although Malick does use convincing diegetic sound and some diegetic music, he also uses sound in inventive ways and relies more heavily on Linda's non-diegetic voiceover narration than is typical in classical Hollywood films.

Malick's distinctive and original use of cinematic style functions to convey inner and outer forces to expose American cultural myths and create a questioning that invites us to wonder about the nature of being. Take, for example, Malick's use of natural lighting.[60] To emphasize the natural landscape, Malick omits artificial lighting in exterior

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[60] Commenting on the myth that the film was shot entirely with natural light, Fisk says, "It's not true that we didn't use lights. Almost all interiors have lights." A number of scenes in barns, for example, used soft north light. To create continuity, the interiors used lights because the sun is always shifting. Says Fisk, "The exteriors on *Days of Heaven* were largely available light. And they were shot in backlight. So when you're shooting in backlight, not only do you get the rim around the head that is very dramatic. And the sun

shots and instead uses the sun as his light source. The film's shots, therefore, are most often composed at dawn and dusk, and as a result, many scenes display muted shadows, and because the characters are ordinarily placed in between the sun and the camera, they are often shot in silhouette.

Malick's lighting, to some extent combined with camera movement, depicts both heaven and hell. Malick often employs large windows and doorways that allow natural light to come in to illuminate interior scenes. In addition, Malick shot most exterior scenes during what is called the "magic hour," the period of light just before twilight, the narrowest time frame in which the crew could work before the sun completely set. The effect of such lighting is heavenly in its presentation. The images that we see—with each fade in from black, dissolve, and cut—are dreamlike in their quality. The choice to shoot during the magic hour, backlit, and in extreme long shots, silhouettes the characters and shows Malick's inclination to shoot a specific environment rather than the faces of the characters (this is similar to Malick's use of the extreme long shot in *Badlands*). These shots immerse the characters in a place rather than emphasizing the characters themselves.

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hitting the ground behind you is very bright. But the light doesn't change as long as you keep it in backlight. The light on the front of the face is going to be very down and soft."

Much of the film was shot in the late afternoon or at the magic hour around dusk. When there was shooting during the day, it was done under cover, for example, in a barn. The crew would rehearse scenes, pick the lens, practice the dolly, and when the sun would drop, the cast and crew would all rush to get the shot. They would shoot a scene in one or two takes. During the summer twilight hour in Southern Alberta Canada, they would have around forty minutes to shoot a scene. And they would shoot a number of scenes at night that way. According to Fisk, "We shot a number of days well after sunset, well after the normal magic hour and of course as the sun sets in the west, the western sky is the last to lose even deep blue light. And Nestor would keep shooting well after the light meter would indicate that there was nothing left…Terry would always say, Nestor let's just shoot it…maybe it'll be great."

The exceptions to this heavenly depiction are those hellish scenes in which the lighting provides a visual contrast to the heavenly depiction of the farm. The scenes lit in this fashion involve the mill where Bill works, the bonfire at the end of the harvest, and the climactic wheat fire. In these scenes, the hellishness is suggested by the fact that the fire or molten iron provides most of the illumination in the scene, either because it takes place in a dark interior setting or at night—and by the fact that the reflections of reddish light shifts on faces and the environment to suggest a hellish atmosphere.

Aside from the stylistic use of light to depict a space as heavenly or hellish in nature, the film's overall use of light indicates Malick's larger concerns. Malick's camera movement enhances the hellish and heavenly effects initiated by his use of light. In the opening scene, we witness a shot of the industrial city with a factory and smoke stacks. The sky is grey and overcast—the only such shot we see in the film. Malick cuts to a shot of Abby sifting through rubble outside of the mill. The sky is still overcast, smoke fills the frame, and the set is loaded with blacks and grays, emphasizing the destitute conditions of the workers. Malick then cuts to Bill working in an industrial hell. Bill and his coworkers are lit only by the overcast sky peeking through skylights and the orange glow of the fire that they feed with black coal. The lighting creates highlights—patches of relative brightness—on their faces and wooden-handled shovels, yielding more diffuse highlights to the texture of the surfaces. Because of the lighting in the factory, there are many attached shadows, shadows wherein light fails to illuminate parts of the men, their clothes and faces and tools, because of the their shape and surface features (Bordwell and Thompson 125). In other words, patches of the men's faces and body fall into darkness. When the men are front lit, the reddish light shrouds their faces

and bodies, and spewing sparks light them from behind in silhouette. In addition, Bill wears a black shirt with dirty grey suspenders and a gray scarf that catches the red molten glow. The men have sweaty, dirty faces that glisten in the stifling heat of the environment, and they squint in the bright heat, thus blending them into the red molten glow and black shadows that envelop them. Malick shoots the scene with a hand-held camera, following Bill as he labors through his work. As a result, the scene has a gritty realism, giving us the impression that we, too, are there in the hellish environment. Bill's face and black hair are illuminated much as the molten glow that illuminates him. Malick also chooses to take shots of the molten iron and the glowing machinery rather than shots of the characters working, leaving us with a feeling of the power and force of the machinery. The film depicts the factory scene with the blaring sounds of machines and machinery that silence the words of Bill and the Mill Foreman. Overall, the lighting in this scene shows just how stifling and oppressive the environment is. The dirty-faced men work hard in a hellish environment, and the attached shadows fill the frame with black. These shadows, generated by the molten glow of the iron and presented with the hand-held camera, convey vividly the difficulty of the working conditions. Linda's voiceover narration creates a sound bridge from the hell and loud volume of the mill to the cuts that take her, Bill, and Abby to the vista of Texas. The film establishes an opposition through lighting between Bill's fiery reddish-black hell at the mill in Chicago and the beautiful golden hues of the Texas Panhandle. The lighting design of the two visually different spaces suggests the hellish or heavenly experience of each environment.

In addition, in the fire scene, Malick continues to use natural lighting—and also diegetic music—to shoot the scene as the fields burn, and this scene challenges the myth

of regeneration through violence and creates a questioning in the viewer. As we noted in the previous chapter, Malick included a fire scene in *Badlands*, and the fire scene in *Days of Heaven* is even longer and evokes more haunting emotions. In a scene that lasts an extremely long four plus minutes, we hear the haunting sounds of Ennio Morricone's score entitled "Fire," a score with strings and French horns, and watch as voluptuous flames engulf the fields of wheat as wheat sackers scramble to put out the flames. Here, the music is designed to match the events taking place. In addition, since no other light source besides the fire illuminates the workers, the workers around the light source look like silhouettes wearing black; they appear as frantic demons running out of control, emphasizing the dramatic nature of the scene. The flames also roar over a horse buggy which takes off through the field, leaving flames in its path. In addition, since the flames illuminate the workers in silhouette, this leaves their faces as black as the night in which the fire blazes. Ordinarily, if we saw faces, we could register the emotion on each face, and that emotion would emphasize for us the hellish nature of the scene. However, here we do not see faces, and the scene is even more haunting because of the frantic motions of the faceless workers. Malick cuts from closeups to medium long shots to long shots to extreme long shots, enhancing the drama of the scene, using multiple cameras, showing the leaping flames as they devour the field. In these shots, Malick uses an array of tilts, pans, and cuts and a collection of shots of the field, using only the flames to illuminate the scene. As the scene concludes, we see only the light of the fire blazing in the pitch black of the frame. Malick uses natural light in nearly all other exterior scenes—such as those moments outdoors in the wheat patches when the workers harvest the wheat and when the workers and Bill, Abby, Linda, and the farmer are at play on the farm. In the

scene just described, Malick shows the power of inner and outer forces such as the farmer's jealousy (which leads to the lighting of the fire) and the power of the natural force, fire, as it fights through the empty black of the night. In this hellish scene, Malick demonstrates that what seems like a God-like force, a larger than human force, condemns the actions of the characters in a climactic event, encouraging viewers to reflect on the nature of being. Overall, Malick's use of lighting encourages viewers to ask questions: "why does the field burning scene last so long—so much longer than other scenes we have watched to this point?" "What is he trying to say?" "Is the fire signifying a new beginning for Bill or the farmer?" "Is the fire suggesting for us through this climactic-like event something about the consequences of how we participate in the world?" The lighting in the scene is beautiful and haunting, and the string and wind instruments complement this tone in the scene, yet the cinematic style overall leaves us wondering why Malick chose to spend so much time depicting the fire and whether this event can be understood as the climax of the film.

Malick's use of structural parallelism and intellectual montage help establish the importance of the characters' acquiescence to outer and inner forces, but other aspects of cinematic style such as mise-en-scene, painterly cinematography, and sound evoke the melancholy mood of the film. The sets, props, and costumes in *Days of Heaven* are used according to the conventions of the genre and contribute to Malick's central concerns. As noted above, nearly the entire first hour of the film from the arrival in the Panhandle is shot outdoors during the "magic hour," and the mise-en-scene takes advantage of the deep space of the farmer's forever reaching farm, while the clearly focused depth of field is beautifully rendered with gentle pans, craning, tilts, and extreme long shots, giving us a

sense of infinite space. Lingering takes of buffalo, ponds, rivers, fields of wheat, and barns within this seemingly limitless vista at first evoke the breathtaking beauty of this Texas prairie.

Many people have commented upon the beauty of the scenery and vista shots, yet Malick does not allow us to indulge in romantic notions about it. Nearly every farm scene vista shot includes humans toiling ceaselessly, slaves to nature's challenges (after all, the wheat must be harvested) and the farmer's dominance. The farmer controls their work lives, illustrating that the workers' lives are determined by the greater forces of nature and class—as Linda explains, "From the time the sun went up, till it went down, they were workin' all the time, non-stop. Just keep goin'. You didn't work, they'd ship you right out of there. They don't need you. They can always get somebody else"—and the workers are generally miserable, despite their efforts to play and entertain themselves. Also, in the field scenes that occur in the middle of the day, scenes that are naturally brighter, we are saddened to see how hard the sackers are working as well as their shabby, soiled clothing, indicating a sharp contrast between these nomads and the gorgeous setting they inhabit. The characters often have dirty faces, and Malick frequently establishes shots that choose to focus on the workers harvesting collectively, rather than simply focusing only on the actions of Bill or Abby. As a result of these shots, the viewer feels what can only amount to a guilty pleasure in the aesthetics because we also feel distressed, knowing that the workers live a difficult existence. Still, even when Malick does concentrate solely on Bill and Abby, as in the scene when they recline against a snow-covered bale of wheat, the farmer's pristine mansion usually looms in the receding space, again emphasizing by contrast the meager lives that these characters live.

Overall, then, Malick uses the beautiful landscape and the sun's natural light to emphasize the golden wheat and the clear white sky, but we are unable to deny that in contrast to this beauty are the browns, blacks, and grays of the characters' grungy clothing. Malick's mise-en-scene and cinematography work to create a conflict within the viewer who cannot ignore the miserable existences of Bill, Abby, and the workers who populate the otherwise beautiful prairie. Ultimately, their miserable existence exposes the invalidity of the frontier myth, for Bill, while inhabiting the luscious prairie, has no dominion over it, and when combined with the beautiful cinematography, the viewer is left feeling melancholy and wondering about his own being.

In *Days of Heaven*, Malick also uses camera distance and camera movements to slow down the pace of the film. That is, rather than try to heighten emotion by using tighter shots, Malick instead chooses to keep his camera at a distance, using loose framing, forcing us to watch the characters at a calculated, objective distance so that we are discouraged from becoming emotionally involved in their plight. In addition, camera movements are motivated more by the whims of the director, occurring most during scenes of nature rather than in following the actions of the characters. Malick's loose framing emphasizes open space, and his cinematic style disrupts Hollywood's generic conventions to create a distancing effect which challenges the visions produced by frontier myth and the American dream that is perpetuated by the characters in Hollywood films.

Malick also uses framing and camera movement in unusual ways to engage the audience in some of his central ideas, ideas such as man's disconnection from and connection to being. Malick's loose framing emphasizes open space. In addition, camera

movements are motivated more by the plans of the director rather than the actions of the characters. For example, in one scene, we see a twenty-second long take. In the scene, we see a closeup of the farmer's hands as he snaps off a handful of wheat, cracks it, and rolls it between his fingers. He blows away the chaff and pinches the kernels that remain. Malick then tilts up to a low-angled shot of the farmer looking down at the wheat, a shot that conveys the farmer's authority and power over the workers. The farmer pops the kernels into his mouth, chews them up, and rolls the wad around in his mouth. Satisfied, he spits it out and gives a nod, suggesting that the wheat is ready to harvest. Malick then cuts to a medium long shot of a preacher who has come out clad in a cassock and surplice, offering prayers of thanksgiving. The sun barely peers over the horizon, and the sunlight stretches for as far as the eye can see. We see a series of angles and medium long and long shots of workers, Linda, the farmer, and Abby and Bill listening to the prayer. Then Malick cuts to an extreme long shot of the workers, silhouetted by the backlight of the sun, and he pans across the vista of wheat (a camera movement he uses countless times in the film), as the workers walk away up the hill to begin work for the day. An extreme long shot of steam-driven tractors blasting their whistles is followed by another extreme low-angle shot of the farmer as he waves his arm, signaling for the harvest to begin. We then cut to a medium long shot of Abby furiously throwing wheat as it is mowed by the binder machine, as she gathers the sheaves together to make bunches or "shocks."

While this scene traces the dramatic opening of a harvest, emphasizing the farmer's judgment and power and the hard work that's involved in harvesting, aside from the shots of the farmer, whose low-angled shots emphasizes his own authority, the scene

deemphasizes man's sense of his own self-importance in the world. In his depiction of the workers at the beginning of the harvest, Malick's aesthetic encourages us to reflect. We see Malick investigating the nature of being, backing over the rules and limits of classical Hollywood cinema, seducing the viewer into a questioning and uncertainty and prompting a revelation about the nature of being. Overall, however, the camera distance and camera movement—the tilt and pan—along with mise-en-scene and cuts function to perplex the viewer yet provide him clues regarding Malick's central ideas in the film.

As has been described above, Malick often rejects the conventions of continuity editing, choosing, for example, to use long takes, a key alternative to continuity editing. This move invites the viewer to mull over what he has just witnessed and, more broadly, the significance of the characters' words and actions. As we have learned, Malick uses long takes in unusual ways throughout the film, and we saw an instance of this during the nearly two-minute barn shot in the sequence when Bill and Abby talk about taking advantage of the farmer's wealth. Malick, however, also uses other techniques besides the long take to further his central concerns in the film.

For example, Malick employs dissolves, slow fades to black and intellectual montage to promote some of his central concerns. Malick uses dissolves and slow fades to black many times in the film. For example, about seven minutes into the film, Malick shows a shot of the newly hired wheat sackers entering through the gates of the farm, while the farmer's house lingers in extreme long shot on the hill in the distance. Malick then slowly dissolves into a long shot of the farmer's house dominating the frame—a graphic match that includes the farmer's house in both shots. In other words, we see two images of the farmer's house at almost the same time. In this dissolve to a tighter shot of

the farmer's house, Malick shows the power of the farmer, who owns the entire estate. We witness the power of an outer force—in this case, class—as it presents itself to the penniless workers who have just arrived to begin work on the farm.

In another instance, Malick fades to black to elucidate his central concerns. Twenty minutes into the movie, Malick shows a twelve-second long shot in deep focus of five dark brown horses in a field in the falling snow, icy snow covering their backs. He fades to black for four long seconds, and then fades in to an extreme closeup in shallow focus of wheat gently blowing in the wind at dawn, holding on this shot for ten seconds. In these longer takes joined by a slow fade, Malick shows us forces in the world acting on the natural environment, outer forces that naturally affect the world. He shows snow falling from the sky, covering the horses with ice, and then the wind blowing the wheat. In these shots, Malick uses a long shot, extreme closeup, and slow fade to black to give another example of natural forces that affect the world, forces beyond the control of human beings, leaving the viewer wondering why he chose to interject these images which interrupt the flow of the primary narrative. In addition, the four-second fade, provides the viewer a reflective space in which to wonder even further about what Malick is trying to say. In these shots, Malick indicates that there are elements in the world out of man's control—here, the wind and snow. Malick includes these nature shots to suggest that there are other stories unfolding, stories and actions equally as significant as the one in which the characters are engaged; this device, as we shall see, recurs often in Malick's later films. Malick's shots of these elements appearing in nature don't advance the narrative of the film in any way; in fact, they delay and even minimize the story of characters, and, ultimately, they undermine the notion of man as the frontier hero or

another Horatio Alger. In other words, the scene deemphasizes man's sense of his own self-importance in and control over the world. During these shots and moments, where we are left looking at long takes of nature or a black screen, Malick's aesthetic encourages us to reflect on the nature of the film wherein we see Malick investigating the nature of being, backing over the rules and limits of classical Hollywood cinema, seducing the viewer into a questioning and uncertainty.

While the previous examples demonstrate Malick's use of long takes, dissolves, and fades to black to elucidate his central concerns, other scenes use many cuts in a form of intellectual montage to convey these same ideas. Each of the shots essentially follows the same pattern, showing an animal or some natural element being pushed upon by a greater force. For example, in a scene at the beginning of the harvest season, Malick cuts from a long shot of workers and wheat threshers harvesting in the fields to an individual high angled close-up shot of a cowering bunny tucked away in a patch of wheat. Malick continues this series of shots by cutting to a subjective shot from the bunny's point of view as it witnesses a low angled close-up of the thresher's menacing, rotating blades, concluding the sequence when he cuts back to another animal close-up, this time of a frantic pheasant hiding in the wheat. In this sequence, Malick provides a kind of reaction shot from the points of view of the bunny and the pheasant, forcing the viewer to make the connection between the destructive progression of the machines and the helplessness of the animals. Ultimately the viewer must understand that there are forces, in this instance machines, which act upon the powerless animals. Several times Malick comes back to this technique: once with a high-angled, omniscient shot from a cliff looking down at a pond in which a strong wind pushes the water, another of snow-covered horses

ambling across an icy field, and one in which golden wheat undulates to a ceaseless breeze—all of which prompt us to realize that external forces are acting upon various aspects of the natural world.

The melancholy mood evoked by the mise-en-scene and cinematography is underlined by the film's engaging use of sound. Malick uses convincing non-diegetic sounds such as non-diegetic music. The wistful piano and strings of Camille Saint-Saens' "Aquarium" from his *Carnival of the Animals* reappears throughout the entire film and creates feelings of loss and sadness during transitions from scene to scene.[61] "Aquarium" plays three times in the film, at the beginning during the opening credits, during Woodrow Wilson's whistle-stop tour, and at the end, when Linda escapes from the finishing school. In each instance, the music signifies class difference and melancholy emotions. For example, at the beginning of the film, we watch as twenty-five sepia-toned photographs dissolve in front of us. In the piece, we hear strings, two pianos, flute and glass harmonica, as we watch snapshots of turn-of-the-century urban, working-class life. The music casts a romantic glow on the images, while its connection with the social and leisure qualities of classical music starkly contrast to the poverty and labor depicted in the photographs. During the whistle-stop tour and when Linda escapes from the finishing school the music again creates feelings of loss and sadness—at the sight of the diminutive

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[61] "The Aquarium" was composed in 1886 as part of Saint-Saens' orchestral suite *The Carnival of Animals*, a collection of short pieces designed to depict zoological scenes. "The Aquarium" is associated with a privileged upper class, one that had the education, time, and financial means to attend concerts (Power 101). According to Richard Power, the piece uses long, melodic lines that gently rise and fall in wave-like patterns, and with slowly changing harmonies.…most of the rhythmic principles of the melody are appropriately long and of consistent values, although quick arpeggiated figures are played over these by pianos (102). This music evokes a languid, relaxed, dreamy feeling.

Wilson as the train passes through the countryside and for Linda, who is now left alone with no one to look after her in the world.

Malick also uses diegetic music in the film, in this case folk music, music which again calls attention to the class dichotomy in the film. For example, after the final day of harvesting, one of the workers is playing a song on the fiddle. In this scene, all of the workers enjoy an evening dance in front of a bonfire, celebrating the end of the harvest. The fiddler, musician Doug Kershaw, plays a Cajun song entitled "Swamp Dance." Kershaw plays the fiddle and sings wildly, illuminated from the glow of the bonfire. Linda, Abby, and even the upper-class farmer all participate in the festivities; however, Bill stands back, unable to enjoy the music. In the scene, workers are shown entertaining themselves with their own music, emphasizing the class dichotomy (after all, just over the hill, the farmer's huge mansion looms). Nevertheless, Bill stands back because he has convinced Abby to stay on the farm with the farmer. At this point, we see Abby dancing with the farmer, further ostracizing Bill from the affair. Overall, both the non-diegetic and diegetic sounds of the "Aquarium" and "Swamp Dance" depict class difference.

Besides the film's score, however, Malick also uses the diegetic sound of machines in an interesting way to emphasize their power, ultimately showing the viewer just how ineffective man is in relation to this outer force. For example, in the first scene, when Bill and the Mill Foreman argue with each other in the foreground, we see their lips moving but only hear the extremely loud clanging of hammers and the groans of the furnaces and kilns from which pour the glowing molten steel. Malick here goes against Hollywood conventions and chooses to eliminate the protagonist's words, opting instead

to accentuate the power and force of the machines. Malick seems to be suggesting through the loud grating machine noises that the advances of the industrial age are a mixed blessing—that although we gain things when machines do things easier and quicker than humans could by hand, machines create problems for humans, too.

Not only does Malick indicate the force of the machines by elevating the volume of their noise (a technique he reuses with most all machines: thrashers, binders, airplanes, and tractors), but he also later adjusts the soundtrack's volume to emphasize the force of the grasshoppers. When the plague descends on the farm, Malick takes several close-up shots of grasshoppers devouring the wheat. Malick elevates the volume of the shrieking grasshoppers and includes the ominous sound of wind instruments as cues that help us better understand the magnitude of the destruction. Here nature, not machines, exhibits power and destructiveness, which the volume of the sound accentuates. Naturally, the viewer is upset to see the farm destroyed, but, more importantly, the powerlessness of man, which was illustrated when opposed to machines, is also evident in opposition to nature. (While the machines extend man's power by allowing for more efficient harvesting of the wheat, the machines can't negate the power of nature. Nevertheless, all machines in the film are reddish-orange, just like the furnace we see at the beginning of the film and the fire that destroys the wheat farm).

Malick also relies more on non-diegetic voiceover narration than is typical in most classical Hollywood films. Linda's descriptions take on an affected, almost poetic quality, descriptions that elaborate on ideas that move beyond simple commentary on the plot. Through Linda's flat and emotionless diegetic voiceovers (a few of which appear to be simultaneous to the action and are at least a parallel commentary on the action), we are

able to develop a key to understanding the moral shortcomings and failures of the main characters, and yet we also develop a tragic understanding of and empathy for people, including her, whose lives are too ruled by suffering. Throughout the film, Linda's voiceovers tend to articulate a moral code, a code that she seems to have established by observing and listening to the people in the world around her. For example, after Bill, Abby, and Linda have fled Chicago and are reclining on top of a boxcar that is heading to Texas, Linda states (in her captivating Brooklyn accent):

> I met this guy named Ding Dong and he told me the whole earth is goin' up in flames. The flames will be comin' out of here and there. They'll just rise up. The mountains will go up in big flames. The waters will rise up in flames. There'll be creatures runnin' every which way, some of them burnt, half their wings burnin.' People are goin' to be screamin' and hollerin' for help. The people that have been good, they are goin' to go to heaven and escape all that fire. But if you've been bad, God don't even hear you. He don't even hear you talkin.'

Linda's early lines in the film are intuitive and foreshadow the uncontrollable fire and plague of grasshoppers that later destroy the farm. This voiceover also serves to articulate the consequences of characters' actions, especially those of her brother and the farmer. Bill, who kills the Mill Foreman and the farmer and initiates a deceitful marriage, clearly acts badly, and, therefore, God never hears or acquiesces to his desires for a better life, and he eventually "burns" for his actions. Linda's voiceover also suggests that the farmer, who was dying before the arrival of her brother and Abby, was actually being listened to—he was going to heaven because he had lived a good, honest

existence. The farmer, however, is ultimately unable to escape "all that fire" because he allows his own jealousy to overshadow his goodness. Because of Linda's voiceovers, we are more clearly able to understand that there is in fact a moral code that governs the world of the film, and without these voiceovers, we would be left only with the film's primary narrative to guide our judgment about the characters' actions.

Some of Linda's voiceovers also help us understand the human suffering endured by the constellation of characters and help us develop empathy for those who suffer. As mentioned earlier, before succumbing to his jealousy, the farmer is an inherently decent man. Linda recognizes this goodness and articulates his sensitivity to us in a way that we might not have gleaned without her voiceover:

> There wasn't no harm in him. You give him a flower—he'd keep it forever. He was headed for the boneyard any minute, but he wasn't really goin' around squawkin' about it, like some people. In one way I felt sorry for him, cause he had nobody to stand out for him, be by his side, hold his hand when he need the attention or somethin.' That's touchin.'

Besides her cognizance of the farmer's compassion, Linda's voiceover observations also recognize the pain and suffering of all the people in the film. The film may depict a class-structured society, but class insulates no one from suffering or death. As she, her brother, and Abby escape by boat down the river, Linda passes people on the riverbank, and says, "You could see people far off on the shore and it was far off and you couldn't see what they was doin.' They were probably callin' for help or somethin.' They were tryin' to bury somebody or somethin.'" Although Linda does not know any of the people she describes, she has an acute awareness of the hardship they all endure. Without

Linda's voiceovers, those workers and people who populate the shore might remain nothing but distant scenery, but because Linda is able to identify and articulate the suffering endured by these people, we are moved to care for their struggling existence.

Linda's haunting voiceovers also create an emotional link between her and the viewer, which serves to augment the overall emotional tone of the film. The cues provided by Linda's voiceovers encourage us to empathize with the complicated and flawed characters. In other words, we grow to feel for her because of her precocious insight into the melancholy nature of human existence. Delivered by a tiny fourteen-year-old, the voiceovers indicate a depth of awareness about the world that she should not have at such a young age. As a result, her comments deepen the feelings of abject sadness in the viewer about her and her place in the world: "I've been thinkin' what to do with my future. I could be a mud doctor, checkin' out the earth underneath." As Linda comments, we watch her slowly put her head to the ground and close her eyes. In this medium shot, Malick illustrates Linda's connection to the earth. Linda, who bounces from person to person and place to place, and suffers from the misery in a naturalistic world, is able to make a kind of spiritual connection which can be found in her ability to identify with the natural world. This spiritual connection is further exemplified later when we listen to her talk about how she enjoyed the farm and how she liked to "Roll in the fields, [and] talk to the wheat patches." The wheat patches, she explains, enter her sleep: "When I was sleeping they'd talk to me. They'd go in my dreams." Although we see that the forces of the world often prevent Linda from successfully living out the moral code that she articulates, because of her connection with as well as resilience to these

natural forces, she is better equipped to adapt to the world, and her voiceovers are central in conveying this to us.

Conclusion

Days of Heaven's stylistic presentation emerged from Malick's decision to ditch the film he shot during production. The film's pared-down plot, emphasis on shots of nature, and Linda's voiceovers result in the film's use of style to do the film's storytelling. *Days of Heaven* focuses on the natural world and emphasizes the emotions—lust, greed, jealousy, desire—that drive the characters. The film uses Biblical references, as its title implies, to suggest the hellish consequences for humans who try to control the universe. It explores the consequences for humans who think they can control their fate and/or the natural order of the universe that they live in. Malick does not attempt to turn the audience against his characters; rather, his film is more interested in the causal forces that produce these characters than suggesting that one character is responsible for the events in the film. Industrialism destroys nature. Indeed, nature destroys nature. When humans try to assert control over other natural systems, the end result is corruption, and humans and nature collide. In the film, greed is a function of Bill and Abby's upbringing in an industrialized, class-ridden world. The farmer's character is more gentle and sympathetic until he becomes inflicted with the same forces that drive Abby and Bill. And all three characters ultimately seem dominated by the inner drives and compulsions that we recognize in a naturalist universe.

At the beginning of the chapter, we learned that an unidentified person—as we see only the silhouette of his arm and finger—pointed toward the image of the Statue of Liberty and a subsequent shot of the immigrants being roped off by the officials. The

first thing this finger pointing does is hint to a careful viewer that America, ideally, is the land of liberty, equality, opportunity, and success. The Statue is a symbol of America, an emblem of hope for the immigrants. This mode of thinking, which promised all people, in the words of the Declaration of Independence, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," was rooted in the Enlightenment and its view that humans were rational beings capable of functioning to create a democratic society. However, the finger also points to the shot of the immigrants being roped off, oppressed by power and authority figures. By having the finger point both to the ideal (the Statue) and the reality (the restraints on liberty for the immigrants), Malick guides us to look deeper. Ultimately, this intimation of the Enlightenment view of humans is quite different from the film's depiction of human beings, rooted, as we have seen, in the naturalist view of humans driven by impulse and desire. The fact that the finger points to both the Statue of Liberty and the immigrants being roped off foreshadows to careful viewers that American dreams and the pursuit of happiness are relatively futile.

In the film, Malick asks questions and doesn't accept easy answers. He's interested in how human behavior works and how we find a place for ourselves in the world. While the man pointing may not have been Malick, I would argue that Malick the writer and director of the film—once again, the "architect"—leaves another message, one that Bill, Abby, and the farmer fail to recognize. The filmmaker leaves a clear, though complex message for the viewer; that is, in *Days of Heaven*, Malick "points" toward a central concern in his burgeoning aesthetic, a concern that reaches its maturity in *The Thin Red Line*, exposing for us through a reflective aesthetic that "general horizon out of which Dasein [man] understands both the 'totality of things which can be present at hand

within the world' and itself" (Malick, *Essence of Reasons* 32) to clarify why we must, and can, share specific notions about the purpose and validity of things in the world. Through his use of film form, Malick aims to provide a fundamental understanding within which things, people, and history all cohere within a shared horizon, a shared understanding of significances and purposes. Ultimately, in *Days of Heaven*, Malick wants to hold open a horizon to expose to us in the age of modernity our mode of being, a Western mode of self-assertion and instrumental thinking that has distorted the world, transforming it into objects to be manipulated and consumed. In this mode of self-assertion, says both Heidegger and Malick's second film, we have become forgetful of what it means to be human, forgetful of our relation to Being, that generative source that remains always and necessarily beyond our ability to comprehend fully. *Days of Heaven* exposes this forgetfulness by disorienting habits of perception to elicit a questioning and feeling of loss that can awaken a new sense of our relation to ourselves, other humans, nature, and Being—something we will see Malick doing as he further develops his aesthetic after a twenty-year absence in *The Thin Red Line*.

Chapter V
"What's your name kid?" The Enigmatic Voiceover in *The Thin Red Line*

After *The Thin Red Line's* first shot, a crocodile submerging itself underwater, several shots follow: the base of a huge tree in a jungle, shafts of light beaming down around it; a twisting camera shot from a worm's eye view up through a canopy of trees; a tilt up a tree with a snake hugging it in long loose coils; a crane and tilt up a tree's huge bare roots, and then a dissolve to vines strangling the life out of a tree. We then hear a disembodied voice asking, "What's this war in the heart of nature? Why does nature vie with itself—the land contend with the sea? Is there an avenging power in nature? Not one power, but two?" Shortly thereafter, Private Witt (Jim Caviezel) appears on screen in a medium shot rowing a canoe in the ocean, and six shots establish him as a primary, important character. Then we hear a disembodied voice saying:

> I remember my mother when she was dyin.' She looked all shrunk up and gray. I asked her if she was afraid. She just shook her head. I was afraid to touch the death I seen in her. I couldn't find nothin' beautiful or upliftin' about her goin' back to God. I heard people talk about immortality. But I ain't seen it. I wondered how it'd be when I died. What it'd be like to know that this breath now was the last one you was ever gonna draw. I just hope I can meet it the same way she did…with the same calm.

It's exceedingly easy for any spectator to equate the first disembodied voice with what at least initially seems like the next disembodied voice, the latter uttered by a character whose bodily presence has been established and who is soon shown speaking. The

inference is understandable in part because conventional films set up expectations for spectators, who will assume that a disembodied voice belongs to the first possible body that appears on the screen after it. Spectators expect filmmakers to provide exposition at the beginnings of films—to help them make sense of what is shown and heard. In most films such exposition follows a cause-and-effect pattern. So, if the filmmaker frustrates expectation by providing an effect for which there appears no cause, this immediately creates a desire to find that cause, and, quite logically, most spectators will seize upon the first plausible explanation to satisfy that desire. In the case of *The Thin Red Line*, the first voiceover is without cause or source—we see no body, no speaker—thus automatically provoking the spectator's curiosity about who the speaker is.

It's understandable, then, that viewers believe the first voiceover is Witt's. The viewer is encouraged to think of Witt as the source of the first voiceover because that voice and Witt's have noticeably Southern accents. In addition, the initial voiceover is accompanied by shots of a variety of natural images—trees, sunbeams, vines. Similarly, Witt's appearance also emphasizes the natural setting in which the islanders and Witt are living, thus again seeming to associate Witt with the opening shots and, by implication, with the first voiceover. As far as the words themselves are concerned, there are good reasons, too, to infer that Witt and the initial voiceover speaker are one and the same. The content of the first voiceover is philosophical and meditative; similarly, the first words that Witt speaks are a philosophical reflection on facing death with a sense of calm, spoken by a man whose bodily postures and gazes indicate someone in a reflective state of mind. As well, the first voiceover speaks about conflict and strife within nature, which at least parallels Witt's thoughts about death as he sits in a peaceful, paradisial

setting. At the end of the sequence, the American patrol boat arrives to disrupt Witt's Edenic haven, again recalling both the first voiceover and its simultaneous images of a snake coiled around a tree trunk and a mass of vines choking the life out of a massive tree. Malick seems to have taken care to violate some of cinema's usual visual "rules" to create two opening sequences that challenge and disrupt our expectations. Evidently, we will learn, the challenge proved too subtle. Nonetheless, the fact remains—in this case, the voices hold the key to explaining the movie's meaning.

Referring to the intriguing relationship between speaker and image created by the voiceover in film, Michel Chion devotes particular attention to the phenomenon of the acousmetre: "a talking and acting shadow—a voice that cannot be connected to a face," which, he argues, "becomes invested with magical powers as soon as it is involved, however slightly, in the image" (*Voice in Cinema* 23). In any film with an acousmetre, he says, tremendous importance lies in "whether or not [the body of the speaking voice] has been seen" (23). Chion and others have studied the power of the disembodied voice in many films, among those Terrence Malick's, whose works, commonly praised for their visual beauty, also have been singled out for their innovative uses of voiceover. In a discussion of "recent permutations of the voiceover in films," Chion recognizes Malick's attempt in *Badlands* to "bring new poetic power to the voiceover, breaking conventions of narration to destructure the spectator's point of view" (*Voice in Cinema* 56). He also discusses the "unusual game of hide-and-seek" in *Days of Heaven* that Linda's voiceover plays (*Voice in Cinema* 56). And, so, it is hardly surprising that much has been made of the voiceovers in *The Thin Red Line* because, as Chion says, "the voiceover or inner voice that is 'out of line,' whose relationship to the course of the narrative is non-linear,

is the most striking feature of Malick's cinema from *Badlands* on" (*TTRL* 53). It is surprising, however, that despite the consensus about the essential role that voiceovers play in all of Malick's work, only one critic (Rybin) has correctly attributed what I will call the most "poetic" voiceovers of *The Thin Red Line* (starting, for example, with the film's first words: "What's this war in the heart of nature? Why does nature vie with itself—the land contend with the sea?") to the character who speaks them: Private Edward P. Train (John Dee Smith). In fact, almost everyone who has written about the film has incorrectly assumed that all the "poetic" voiceovers are spoken by Private Witt. Without a recognition that there is an acousmetre in the film[62]—Train —whose powers and perspectives as the speaker of the most enigmatic voiceovers are at odds with the character he plays within the diegesis and which shift throughout the film, something important is lost. If, as Chion argues, "an entire image, an entire story, an entire film can...hang on the epiphany of the acousmetre"—the moment when the spectator realizes who the speaker of the voiceover is (*Voice in Cinema* 23)—then, of course, there is no epiphany if one doesn't realize whose voice is speaking. However, once the acousmatic voice is accurately recognized as Train's, not Witt's, a fresh realm of questions opens up—the epiphany invites new considerations of the film.

Ultimately, we must ask how recognizing Train as the speaker of an entire group of *The Thin Red Line's* most unusual voiceovers affects our understanding of the film. While the failure to identify this doesn't invalidate all the arguments made about the film

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[62] Technically, Train is a "partial" or perhaps "paradoxical" acousmetre, according to Chion's definitions. A paradoxical acousmetre is one "deprived of some powers that are usually accorded to the acousmetre; their lack is the very thing that makes them special" (*Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*"130). In other words, the primary ability of the body is intensified by his partial lack of a visible, delimited body.

by other scholars who think that the voiceovers are Witt's, it does require a reevaluation of voiceover within the film as a whole: the identification of Train as the speaker of certain voiceovers sheds a different light on the subject of Malick's use of Heidegger, and shows that in *The Thin Red Line*, Malick uses voiceover to raise questions about the extent to which people whose world is pervaded by an overwhelming technocratic rationality have forgotten and/or may be able to regain a relationship to "being" that can revitalize them.

That the initial voiceover speaker and Private Witt are not the same is an indisputable, even if previously unrecognized, fact. Close listening to the film's opening scenes establishes the clear distinctions in timbre between the first and second speaker sequences. The first speaker has a voice that is guttural and deeper or more textured than the second—which is first heard in voice-off and is nasal and higher-pitched.[63]

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[63] However, if a listener isn't able to detect the general differences in the timbre qualities of the voices, an auditory analysis performed by forensic linguist Phil Harrison identifies crucial objective differences between the first and second voices:
(Note: Words in capitals indicate a word class, while words in quotation marks are examples of words from the speakers)

1. Vowel in SKY: Train [the first speaker] monophthongises (more like a long 'aa'), in words like "why" or "vie"; Witt [the second speaker] has a diphthong /aI/ as in "I."
2. Morpheme -ing: Train drops [g] and has an alveolar [n], as in "avengin'"; Witt does not and has a velar [N], "uplifting."
3. Vowel in POT: Train is high-mid, rounded, as in "not" or "one"; Witt is much lower and unrounded, as in "God."
4. /nd/ clusters: Train has a weak to non-existent [d], "land" or "contend." become "lan'" or "conten'"; Witt's is stronger, as in "find."
5. Pitch and intonation: Overall, pitch is lower for Train. Also, Train's intonation is generally rising, while Witt's is falling. (Harrison, Personal Interview)

Harrison concludes that the voices are without question different, and he explains that the first speaker's vocal features are more stereotypically southeastern than the second's, (which is likely attributable to the fact that John Dee Smith grew up in Tennessee, and Caviezel is from the state of Washington). While Harrison's auditory analysis provides conclusive scientific evidence that the film's initial voiceover (and seven others) does indeed belong to Train and not Witt, perhaps the piece de resistance has been provided by John Dee Smith, the actor who plays Train, who when interviewed stated that he, in fact, speaks the eight voiceovers in the film (In addition, the English captions on the DVD version of the film identify Train

While the identity of the film's second voice is quickly aligned visually with the body of its speaker (Witt), the identity of the initial voiceover speaker is not, thus leaving a viewer who has detected the differences in the voices to wonder who it might be. The film will never attach Train's voiceovers to his diegetic character, yet the identity of the initial voiceover speaker is unveiled several scenes into the film, on the patrol boat where everyone awaits word to go ashore to fight. The camera cuts to below deck, to an exchange taking place between Sergeant Welsh (Sean Penn) and a nervous, fingernail biting (gesticulating) young soldier:

> I just can't help how damn scared I am, Sarge, all right? I can't help it. I got—you know my step daddy took a block and beat me, beat me when I was real little…and I, I was scared, and I used to run and I used to hide. Hell, I slept in the chicken coop a whole lotta nights, and, uh….I never thought it'd get no worse than that….but I'm—I'm livin' by the—by the minute over here. I'm countin' the seconds. Now we're gonna be landin', we're gonna be landin' soon. There's gonna be air raids. We're probably gonna die before we get off the beach. This place is—it's like a big floatin' graveyard.

Welsh, coolly trimming his hair, stops for a moment, looks around his mirror at the fidgety, babbling soldier, and asks, "What's your name, kid?" The soldier, so full of anxiety that he seems not to have even heard the question, blurts, "I wanna own an

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as the speaker of the initial voiceover as well as of many others; of course this is not something a viewer in the theater would be aware of). The DVD does not accurately list the appropriate voiceovers to Train.

automobile when I get out!" Welsh, now perturbed, glances over his shoulder, completely miffed, and asks again, more loudly and emphatically: "What's your name?" This time he gets an answer—as does the viewer—to the question of who utters the film's initial voiceover as the soldier answers in a stutter: "Ed—Edward—Edward P. Train." Welsh pauses and responds with an echo: "Train." The soldier continues on, asserting, apparently as a defense against fear, "The only things that are permanent.…is….is dyin' and the Lord. That's it. That's all you gotta worry about. This war ain't—this war ain't gonna be the end of me and it ain't gonna be the end of you, neither." While the stylistic and substantive features of the young Private Train's discourse in this scene differs radically from that of the film's initial words, the voices are one and the same. Those who can "hear" beyond the different levels of energy, sound volume, diction, pace, and degrees of reflectiveness between the two utterances should, at this point, be jolted into confusion: this breathless, whiny, chatterbox is the same person whose measured, whispered voice opened the film in an eloquent voiceover meditation.

This is the recognition and identification that most everyone who has written about the film has not made—and the error[64] is not without its consequences. Mistaking Witt to be the speaker of voiceovers that are in fact spoken by Private Train has led critics to attribute to Witt a greater role in creating the film's meanings than he deserves—and they must engage in some flawed reasoning to do so.

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[64] Unfortunately, the list is long: Kaja Silverman, Roger Ebert, Michel Chion, Tom Whalen, Martin Flanagan, Marc Furstenau and Leslie MacAvoy, James Morrison and Thomas Schur, Robert Silberman, David Davies, Lloyd Michaels, Hannah Patterson—just to name a few.

The burden of this mistake should not, perhaps, rest solely on the shoulders of critics, as in some ways the mistake is easy to understand. After all, several visual features of the film's opening sequences encourage viewers to associate the speaker of the initial voiceover with the character of Witt. Showing how this is accomplished not only at least partially excuses the misidentification but, more importantly, also demonstrates the subtlety of Malick's art and his "defiance" of conventional filmmaking.[65]

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[65] For example, Kaja Silverman is correct that one of the film's central issues is its exploration of "the affective conflict that knowledge of mortality precipitates in every psyche" (336). She says that "We wonder about our world when the question of why it should exist becomes urgent for us and when we become capable of dwelling within the space of mystery that question creates" (323), and that the film tries to provoke viewers into that state of mind—of wonder and questioning—by showing us men in wartime coming right up against that moment of urgency. In her reading of the *The Thin Red Line* as a presentation of Heideggerian philosophy, she says, "Every time we decide to embrace our mortality…we immediately face a new choice. We must now decide whether we will make nothing out of the 'nothing,' or whether we will progress from the 'nothing' to Being itself…..If it is through Walsh [sic] that Malick clarifies the first of these options, it is through Wit [sic] that he clarifies the second (336). She proceeds, then, to explain how Witt's "journey toward Being" is dramatized "through a series of voice-over sequences" (336)—which, however (with one exception), are not spoken by Witt, as she incorrectly states, but by Train. By the end of the film, she says, referring to the final voiceover, "we are not surprised…by Wit's [sic] capacity to speak beyond the grave….By now, we too understand Wit [sic] to be part of an indeterminate Being. And, in our unusual proximity to this Being, even our habitual assertions have turned to questions" (340). Thus she argues that we identify ourselves with the character of Witt, who teaches us that "we can apprehend what we are only by thinking beyond our own being[;] we can affirm the world only though a very particular pair of eyes" (340). What's intriguing, here, is that Silverman has arrived at an accurate conclusion about the film and the state of mind it encourages the viewer to inhabit, but has done so by incorrectly interpreting the path by which the viewer is encouraged to arrive there. In order to make her analysis work, for example, she has to assert that viewers will not be disturbed by Witt' uttering the film's final voiceover words after his death, and that we're to imagine that his speaking from beyond the grave is an example of the "thinking beyond our own being" to get to the larger understanding of Being that we are supposed to adopt within ourselves. But it is disconcerting to viewers when characters who die within the narrative seem to speak after they're dead, and thus it's not so certain as she imagines that viewers would not be taken aback by Witt doing so if they thought of <u>him</u> as the final voiceover speaker. Moreover, if Witt is being held up as the model for viewers to identify with, as Silverman argues, a troubling question arises: is the way of thinking that he demonstrates—which occurs after his death—accessible to us as living beings? In other words, wouldn't the final conclusion be instead that his supposed affirmation of Being is <u>not</u> attainable <u>in this world</u>—thus favoring, overall, the darker frame of mind that Welsh comes to? And, finally, if that were the case, then what sense could we make of the shining hopefulness of the film's final words and images?

Like Silverman's, so many of the scholarly discussions of *The Thin Red Line* are nicely on target in the way they clarify our knowledge and understanding of the film's overall meanings. And yet, when they start to talk about how those meanings are created, most also strain the limits of logic because of their

As noted above, Malick has demonstrated an interest in the philosophy of Heidegger. Furstenau and MacAvoy, Silverman, and some others have specifically identified the Heideggerian nature of the film, calling it an example of "Heideggerian cinema" (*TCOTM* 174), and arguing that it is difficult "to characterize the state of mind into which *The Thin Red Line* throws us without invoking Heideggerian metaphors" (324). In their recognition of the film's Heideggerian concerns, these critics have done

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mistake about the voiceover speaker. Reading these explanations is like being engrossed in a friend's story and then watching him experience the feeling of suddenly having something "just on the tip of his tongue" that he just can't find the words for. You see his brows knit, forehead wrinkle, eyes squint, and finally his shoulders shrug as he says, "Well, maybe it'll come to me later." You hoped the words would come to his mind, so that you, too, could know what he was trying to say—but are left either hanging in frustration or offered a rambling substitute. Similarly, the critical analyses of the film convey this sort of "reaching": as they seek ways to explain what they know about its meanings, the writers come up short. Their explanations are either frustratingly absent or sound somewhat vague and "muddy," never stating precisely what they mean—and what their readers want to understand.

Even worse, some arguments nearly unravel altogether under the weight of the error. In their discussion of the cinematic techniques Malick employs to bring his themes into presence for viewers, Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit argue, for example, that "Malick's masterpiece…explicitly presents itself as a reflection on the presence of evil in the world" (128), and they identify the film's use of voiceover as one of the primary means by which it raises "questions….about the killing of men and the destruction of nature in war" (129). While they recognize that the questioning voiceovers are "crucial to the film's sense," they, like every other commentator on this film, attribute them to Witt—and in so doing become unable to articulate how they play the crucial role that they do. Bersani and Dutoit's conclusions, become, finally, very difficult to decipher: "These questions are asked not in order to be answered, but in order to help us to understand the extensibility of being that can be voiced only as that which it is not, as that which always fails to be adequate to the film's vision" (171). While they may construct a rather elaborate and subtle argument in their article overall, one thing they do not do is make clear how the voiceovers function in the film—and in failing to do so, their reasoning obscures rather than clarifies.

They are certainly not alone. Even Michel Chion, whose expertise regarding sound and voice in cinema is justifiably well respected, falters in his arguments because of having misidentified Witt as the speaker of voiceovers that don't belong to him—and because in so doing doesn't distinguish any of the film's voiceovers clearly enough from one another. He says "The inner voice passes from one to the next, always moving on, so that these voices that are closed to each other at the same time combine into the modulated meditation of a single collective consciousness. They are like a single text that the voices share between them, like a shared reading—now whispered, now more peremptory, or more anxious" (*TTRL* 57). Chion considers all the voiceovers to be spoken by characters within the diegesis, and bundles them all together as he fits them into his understanding of one of the film's themes that "it is out of extreme human isolation and insularity (each man is an island) that 'togetherness' can emerge" (57). What has happened is that his and others' critical analyses have, in missing the Train voiceovers, rendered themselves unable to contend effectively with the film's voiceovers overall and thus have gone astray. It's a bit like they've been trying to knock a nail into a plank using a screwdriver instead of a hammer— the wrong tool just cannot get the job done—not without disfiguring or splintering the surface.

substantial work to identify how his philosophy influences its themes. Silverman, for example, noting Heidegger, explains that "To be a human, he tells us, is to be 'held out' into the 'nothing'—into the void of that nonbeing out of which we have emerged and to which we will return" (324). Malick's film, says Silverman, "suggests" this proposition from Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics" because "the 'nothing' hits a frontline soldier in the face with every step he takes" (326). In their discussion of Heidegger, Furstenau and MacAvoy identify a critical aspect of his thought, saying that

> human beings become forgetful of what it means to be human, which means understanding oneself as standing in a particular relation to Being, a relation that actually connects us with all other beings. Thus, the forgetfulness of our humanity goes hand in hand with a forgetfulness of Being, and this is to be overcome through a reawakening of the questions of Being, which involves bringing human beings back to themselves as human through reminding them of their mortality, their finitude, their existence. (179)

They say that in invoking themes from Heidegger's "What Are Poets For," Malick's war film "illustrates technological thinking and the alienation from Being that it produces and shows how, when this alienation is at its most acute—namely in war—the question of Being may be reawakened" (180).

In this chapter, I analyze *The Thin Red Line's* formal systems, arguing that Malick uses the war genre as a way to explore how the ideology of American cultural myths, in conjunction with a decidedly Heideggerian technocratic rationality, has created loss and separation of the men from themselves, other beings, and from a connection with any

larger sense of Being. Most reviewers have classified *The Thin Red Line* as a war film and, in general, have complained about its failures as an example of that genre. For instance, *New York Times* critic Janet Maslin and *Chicago Sun Times* critic Roger Ebert both comment on the film's rambling, meandering narrative, a black mark against any film that aspires to belong to the war genre. Ebert, in particular, believes that confusing voiceovers interrupt the skillfully conducted battle scenes. Even a more scholarly review by Tom Whalen that appeared in *Literature/Film Quarterly* bitterly criticizes the film's problematic status within the war genre, though he admits the film possesses some of the "classic" features of war films. Most of the discourse about this film has not done it justice, for while we can argue that *The Thin Red Line* fits, to some extent, within the war film template, and we can also argue that it would be more correct to see it as an anti-war film. To categorize it definitively as either misses the ways that it steps outside of these genres/subgenres and fails to consider adequately a crucial concern of the film: its Heideggerian philosophical investigation of the nature of being (Being).[66] Even the few who have addressed this are unable to pin down just how Malick manipulates the elements of film, especially the much-maligned voiceovers, to disclose the limitations of the individual characters' worldviews and to call attention, in turn, to the ways any audience member may be limited by his or her own horizons, which are inherently entwined within and defined by—as Heidegger suggests—the epistemological rationality of western metaphysics that inhibits ontological thinking.

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[66] The film's unwillingness to employ the conventions of the genre it resembles (the war film) is similar to the way *Days of Heaven* refuses to follow the conventions of the love story or western.

Context

The context in which *The Thin Red Line* was produced, shot, and edited is quite different than the context surrounding both *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*. During the late 70s and early-mid 90s, the era Malick missed during his twenty-year absence from filmmaking, America underwent a number of changes. The late 70s saw American culture and its films, such as *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978) and *Apocalypse Now* (Oliver Stone, 1979), oppose the Vietnam war, a focus of popular contestation in America in the late 60s to early 70s. However, according to Ryan and Kellner, "In the decade following the end of the war, America's military posture shifted from doubt to assertiveness, as the liberal tide of the mid-seventies receded and a rightist current came to dominate American political life" (196). The 80s saw significant transformations in the nation's political culture. It became a much more conservative nation than in the 70s, turning to right-wing policies that were buttressed by the administration of Ronald Reagan. There was a turn "occurring in American culture at the time, a turn whose trajectory intersects eventually with the rise of the New Right as a force in American politics and with the renewal of militarism during the Reagan eighties" (Ryan and Kellner 194). In this context, Hollywood produced such conservative, rightist, and revisionist films as *First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982), *Uncommon Valor* (Ted Kotcheff, 1983), and *Missing in Action* (1984), films that tried to revise the negative image of Vietnam that appeared in some films of the later 1970s. In the 90s, this more conventional approach to war films returned to World War II with Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), a film that contributed to the same cultural celebration of World War II veterans apparent in Tom Brokaw's book of the same year, *The Greatest*

Generation. Like the revisionist Vietnam films from the early 1980s, *Saving Private Ryan* was more cinematically conventional and politically conservative than the late 1970s Vietnam films.

The Thin Red Line, however, is not a direct repudiation of conservative or liberal politics; rather, it seems to elude any ideological position altogether. In fact, the film follows the plan outlined in the letter to President Johnson in 1967 that Malick helped coauthor about the war in Vietnam. As we have learned, in that letter, the tone is thoughtful, not argumentative, and the Rhodes scholars explain that "because they lack access to vital information, they chose to ask questions rather than make criticisms or recommendations" (Schmidt A2). In the letter, the Rhodes scholars explore the facts about the policy in Vietnam as they were laid out by President Johnson, and then *ask questions* about those facts in order to expose discrepancies with what the Administration has stated about the War. It seems that the scholars aim to address the facts so as to realign the Administration's perspective on them—all to reduce confusion and stubbornness on both sides in hopes of reaching a consensus regarding the aims of the war in Vietnam. Here we see Malick, concerned about his times, proposing with the other signatories that imagination and flexibility be used to come to terms with contradictory positions and perspectives in American culture by asking questions rather than making judgments. This orientation—asking questions, stressing imagination, and encouraging intellectual flexibility—becomes evident in Malick's *The Thin Red Line*, a movie that eludes typical leftist or rightist ideological readings.

As Malick was trying to get his third feature film production underway, a number of factors within the film industry created conditions so that more experienced

filmmakers such as Malick could still make bigger budget, though more challenging, movies. As we all know, Malick's spent twenty years between films—during the 80s and early 90s—which marks one of the most anomalous careers in American filmmaking. Malick's return to filmmaking was in some quarters one of the most eagerly anticipated comebacks in contemporary cinema history. Although Malick had been acclaimed as a visual poet rather than as a director of commercial entertainment, the coverage of his return in specialist film magazines and in broadcast media demonstrated a considerable amount of public interest in a director whose reputation as an auteur had been established with *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*. When *The Thin Red Line* opened in 1998, Malick was one of several other key 70s directors—Spielberg, George Lucas and Stanley Kubrick—who also released films that year.

The economic conditions of the 70s, however, diverged from those when Malick made his third feature film. As we have learned, Malick made *Badlands* for $350,000 at a time when the major studios were giving control to creative and often youthful auteurs who were making more personal films. As Thomas Schatz has explained, this period of experimentation diminished in American cinema following the box-office success of conventional Hollywood commercial films like *Jaws* and *Star Wars* crafted by Spielberg and Lucas.

While Malick was absent in the 80s, Hollywood amalgamated the gains of the post-*Star Wars* era by focusing its resources on sequels and what Justin Wyatt calls "high-concept" blockbusters—films that could be described (and sold) with a simple catchy phrase. Multinational conglomerates like Sony acquired key studios, folding them into media empires, and a series of high-profile mergers and acquisitions registered a

profound impact upon the Hollywood landscape. These institutional changes had consequences for the artistic freedom of some filmmakers. Despite some distributors of independent films that still encouraged personal vision (see Prince 117-18), when Malick returned in the mid-90s, American cinema's industrial landscape was very different.

Perhaps because of the shifting nature of the Hollywood film industry, less hospitable to the maverick auteurs of the early 70s, Malick vanished, severing his ties to Hollywood. Instead, he wandered the world. As time passed, his disappearing act became the stuff of myth. Cinephiles who loved *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven* yearned to see another similar film. As Peter Biskind says in *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, "The thirteen years between *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967 and *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino) in 1980 marked the last time it was really exciting to make movies in Hollywood" (17). Malick's films had helped define Hollywood in the 70s; the times that followed were defined instead by the absence of directors like him.

After completing *Days of Heaven*, Malick embarked on *Q*, a film about the origins of the universe (a film related to what became *The Tree of Life*). At the time, Paramount was run by Charlie Bluhdorn, the chief executive of the studio's corporate parent, Gulf + Western. Bluhdorn, who loved *Days of Heaven*, gave Malick carte blanche on *Q*. However, according to Paul Ryan, a cinematographer on the project, "He [Malick] was thinking more in terms of symphony, rather than film" (152). The *Q* project, however, went on forever, and people in Hollywood assumed that Malick couldn't finish it.

When Malick started spending time in Europe, members of the crew started leaving to take other jobs. Then Bluhdorn died in 1983, which began a power struggle

for control of the studio. Nearing forty, Malick grew disenchanted; he moved to Paris, cut off his old ties, and went underground.

Marketing also changed the face of the industry, thanks to *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), *Jaws*, and the first *Star Wars* trilogy. Many careers, such as Robert Altman's, were halted prematurely as the Hollywood Reniassance came to a close.[67] Spielberg and Lucas began specializing in blockbusters and did well in the 80s. Meanwhile, nobody knew why Malick vanished. Rumors circulated that he was in Nepal. Others said he was cutting hair in Paris. The longer he was gone, the more his myth grew. According to critic Andrew Sarris, Malick is "one of those people who have become a cult figure because he has done so little….He hasn't made any other movies, so people can say, 'Oh, for the days of *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*'" (153).

To support himself, Malick worked as a script doctor. He wrote an early screenplay draft of *Great Balls of Fire!* about musician Jerry Lee Lewis. He remarried and got divorced. In time, he grew nostalgic for Texas, and in the mid 80s moved back to Austin. According to an old friend from St. Stephen's Episcopal, "My impression was that he thought absolutely unprincipled people were running the industry…It was like he

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[67] According to Biskind, William Friedkin, Peter Bogdanovich, Hal Ashby, Paul Shrader, Bob Rafelson, and Arthur Penn "all went down" (409). Said William Friedkin, "*Star Wars* swept all the chips off the table. What happened with *Star Wars* was like when McDonald's got a foothold, the taste for good food just disappeared. Now we're in a period of devolution. Everything has gone backward toward a big sucking hole" (Biskind 344). Robert Altman worked in small-scale movies completely outside of Hollywood until reemerging with *The Player* in 1992.

wanted to shuck off that part of his life. Because of his notoriety, this required that he simply not admit to it. He wouldn't talk about Hollywood" (Thorpe 153).[68]

His path back to Hollywood, however, was an unusual one. Malick might never have made another movie if it wasn't for the persistence of two little known Broadway producers who wooed him for a decade (127). Bobby Geisler and John Roberdeau were not Hollywood insiders but, rather, hustlers who wanted to get into the movie business. In the 70s, Geisler moved to L.A. and looked up Malick after seeing *Badlands* and tried to interest Malick in a screenplay he had optioned. Malick apparently declined.

Later, Geisler moved to New York, where he met Roberdeau, who is from Austin. In 1988, they tracked down Malick in Austin and asked him to write a screenplay of *The White Hotel*, by D. M. Thomas. Malick declined but suggested he was interested in *The Thin Red Line*. After talking to author James Jones's widow, Gloria, Geisler and Roberdeau secured the rights to the novel (154).

Always self-promoters, Geisler and Roberdeau have claimed credit for Malick's return to film—though apparently Malick disagreed. According to Thorpe, Malick's contract on *The Thin Red Line* stipulated that no one could visit the set without his permission, which he never granted to Geisler and Roberdeau. Without the two, however, the project might never have gotten off the ground. According to Geisler, "It didn't take, as we had presumed it would, two or three or even four years for Malick to bubble back up. It occupied most of the decade" (154)

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[68] Unless otherwise indicated, the information about Malick's return to filmmaking and his involvement in *The Thin Red Line* is drawn from Helen Thorpe's useful profile on Malick, "The Man Who Wasn't There," which appeared in *Texas Monthly* in December, 1998.

Malick completed a first draft of the screenplay in April 1989. Apparently still unhappy with the screenplay, he put it aside. The two producers then commissioned him to write a play, *Sansho the Bailiff*.[69] Says Geisler, "We wanted to keep the machinery moving, because we felt like we were on to something together.…If he wasn't yet ready to direct *The Thin Red Line*, then, Lord, let's not let him out of our clutches" (154).

Eventually, Malick worked alternately on *The Thin Red Line*, *Sansho the Bailiff*, and a third project, *The English-Speaker*. For his work, the producers paid Malick $1 million, money they had attained from an investor:

> Juggling three projects allowed Malick to pick something up and put it down, which suited his creative process. If a vast gulf separated Geisler and Roberdeau from the Hollywood moguls they longed to become, that must also have appealed to Malick. He could take their checks and never feel he was doing business with the people he had left behind. Perhaps Malick didn't understand that Geisler and Roberdeau were banking everything on the dream of orchestrating his return to moviemaking. (154)

In 1995, Geisler and Roberdeau needed money and decided to move forward with *The Thin Red Line*. According to Roberdeau, "Quite frankly, it was getting increasingly impractical to be so solicitous of Terry….So we said, 'We're going to go make this movie now, Terry, aren't we?'" (154). Geisler and Roberdeau took Malick's script to Hollywood, and they contacted Malick's former agent, Mike Medavoy, who was then

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[69] This was a planned American remake of the 1954 Mizoguchi film.

starting a company called Phoenix Pictures within Sony Entertainment. Says Medavoy of Geisler and Roberdeau, "These guys were always living on the edge of extinction—without money…so they asked me for $100,000 to get an option on all their projects" (154).

When Geisler and Roberdeau brought in Medavoy, they lost control of the project they had committed so much time to, since Medavoy brought in George Stevens, Jr., Malick's early Hollywood mentor, as executive producer. Asked who brought Malick back to directing, Medavoy says, "I don't know that anybody persuaded Terry to go back to work. I think it's pretty hard to persuade Terry to do anything" (155). What is clear is that after spending twenty years away from filmmaking, Malick agreed to direct *The Thin Red* Line, a movie that was going to cost $52 million—about fifteen times more than *Days of Heaven*.

Considering the fates of such peers as Peter Bogdanovich, William Friedkin, and Michael Cimino, people asked questions about how Malick would fit into the new landscape of American film and how his aesthetic would sit with audiences. For *The Thin Red Line*, Malick negotiated a budget of $52 million, an exceptional amount of money, considering the commercial failure of *Days of Heaven*. When word spread that Malick was going to direct again, a number of Hollywood male leads jumped to get a part in the film, attracted to the idea of working with a film legend from the 70s. According to Thorpe, George Clooney said, "I told Terry I would carry the hammer box if he wanted me to" (127). Malick cast Clooney, Sean Penn, John Cusack, John Travolta, and Woody Harrelson, among others, for *The Thin Red Line*. With Malick's return and this group of celebrities, the film received great press attention.

For those critics who supported Malick, Malick's comeback would crystallize a hoped-for return to the Hollywood Renaissance and its proclivity for artistic personal films that achieved commercial success. When Spielberg, in some ways the anti-Malick in terms of his industriousness, public recognition, and commercial success, released his own World War II movie, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), just months before *The Thin Red Line*, the stakes were raised even further.

In fact, there may be no better foil than Spielberg to reveal exactly who Malick is and why his films are worth watching. Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* has been the highest grossing war film.[70] The release of Spielberg's film ensured that Malick's film would be scrutinized next to Spielberg's again (critics compared Malick's *Badlands* to Spielberg's *The Sugarland Express*). According to Medavoy, "That's exactly what I worry about: that people are going to try to compare it to *Saving Private Ryan*….It's not *Private Ryan*. It's Malick's version of the subject— it's that mixture of poetry and prose." Rather than busily chatting up his new movies in interviews—as Spielberg did for *Saving Private Ryan*—Malick refused, as usual, to give interviews before *The Thin Red Line* was released. He even had written into his contract with distributor 20th Century Fox that he could not be photographed. As a result of his reclusive nature, the studio had a difficult time marketing the movie before it was released.

In fact, the website features statements from studio executives and famous actors demonstrating that from the beginning, Fox chose to take a different slant than, say,

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[70] See http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=savingprivateryan.htm, which says that the domestic gross of *Saving Private Ryan* was $216 million. *The Thin Red Line* earned $36.4 million, with $98 million worldwide.

Saving Private Ryan. Spielberg's film had been marketed as a film that would give the viewers a chance to remember and pay tribute to World War II, whereas *The Thin Red Line* was "marketed as a cineaste's dream, an aesthetic event, its campaign stressing the wizardry of a genuine auteur surrounded by star acolytes.…Fox gambled that it could afford to play down the film's generic profile amongst the canon of war films….while simultaneously resisting *Saving Private Ryan*'s dubious (but successful) marketing tactic of engaging public sentiment for the war" (Flanagan 130). In other words, Malick's reputation as an auteur back from the wilderness was the primary promotional aspect of the film, a strategy that ultimately didn't sit well with audiences who primarily desired a conventional war film.

Production History

A filmmaker's position, experience, and status within the film industry helps determine the level of constraints that he works under, and during the New Hollywood. Malick still managed to exercise an unusually high level of creative control on his third film. As in *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*, Malick's involvement with the film production extended from the initial conceptualization of the film in 1989 through the entire production process until the film's release in late December 1998. *The Thin Red Line* was shot on-location in Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands, and Queensland, Australia. Malick shot the film for eighty days in Australia and twenty in Guadalcanal (Pizzello 45). Malick brought the film in on time within the $52 million budget.

John Dee Smith said in an interview that he got the part as the voiceover narrator of the film by accident. According to Smith, one day on the set, Malick was planning to shoot a million-dollar scene, one with many explosions. Smith says that the actors were

supposed to rush out into the grass on cue; however, Smith made a mistake and ran at the wrong time, ruining the shot and wasting somewhere around a million dollars. Beside himself and crying, Smith says he was then approached by Malick who asked him his name. After consoling Smith, Malick, who is well-known for taking advantage of accidents, said that he thought he might have a larger role for Smith in the movie. As luck would have it for Smith, he received a slip under his door the next morning asking that he show up for a scene taking place below the deck of the US patrol boat with none other than Sean Penn. After that, Malick asked Smith to come to Los Angeles after shooting had wrapped to do voiceover for the film. According to Smith, he spent months repeating lines, for example, "What's this war in the heart of nature?"

As in his other films, voiceover was central:

> Terry wanted this film to be about all men, not just individual soldiers and voicing their most personal inner thoughts was the technique he chose to tell their story. That's why he was with us throughout the final mixing sessions. He wanted his intended feeling of being in a semi-dream state to be expressed through the combination of sound effects and music so there was nothing particularly distracting around the edges of the screen to take attention away from the focus of the central characters. That meant that although we could utilize all six channels of the Dolby SRD format in which we created the master soundtrack, the surrounds were generally used only in an atmospheric, discreet way and the narrative drive came out of the front speakers. (Ankeney)

Whereas Malick had previously worked with several cinematographers during *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*, he worked only with cinematographer John Toll on *The Thin Red Line*. According to Toll, there was a specific visual inspiration for the look of the film: *Images of War: The Artist's Vision of World War II*, edited by Ken McCormick and Hamilton Darby Perry, which presents two hundred paintings by different artists (Pizzello 45-46). Says Toll, they were artists who spent time on the front lines and depicted the scenes they had witnessed in different and unique painting styles. While Malick didn't try to reproduce these pieces of art, says Toll, the images gave good ideas about color schemes for the film—the images served as guides for the kind of atmosphere they were after (Pizzello 46). In the film, Malick also used a handheld camera, more than he did in *Days of Heaven*. Speaking about the camera movements in the movie, Toll says, "we talked about making the viewers feel as if they were watching this story from close up, almost as if they were participants. A lot of what the characters go through emotionally is unspoken, so it was necessary to convey those moments in a visual way. We wanted the camera to tell the story and yet somehow be part of the story—almost as if the audience was making the same journey as the characters" (Pizzello 47). Toll talked with Malick extensively about creating a sense of movement through the camera, saying:

> we had talked about various ways to create that kind of style, but we never settled on a single approach. On the first couple of days of the schedule, we shot some scenes with a moving camera on a dolly, and some with stationary cameras incorporating conventional coverage and angles. It was all technically correct. And there was nothing wrong with the scenes, but when we viewed the footage, it sometimes felt very 'staged' and

> overly structured for the camera….we decided to loosen up our approach a bit. As a result there's a lot of Steadicam and handheld work….We allowed the camera to explore a bit, and Terry encouraged the actors to try something different if they felt like it. At times, the camera would drift from one actor to another; we might not get conventional masters or coverage, but it didn't seem that important. Every scene became a unique situation, and we just shot what seemed to be most appropriate for a particular sequence. We allowed the camera to follow the emotional thread of a scene without worrying about much else. What seemed to emerge from that was a feeling of unpredictability which completely supported the idea that Guadalcanal was a strange and dangerous place that these characters suddenly found themselves in….Terry got into that style of shooting immediately; he has a rather spontaneous and unpredictable personality, so the idea made a lot of sense to him. (Pizzello 47)

For a time, Malick actually considered using artificial lighting. Says Toll, " We did haul some lights into the jungle, but when we turned them on, they completely changed the character and nuances of the natural light. It was beautiful in there, but we were dealing with extremely low light levels. There were subtleties in the colors and gradations of the natural light that completely disappeared when we mixed in any artificial fill. There was plenty of contrast, though, because the sunlight that did filter in created great hot highlights" (Pizzello 53). Toll did, however, "use indirect light bounced

from muslin or beadboard to lift faces" in some scenes shooting the characters (Pizzello 53).

Malick spent thirteen months editing the film. According to editor Billy Weber (who also worked with Malick, along with editors Leslie Jones and Saar Klein), collaborating with Malick after twenty years was essentially the same as it was during *Days of Heaven*, saying, "He is the same person and approached the film in the same way as he did on his other two films. He is very meticulous, thoughtful, nervous, and he wants the films to be as close to his own thoughts and feelings as possible. This causes the editing to take a lot of time and effort, but is very rewarding in the end" (Cercel). According to Weber, the film needed three editors because there was a tremendous amount of footage to deal with—well over a million and a half feet. Weber says, "We also had a tremendous amount of voiceover and music we were experimenting with. The film required more than one person cutting it so Terry would feel comfortable that he had exhausted all attempts at different ways of approaching each scene" (Cercel). According to Weber there wasn't a clear guideline in the screenplay on the way that all the elements of the film were to be integrated. However, the film was clearly a Malick film and was part of the way he views the world in relation to his movies: "We had an ethnographic film unit shooting in Guadalcanal a month before he ever went to shoot on location. Terry was always shooting elements of nature throughout the entire production. That was something that was always budgeted and was always part of what we planned to do, but it wasn't actually scripted" (Cercel). Weber used the Avid non-linear editing system, a video and audio editing digital workstation system which can perform random access, non-destructive editing on the film. Malick didn't like the Avid at first, says Weber,

because it was so fast: “He was used to coming up with an idea and being able to walk away and not having it be done for a little while. Now he couldn’t leave the room” (Cercel).

According to Weber, the music was very important: “We pretty much supplied the themes to Hans Zimmer that he used. Then he was able to orchestrate them into the score. A tremendous amount of that came from Terry. I think it’s Hans’ best score but I think that Terry and those of us in the cutting room are as responsible for it as anyone else” (Cercel). Weber also notes that “We were working with the music from the first cut on without Hans—just me, Leslie, Saar, and Terry experimenting with different pieces of music which we found ourselves. A tremendous amount of work went into it…Then we showed it to Hans and explained what we would like” (Cercel). As in his other films, with *The Thin Red Line* Malick was involved with the selection of music.

Claude Letessier, a sound designer on the film, says breaking Hollywood conventions was part of the plan for the film, which we see in the scene where Witt dies. According to Letessier, when Witt is shot by the Japanese, “the studio wanted to hear the bang of a gun and the body falling…[However]…the main element in the film is the sound of waves. When he was hit, I wanted to hear a massive wave sweeping him away. This mixed with the next scene, which showed him swimming early in his life. After a fight with the Hollywood sound supervisor, the sound of the wave eventually made up 70 per cent of the track with the gun popping underneath” (“Wall of Sound”).

In sum, Malick had much control over his third film’s production due to the various socio-historical and industrial conditions that existed within Hollywood at the time. But *The Thin Red Line* could not have been made if Malick had not had critical

success with his first two films. His ability to exercise creative control also related to the high level of anticipation, inside the industry and out, concerning his return to filmmaking. Attention to the production history of *The Thin Red Line* is thus a key consideration as one seeks to understand the film, not least of all its unconventional use of narrative and cinematic style.

Aligning Personal Visions

The narrative of *The Thin Red Line* helps Malick develop his concerns. The film very loosely parallels the story of the New Testament's Gospel according to John. The Gospel's authorship is anonymous—much like the primary voiceover narrator is in the film. The book begins with the witnessing and affirmation by John the Baptist (Train) and concludes with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, paralleling the events we witness with Private Witt. While we don't witness the resurrection of Witt, Train provides a way of being in the world that parallels that of Jesus.

Without question, *The Thin Red Line* employs, yet thwarts, conventions of the war genre. Some of the essential features of a war film include a group of military men (within a clearly established hierarchy), often from different ethnic groups who form a bond as they fight as a team. The war film also involves a hero who helps unify the group of men and opposes individualism when it threatens the good of the team. According to Thomas Sobchack, the hero of the war film "is always in the service of the group, of law and order, of stability, of survival, not of himself but of the organization or the institution, no matter how individual his activities" (202). Without question, several scenes in *The Thin Red Line* do include these elements. Nonetheless, in *The Thin Red Line* and each of Malick's other films, we also find him subtly exposing the flaws in

American cultural myths such as the Adamic myth, the myth of the frontier, and the myth of regeneration through violence.

The Battle of Guadalcanal was a pivotal conflict in World War II. Early in 1942, the Japanese in the South Pacific were advancing toward the Solomon Islands, a place that had been chosen as the strategic site for an airfield that would extend the range of the Axis air force. When the U.S. heard of this maneuver, which would threaten Australian sea lanes, the U.S. mobilized troops to defend the airfield. The Japanese mounted a counteroffensive that led to six months of combat, but the U.S. finally achieved victory.

This historical event serves as the setting for James Jones' 1962 novel, a semi-autobiographical text which offers some insights into the human condition. The film tells the tale of a rifle company within the Army's 25th Division, which arrived at Guadalcanal in November 1942 to support the Marines. At that point in the battle, the Japanese troops who were on the island had adopted defensive tactics, retreating into the island's grassy hills. There, they faced attack by the Americans who were ordered to flush them out.

In the film, however, we first see Army Private Witt, who is AWOL from C Company and living with Melanesian natives in the South Pacific. He is located and imprisoned on a troop carrier by his company First Sergeant, Welsh. Welsh has a conversation with Witt about his commitment to serving in the Army.

As they approach Guadalcanal, we learn that the men of C Company serve as reinforcements for the Marines in the mission to take the island from the Japanese. While they wait, the men discuss their lives and the imminent invasion. On deck, battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Tall (Nick Nolte) talks with his commanding officer, Brigadier General Quintard (John Travolta), about the importance of the invasion. We

hear Tall in voiceover reveal that he has been passed over for promotion and this battle may be his last chance to command.

C Company lands on Guadalcanal without opposition. After some time, they arrive near Hill 210, a primary Japanese position because of a bunker they control at the top of the hill. C Company attempts to take the hill, yet they are driven back by gunfire from the bunker. The leader of the attacking platoon, Second Lieutenant Whyte (Jared Leto), is killed. During the battle, Colonel Tall orders the company commander, Captain Staros (Elias Koteas), to take the bunker by frontal assault, but Staros refuses, adamant that he does not want to see his men die. However, when Tall decides to join Staros on the line to see the state of affairs for himself, the Japanese resistance has lessened. Also, during the battle, Captain Staros allows Private Witt to rejoin the Company.

Tall orders a small group of men, led by Private Bell (Ben Chaplin), to carry out a reconnaissance mission to find out the strength of the Japanese bunker. Bell joins another small group of men, led by Captain Gaff (John Cusack), on a mission to take the bunker. The men succeed, and C Company is able to take one of the last Japanese strongholds on the island.

As a reward for taking the hill, the soldiers are granted a week off the front line to enjoy themselves. Tall relieves Staros of his command for disobeying his orders. Meanwhile Private Bell receives a letter from his wife asking for a divorce. Witt leaves the company to find another Melanesian village, one like the village where he was AWOL; however, he finds that the natives are afraid of him and that the community has been devastated by the war. Later, Welsh and Witt talk, and we learn that Welsh feels

alone around other people. The scene highlights Witt's devotion to the spark of light and glory he sees in people, even in death.

After their week off the front line, the unit goes out on another mission deeper into the island. Witt, Corporal Fife (Adrian Brody), and Private Coombs (Matt Doran) are sent out to find where their phone line is cut but find that their unit is outnumbered. Witt decides to act as a decoy and lure the Japanese away from the two soldiers and the rest of their unit. He succeeds in drawing the Japanese away, but in the course of retreating, is surrounded when he runs into a small clearing. He then raises his rifle and is shot. Later, the unit finds his body and buries it nearby. Welsh cries, asking Witt where his spark is now. The film ends with another new commanding officer taking over C Company, and the campaign comes to a close with the group of soldiers boarding transport ships to leave the island and to continue fighting the war. The film concludes with a boat of Melanesians canoeing together, two colorful birds in a tree, and a shot of a plant and rock or helmet at the beach in the water.

A general segmentation of the plot looks like this:

1. Jungle
2. Melanesian Village
3. Patrol Boat
4. Beach
5. Inland
6. Camp
7. Hill 210
8. Camp
9. Bunker: Men take ridge; Japanese soldiers captured
10. Camp
11. Japanese Bivouac
12. Camp
13. River
14. Preparing to Leave
15. Island

In *The Thin Red Line*, this unconventional war story contains both unclear protagonists and antagonists, an episodic plot, a disappointing climax, and an ambiguous ending to create a questioning that invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

First of all, the film lacks a clearly defined individual protagonist central in most classical Hollywood narratives. The film is, for the most part, more character than plot driven, and Malick uses many voiceovers to depict the inner conflicts of the characters in the face of dying. Ultimately, the character we care the most for is Witt, the most empathetic character in the narrative; however, Train narrates the film in voiceover as the film's primary speaker, and Welsh, Bell, Staros, and Tall occupy equal amount of time as Witt, suggesting that the film possesses multiple protagonists.

The keys to understanding how Malick uses many protagonists and elevates the film beyond the war genre involve the repeated presentation of scenes that show characters engaged in private moments of memory and self-reflection, using highly unusual voiceovers. Through the scenes of individual characters, Malick invites the viewer to witness how each struggles with the problem of how to align some felt inner sense or belief with his outward actions. The accumulation of and prominence of these scenes—scenes that are more powerful because of their intimacy, stillness, silence, and close-ups in contrast to the noisy long shot and extreme long shot activity of the combat scenes—indicate that the subject of the film is a philosophical questioning about human being, that the film shows men implicitly asking the question, "How can I live in a way that confronts and values human being and keeps me trying to bring my humanness into a world that increasingly denies it in the face of the dominating technocratic rationality of war?" The parallel scenes of individuals in private moments foreground what Marc

Furstenau and Leslie MacAvoy say is a central concern of Malick's art: the "general capacity to make present things that are absent" (175). Usually in times of stress or crisis, people use a variety of mental strategies to help themselves cope, and this singularly human ability defines human "being," according to Heidegger. Malick makes "being" the subject of *The Thin Red Line* by his constant repetition of scenes that show individuals engaged in the struggle to "make present," to call to mind (or deny) important feelings, memories, or beliefs to guide their actions.

One of Malick's many protagonists, Private Jack Bell, blankets his worldview with romantic idealism. Until he receives the letter from his wife, Marty (Miranda Otto), informing him she wants a divorce, Bell uses what to him is a certainty of having achieved oneness with another—in his case through romantic love—to block out his fear of death, give him courage, and shield him from the realities of war. The narrative dramatizes his ultimately futile struggle to hold on to his chosen viewpoint.

Throughout the film, Bell shows that his singular focus on the bond he feels with his wife determines the boundaries of his awareness. Because of his desire not to be separated from her, he had resigned his previous commission as an officer in the Corps of Engineers, a choice that led him, ironically, to be dragged into the war against his wishes and drafted as a non-commissioned private. Malick employs mental subjective narration to depict Bell's inner thoughts and projections of his wife's image, which demonstrate his attempt to bolster himself in the face of the enemy threat. For example, just before the initial battle, he is shown imagining moments with Marty—they stand oceanside at dusk, watching the sun disappear below the horizon. He imagines his wife caressing his back tenderly, and in voiceover we hear him inwardly address her: "Why should I be afraid to

die? I belong to you. If I go first, I'll wait for you there [,] on the other side of the dark waters. Be with me now." Bell makes present in his mind an idealized vision of himself with his loving wife in an attempt to help him be brave. As the narrative moves on, however, the viewer is shown that Bell's unyielding belief in the changeless, timeless nature of love does not correspond with the facts of the world he's in. In fact, he is shown to be limited, almost endangered by this view. And finally, he is devastated when his vision is fatally punctured.

That the image of love as a shelter from the world is an illusion that Bell struggles to preserve is intimated to the viewer several times before Bell himself becomes fully aware of it. A scene in which Bell, alone, crawling uphill on a reconnaissance mission, is voluntarily in a position of great peril, brings to mind various images of himself and Marty in their home embracing. Suddenly, his image shifts to a scene at water's edge.[71] As he stands on the shore watching, Marty is several yards away from him, knee-deep in the water, and we hear her voice: "Come out—come out to where I am." Bell has tried to fight off his fear of death by imagining her with him, but the sudden change in the way in which she is depicted—moving away from him into the water—indicates that his efforts are faltering. Awareness of their separation is creeping into him, making it harder for him to use images of togetherness to block out the reality of battle and death all around him. It

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[71] One of the musical tracks devoted to Bell is John Powell's "Beam." It is one of the darkest in the film. It starts with Tibetan bells backed by electronics, and it's the first piece when Francesco Lupica's Cosmic Beam is used (Stroinski). The composer combines suspense (when, for example, Bell goes on a recon mission to determine where the bunker on the hill is) and love (the scene flashes back to a love scene with Marty). The second cue underscores the scene when Private Bell receives a letter from his wife, who asks for a divorce. It's a simple melody based on a simple, quiet rhythm. The melody is performed by the oboe and the rhythm is performed by strings and bassoon.

may be, even, that he is reconstituting death in Marty's image, transforming death into a beckoning rather than threatening force. In either case, seemingly in spite of his will, the reality of their separation is imaged in his mind.

Other examples occur later, one in the scene in which Bell reveals to another soldier that he hasn't touched another woman since he was drafted. He says, "I, I don't want to feel the desire," indicating that of course he's aware of physical longing but can only think of it and act upon it within the boundaries of his idea of the perfect love he shares with his wife. A bit later, as he walks through a field, we hear him reverently addressing Marty. "My dear wife," he says, "you get something twisted out of you by all this blood, filth, and noise." The war is eating away at him. Trying to ward off the changes he feels taking place within, he asserts his will: " I want to stay changeless for you. I want to come back to you the man I was before" (emphasis added). Next, rather than make an assertion, he asks a question, his words revealing that the strength of his vision of romantic union has diminished. He asks, "How do we get to those other shores? To those blue hills?" Yet a man certain of a perfect union with his wife doesn't need to ask how to get to any other shores where she stands—in fact, he wouldn't even be aware of their being divided, each on one shore, separated from the other. While Bell has tried to keep his belief in their unity present in his mind, the viewer sees and hears the reality of their separation now pushing its way to the surface, becoming more present in him.

Bell's experience illustrates the powerful way in which a person can "inhabit" a viewpoint or belief, thinking, of course, that it helps him, but be unaware of the ways in which it can limit him. Bell raises his belief in an idealized love to such a level that it completely occupies his inner world, and he fights, valiantly, to maintain the walls of that

vision against "assaults" from the world around him. He isolates himself from the other soldiers as he keeps present his wife's image in his mind. As viewers we understand, although he cannot, that his romantic images have really been his creation all along—a creation he believes in wholeheartedly, yet which obscures from him certain realties of the larger world. We know, watching and listening to him and the other characters, that each of them is alone, separate, and longing for connection with something. But, like Bell, all characters settle on one viewpoint, position, or belief, and it nearly blindfolds them, makes them unable to see its fictive, self-created nature, until violently or against their will it is taken from them.

Another protagonist, Colonel Tall, undergoes a struggle entirely different from Bell's: we see him try to deny his inner sense of connectedness with those whom he loves because it conflicts with his desire to succeed in the "outer" world of the military—to realize a purely personal ambition and desire for recognition. We hear Tall's deep reservations as he strides toward the line, just after the soldiers have taken the Japanese bivouac, and in interior monologue he thinks, "Shut up in a tomb….can't lift the lid….Played a role I never conceived," yet the moment he arrives where the men rest against the hill, he screams at a soldier, "Get that blouse on, soldier. It's not a damn bathing beach." We are made aware of how Tall has ignored and rejected his inner voice (which he earlier declared was his love for his family), but understand that he has trapped himself into acting on his ambition only, according to the demands of the institutional machinery of war.

Tall's interior monologue disrupts the establishment of this (present though not adequately articulated) cause by demonstrating to us his private thoughts as well as

introducing to us Tall's personal misgivings within himself as the very man whose job it will be to lead and coordinate this crucial operation. As Tall follows General Quintard around the ship, we hear his private thoughts and regrets: "Worked my ass off, brown-nosed the generals, degraded myself for them and my family, my home….All they sacrificed for me, poured out like water on the ground. All I might have given for love's sake. Too late. Dyin', slow as a tree." A viewer expecting a standard war film is likely surprised to learn that Tall would be thinking these things at the very moment when his superior is laying out what is to be his objective. Far removed from that objective, Tall's thoughts concentrate on his own choice to disregard the love of his family in favor of petty personal ambition, which ultimately becomes his primary motivation. Tall's interior monologue, then, further undercuts the idea that this war is motivated by lofty ideals. The scene is punctuated by private thoughts that create doubt about the value of the military life. As a result, a viewer may begin to wonder what Malick is doing with these characters, and in conjunction with the film's opening sequence of idyllic island scenes, the viewer is likely to ask, "What kind of a war film is this?" Overall, Malick depicts Tall as another character unable to line up his inner thoughts with his outer actions.

Another protagonist whose private moments are depicted is Captain Staros—and he, like Bell, tries to make present the God he believes in to help him act in ways that will keep as many of his men safe and alive as possible. The night before what Staros knows will be a terrible battle, we see him in a high angle close-up, twice cutting to an extreme-close-up reverse shot of a candle flame that illuminates his deeply furrowed brow, asking, "Are You here? Let me not betray You. Let me not betray my men. In You I place my

trust."[72] Once again, then, we see a man engaged in a distinctly human effort to "be," to bring an "absent" belief into the presence of his mind, so that he can try to act in accordance with that belief. Unfortunately, Staros's perspective ultimately fails because we see him sent home, unable to care for his men.

Another protagonist who has difficulty aligning his private vision with his outward action is First Sergeant Edward Welsh. Welsh, unlike Witt, holds a cynical world view, one that emphasizes a nihilistic focus on man's place in the world and the absence of an afterlife or another world. Welsh believes that there is no such thing as metaphysical truth: in his first discussion with Witt, who has been imprisoned after going AWOL, Welsh articulates his views, saying, "In this world, a man himself is nothing. And there ain't no world, but this one." Witt responds, "You're wrong, there, Top. I've seen another world. Sometimes I think it's just my imagination." Welsh replies, "Well, then you've seen things I never will….We're living in a world that's blowing itself to pieces as fast as everybody can arrange it. In a situation like that, all a man can do is shut his eyes and let nothing touch him—look out for himself." Welsh does not believe in an idyllic, collective humanity; rather, he believes man is alone in the world—as he tells Mess Sgt. Storm at one point, he feels "frozen up."

At one point, when Welsh and Witt are having a discussion on a hill, Welsh says:

> I feel sorry for you, kid. This army is going to kill you. If you're smart,

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[72] When Staros prays not to betray God and his men, the scene is moving. The melody used is not composed by Hans Zimmer; it's a traditional folk hymn called "Christian Race" (Stroinski). In the composer's arrangement, it's a simple, sad melody. Staros is a sensitive man who "doesn't like when his men get killed," and Zimmer emphasizes this facet of his beliefs by arranging the hymn for strings and a bassoon, which sounds a bit like a sobbing person. The effect is music that is made much more moving as Staros prays.

> you'll take care of yourself. There's nothing you can do for anybody else. You're just running into a burning house where nobody can be saved. What difference do you think you can make, one single man in all this madness? If you die, it's gonna be for nothing. There's not some other world out there where everything's gonna be okay. There's just this world. Just this rock.

This conversation follows an earlier scene in which Welsh runs out in the middle of combat and "saves" a soldier amidst heavy gunfire, giving him morphine so he can take his own life without too much pain. Welsh's altruistic act demonstrates that his inner vision doesn't line up with his actions in the world. As Welsh predicts in his second conversation with Witt, the reward for Witt's belief in another world will be death. Loyalty to a truth beyond oneself and this world leads to death.

At the Copra plantation, Welsh asks, "Why are you such a troublemaker?" Witt says, "You care about me, don't you, Sarge? Why do you always make yourself out like a rock? Do you ever get lonely?" Welsh comments, "Only around people." Witt examines an empty birdcage, and Welsh says sarcastically, "You still a believer in the great light, are you? How do you do that? You're a magician to me." Witt replies, "I still see a spark in you," as Welsh stares blankly at Witt. Welsh is contemptuous of everything.

On the way to the beach, Sgt. Welsh joins the line of men in his company. They walk past a cemetery, and Sgt. Welsh says in voiceover, "Only one thing a man can do is find something that's his—make an island for himself. If I never meet You in this life, let me feel the lack. A glance from Your eyes, and my life will be Yours." Behind Welsh's nihilism there is a reluctant respect for Witt's belief in his own perspective. Welsh cannot

believe what Witt believes; he is unable to view the glory in the world and beyond it. However, he cannot feel numb to the suffering that surrounds him. As a result, he is in deep pain. For example, while crying at Witt's grave, Welsh asks, "Where's your spark now?" This is essentially a question to himself.

Although Welsh somewhat abandons his cynical outlook on life and comes to appreciate Witt's humanity, he is disillusioned with military hierarchy and turns his disdain toward the new commander of Charlie Company, Captain Bosche (George Clooney). Ultimately, Welsh is left with a pessimistic perspective on the world.

Private Witt, of course, is the protagonist in the film who is most successful at aligning his private vision with his outward action; he is the one who is most able to make present his inner belief in or vision of an idyllic, collective humanity and act upon it, even though doing so leads to his own death. For example, at one point, Witt walks among the wounded and dying soldiers, taking care of the wounded by tending to the injured and rubbing water on a soldier's neck. We hear him think to himself: "Maybe all men got one big soul, who everybody's a part of. All faces of the same man…one big self." This is quintessential Witt: in the midst of the death and the destruction of war, he continually calls to mind his belief in an underlying connectedness of all men to each other.[73] Even the scene in which he dies presents him acting to save his fellow soldiers, and, in the face of death, his face shows the "calm" he hoped for in his first voiceover,

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[73] As we have learned, Malick received an award in English at St. Stephen's Episcopal and studied philosophy at Harvard, and Witt's notion calls to mind not only Emerson's "Nature" but also Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The Transcendentalists were optimistic about human nature and believed we had an interconnectedness with other men and with nature. Tom Joad speaks words similar to Witt's in John Ford's *Grapes of Wrath*.

discussed above. Ultimately, however, Witt's perspective on the world gets him killed, showing the limitations of his worldview.

Through such recursive presentation of such powerful moments of "being," Malick seeks to ensure that viewers cannot escape the importance of this subject—of how individuals "struggle to understand their place in [the] order; [of how] they search for some sort of ground" of being (Furstenau and McAvoy 182). As we will we learn, however, Malick provides an alternative perspective, that of Private Train's, which provides a way out of a limiting view of the world.

Following the clear character motivations of classical Hollywood cinema, the primary characters' behavior/actions are motivated and defined by goals—aligning their inner visions with their outer actions—even though their actions and motivations are unconventional for a war film. Ultimately, these behaviors and drives conflict with each other; that is, the true antagonists of the film are the inner conflicts a number of the characters experience within themselves. Therefore, the film's character constellation is much more ambiguous than that in most classical Hollywood films, and as a result the Malick's war film evokes a perplexing tone.

In the film, many events can be best understood as being caused not by characters but by larger forces (love, the desire to succeed in war, nihilism, and a belief in the greater good). The characters are the products of forces, yet Malick doesn't directly criticize the characters or their behavior. Overall, Malick's film backs over these thematic meanings to reveal for us the problems at the root of American culture, exposing the futility of the myth of success and the inadequacy of the frontier hero. Malick leaves questions as to who the antagonist in the film is, or, at least, why there is no clearly

defined protagonist, which creates an uncertainty, an uncertain state to reflect on the nature of our own place in the world and how we comport ourselves through the world.

Further, the narrative presents its plotline in an episodic manner that is ultimately neither goal-oriented nor causally-driven. However, at the beginning, and at other times, the film actually does appear to contain causal agents. A scene near the beginning of the film identifies a mission to be accomplished and articulates a strategy that would seem to achieve that goal (Solomon 245-7; Kaminsky 229): it shows a U.S. Army ship traveling to the islands of the South Pacific where the soldiers will fight the Japanese in the battle for Guadalcanal. On the surface, the scene in which the ship cuts through the water aligns itself neatly with many of the conventions that define a classic war film. Up to this moment, the narrative has seemed to sidle along without purpose; however, it appears that the narrative will become more plot driven once we see the ship slicing through the water. For example, Malick cuts from this establishing shot to Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Tall, peering out at the island to which the ship is headed. The camera then cuts to a close-up of the right arm of Brigadier General Quintard who, pencil in hand, stabs purposefully at a map and states with authority: "They call it the rock." We watch his hands flip quickly to another map, one of Guadalcanal, and, as he circles a spot on the map, he states, "Nobody wants this island [Guadalcanal]; the Japs just put an airfield there. All the fighting is confined to this area." The camera then cuts to a medium shot of the General, surrounded by men (as well as by many who look on from the ship's second tier) who listen attentively as their leader outlines the strategy that they will shortly put into motion. The General continues in medium shot, his arms tightly encircling points on the map with authoritative, clipped gestures: "As you can see, this is

their road to Australia and this is their way of controlling the sea lanes to America. Now, if we're going to stop the Japs' advance into the South Pacific [the camera cuts back to a close-up of both hands as he circles a spot and smacks them into the map], we've got to do it there." The General concludes his strategizing when he stands up and lifts his chin, affixes his cap on his head, and states, "The marines have done their jobs, and now it's our turn." Everything about this scene ties it to the war genre: the General demonstrates authority and power as he barks out the objective; he is the embodiment of the military institution.

As the scene continues, we see the General striding about the ship, looking attentive and driven (much as the actual ship cuts through the water). While he walks, he looks toward the island, and acknowledges his subordinates, all of whom are in their proper positions. This indicates a smooth running and well-oiled military machine. At one point, the General reenacts classic training/brainwashing military methodology when he cuts Colonel Tall down, humiliates him, takes away his power, and rebuilds him in such a way that his energies are directed to the military objective. Quintard quickly and cunningly effaces Tall by suddenly becoming personal with him, and says, "I admire you, Colonel, I do; most men your age would have retired by now," as he condescendingly taps Tall on the shoulder with his sunglasses. Then he begins his process of tapping into Tall's ambition, flattering him with compliments about his maturity and character. Quintard manipulates Tall's fear by threatening him, telling him that he's being watched by the powerful ranks above him. Eventually, he makes Tall adopt the military objective, telling him, "Nobody wants that island [Quintard gives a hard pause and an intense stare] but you. How much do you want it?" Tall unflinchingly, with the first strength of

conviction that we've seen in him, lowers his voice and responds, "As much as I have to, sir." In other words, Quintard's pressure forces Tall to publicly give his word that the military's objective is also his own.

This scene's overall look and feel seems almost to announce that this is a standard war film. After all, it is loaded with the iconography of the war film, with those "visual elements [that] have become encrusted with shared meanings…a shorthand of mutually recognizable communications that neither filmmaker nor audience need ponder" (Sobchack 106-7); however, certain parts of the scene undermine that iconographic veneer and prevent it from falling too neatly under the "war film" label. For example, even though, like any good war movie, a cause is articulated that will presumably drive the plot of the movie, that cause is undermined by the General's own words when he asks the Colonel, "You wonder why—why did the Japs have to put an airfield there of all places. I guess we don't know the bigger picture, do we, if there is such a thing?" Because Quintard, the General, a man who has indicated no doubts, calls into question the very presence of a bigger picture, his musing ultimately undermines the idea of a greater cause of a war worth fighting for. All we get is strategizing, and the conspicuous absence of a recognizable moral cause that is worth fighting for violates a primary expectation established in the war film genre.

However, clues that the narrative presents its plotline in an episodic manner—and that Malick's intentions might not be to depict a conventional war movie—are presented in the film's next sequence of scenes, in which he applies but also frustrates generic conventions. In the sequence, which begins on the ship, moves to the transport motorboats, and ends on the beach, Malick depicts soldiers anxiously preparing for

combat, readying themselves to act on the military strategy articulated by General Quintard. During this sequence, Malick interjects ominous, shrieking, shrill music, played to a montage of close-ups and long shots of men putting on their helmets, loading their weapons, and looking at each other in fear. One of them, Sergeant McCron (John Savage), says the Lord's Prayer to a group of soldiers. Airplanes whiz overhead, and other transport motorboats chop toward the shore, carrying dozens of soldiers. The moment that the men hit the shore (shown to us from the first-person point-of-view of a soldier who pushes open the metal transport door), a rhythmic, syncopated drumbeat begins to play, as if to suggest the onset of tremendous action. After all this build-up of anticipation, however, all we see are men running across the beach, bracing to confront the enemy and looking around, but, surprisingly, there is no enemy in sight. Not a single shot is fired. Eventually, Captain Staros is approached by a scout, who explains there is no enemy to be seen and no casualties, and, almost comically, we hear the scout say, "Damndest thing I ever did see, sir. They've got fish that live in trees." Fish in trees? Through the deft use of cinematic style, Malick has engrossed and engaged us into anticipating a rousing combat scene; however, his overall effect has prepared us for a battle that fails to materialize and will not transpire for at least another twenty-five minutes. In other words, Malick depicts an episodic plot while he undermines what Thomas Sobchack posits is fundamental to genre films: "The most important single aspect of the genre film that gives it this compact sense of shape is the plot. It's what happens that is most important, not why. Incident crowding on incident, reversal after reversal, all strung out like beads on a string […], to be counted one after another until the final shootout" (106).

These scenes, then, are actually "false starts" that cause us to anticipate combat that never occurs, and thus they make it clear that the film does not seem preoccupied with adhering to a linear, causal chain of "beads on a string" events that propel it toward a clearly defined goal. Precisely because of the accumulation of these clues (Quintard's failure to articulate a moral purpose, Tall's private thoughts which contradict the ideology of the military institution, and the failure to materialize a highly anticipated battle), several critics have come to the conclusion that *The Thin Red Line* is actually an anti-war film.

Granted, the fact that the viewer is duped into expecting a non-existent combat scene does not necessarily mean that the film can be tagged as antiwar. After all, General Quintard does strategize, and Tall in his interior monologue does not actually embrace an antiwar position. However, without question, other voiceovers and actual statements clearly establish the anti-war episodic plot. For example, in a scene near the film's end, while First Sergeant Welsh endures Captain Bosche's address to the troops, we hear Welsh's interior monologue. He indicts the military: "Everything a lie. Everything you hear, everything you see. So much to spew out. They just keep coming, one after another. You're in a box, a moving box. They want you dead or in their lie." Likewise, earlier in the film, Welsh, after risking his life to provide Private Tella (Kirk Acevedo) with a fatal dose of morphine so that he doesn't have to suffer, runs back to the line. Captain Staros tells Welsh that he's going to recommend him for the Silver Star, and Welsh yells angrily, "Property! The whole fuckin' thing's about property." Besides these episodic moments and cynical antiwar statements spoken by Sergeant Welsh, Sergeant Storm (John C. Reilly) questions war in a comment to Corporal Fife. After the

Americans have annihilated the Japanese bivouac, a terrified Fife glances at dozens of burnt Japanese bodies and remembers a past conversation he has had with Storm that must have occurred before Fife had ever seen battle. In a remembered voiceover, Fife asks, "You see many dead people?" Storm replies, "Plenty. They're no different than dead dogs once you get used to the idea. We're meat, kid."

Besides these episodic moments and antiwar statements, many scenes are also typical of the antiwar genre. According to Solomon, the antiwar film "operates in a realistic mode that serves to deglamorize the romantic elements associated with fighting for a cause, for freedom, or for the attainment of noble or heroic ends" (252). It also attempts to "debunk heroic warfare" and demonstrate "incompetent or corrupt leadership" (Solomon 252). There are plenty of such scenes in the film, scenes in which men die horrible deaths, that are implicitly anti-war and episodic. For example, Sergeant Keck (Woody Harrelson) blows his own butt off when he accidentally pulls the pin on a grenade that is still hooked to his pack. In the battle scenes, Malick frequently tracks uphill alongside running soldiers who sprint head on into bullets, bullets that decimate bodies, sending them twisted and lifeless to the ground in contorted heaps. Despite the film's inclusion of these elements, however, Malick ultimately steps outside of the anti-war genre. In other words, certain features of the film such as its episodic plot show that Malick has moved beyond the war/antiwar genre and is more deeply concerned with philosophical issues.

His philosophical investigation is evinced through his subtle and skillful uses of disembodied voiceovers: in particular, that of the Japanese soldier speaking from the grave as well as those of Private Train. One of the more remarkable of the film's

"voiceovers" is that of a dead Japanese soldier asking questions. In the scene, just after Charlie Company has taken a Japanese bivouac, there is a low-angled medium shot of Private Witt, framed by the cloudy blue sky, as he, captivated, almost mesmerized, looks down, breathing rapidly. The camera cuts to a reverse shot of the dirt and rubble-covered ground; a cloud of artillery smoke hovers across its scarred, scorched surface, and we see a close-up of the near buried face of a dead Japanese soldier peeking out from the dirt. This shot recalls the film's opening shot of a menacing crocodile submerged in the swamp. The camera holds on this gruesome shot as smoke blows over the partially obscured face, and in what appears to be subjective or delusional sound (Kozloff 5), the dead Japanese soldier says: "Are you righteous? Kind? Does your confidence lie in this? Are you loved by all? Know that I was, too. Do you imagine your sufferings will be less because you loved goodness? Truth?" Although the scene concludes by cutting back to the shot of Private Witt (which suggests that he alone may have "heard" this voice), ultimately, the dead soldier implicates the viewer as well by speaking in second person. Malick invites us, here, to ask on what ground do we base our actions, causing us to question whether our ideas of right and wrong, which may ultimately inflict suffering upon others, are actually justified. He shows that both the Americans and Japanese suffer equally, and, ultimately, Malick creates a questioning. These kinds of questions are different from the voiceovers and inner thoughts of the "living" characters within the film—these contain a more abstract level of philosophical questioning. Malick's strategy of having a dead character voice these questions—something that is bound to surprise any viewer—calls attention to the questions themselves.

A film's narrative will typically resolve its causal issues by bringing the development to a high point or climax, and the "climax" of this film does not really resolve conflicts or close off chains of cause and effect as Hollywood films ordinarily do. We get little catharsis from the death of Witt, partly because we admire his worldview most. An example of the American Adam, Witt possesses a kind of innocence

In the climactic scene, Private Coombs and Witt and Corporal Fife leave the Company to go in search of the Company's communication line. Just as they cross the stream, Private Coombs is shot. The three men gather among the roots of a tree. Above them, giant fruit bats hang and chatter. Witt looks up at them and then back toward the river. Meanwhile, the Japanese are looking for the men. Witt turns to Fife and says, "One of us has to stay here and hold them off. We'll be all right. My friend here doesn't have long. So you go. You go on ahead." Witt swims over to Coombs and puts his hand over his mouth to keep him quiet. At that moment some of the Japanese troops run along the riverbank just above them. Corporal Fife escapes and heads back to the company. Witt attends to Coombs, who is resting on the bank. He tells him, "They're coming. I've got to go. I don't want you to be afraid. Lie right here until you hear firing, and then push on down the river." Witt runs through the jungle, and we hear shots. Fife has already reached the company, and he tells them about the advancing force of Japanese.

Witt moves through the jungle and makes the sound of a birdcall. Witt keeps drawing them away from the company; the scene is dramatized through parallel editing; the shots emphasize the movement through the jungle and the building tension. Finally, Witt runs from the jungle into a clearing where the Japanese quickly surround him, advancing from all corners. All have their guns raised. Witt's gun is lowered. He turns

and looks at them. They speak to him, but Witt doesn't respond, seemingly lost in thought. He remains still, peaceful, as if in a reverie. Suddenly, he lifts his gun and is shot several times. Malick immediately cuts to a shot looking up into the canopy above the jungle with rays of light shining through, then to native children swimming under water, Witt swimming among them. Here we feel satisfaction that Witt has joined "another world" that he so persistently believed in for the entire movie.

As the scene continues, we cut to a rifle being stuck into the grave by the river as Witt's company stands around to pay their respects. Sergeant Welsh kneels next to the rifle and places Witt's dog tags on it. Then he places a helmet over the butt of the rifle. Welsh walks up to the grave and kneels down, crying, "Where's your spark now?" He looks up and sees birds flying above the palms.

The climax of the film is a powerful one—after all, Witt, the character we care about most, sacrifices himself for C Company. We watch, unsure of what will happen next. The death of each man is a surprise, thereby presenting a surprising climax that Malick has not adequately prepared us to expect. Ultimately, the American Adam falls short of reaching an end that we desire. Challenging such myths, the film suggests that external forces in the world, rather than individual effort, belief in community, or desire to succeed, determine our place in the world. Exposing the fraudulence of American cultural myths, Malick, we will learn, uses voiceovers, editing, and beautiful cinematography of the natural environment to reflect on the nature of being.

At the end of the film, we do, however, have a kind of closure: we learn Witt's fate and see the troops successfully capture the airfield and defeat the Japanese. However, we do not witness the fate of the remaining soldiers, who board a ship to

continue to battle, and we are still left with a sense that the film is not closed. After we watch as a long line of GIs moves on to the beach and boards the ship, we hear the distinctive voice of Private Train, the scared soldier we saw back on the troop ship early in the film. He tells another soldier, "I'm determined now. I've been through the thick and the thin of it. I may be young, but I've lived plenty of life. I'm going to start living it good. You know, my daddy always told me it will get a whole lot worse before it gets better. Cuz' you know, life is not supposed to be that hard when you're young. I figure after this the worst will be gone. It's time for things to get better. That's what I want. That's what's going to happen." At this point, we hear Train, now in voiceover, who, amidst images of the soldiers on the leaving ship, says,

> Where is it we were together? Who were you that I lived with—walked with—the brother—the friend? Darkness and light, strife and love. Are they the workings of one mind? The features of the same face? Oh my soul, let me be in you now. Look out through my eyes. Look out at the things you made—all things shining.

Malick dissolves to a peaceful scene—two canoes, paddled by Melanesians, on a quiet river, then cuts to two colorful parrots on a branch grooming each other, and finally, to a lone coconut, sprouting a new leaf, growing in the shallow water of the beach.

Tracking the Jungle

A number of stylistic devices, some of which violate classical Hollywood norms, are central to cinematic style in *The Thin Red Line*; after listing these devices, we can examine each in more detail to see how they help Malick achieve his philosophic aims in the film. Lighting is unobtrusive; most is from natural sources. Camera distance and

duration create intimacy and slow down the pace. Unlike in his first two films, wherein Malick keeps his camera at a distance, in *The Thin Red Line* he oscillates between extreme long shots and extreme closeups. The five conventions of continuity editing—180 degree rule, establishing shot/breakdown, shot/reverse shot, eyeline match, and match on action—are not followed religiously. The director also employs intellectual montage. Finally, Malick relies much more heavily on the non-diegetic voiceover narration than is typical in classical Hollywood films.

Most often, Malick shoots combat scenes using natural light. As a result, the gritty realism of war comes forward more realistically. For example, in the sequence below deck on the U.S. patrol boat where most of the men are terrified at what lies ahead of them, they are only lit from above by small hanging lamps, and their faces are mostly in silhouette. As they walk through the ship, we see flashes of the lamps on their heads, and these illuminate them briefly and partially. The ship is hidden mostly in shadow. A medium closeup of Corporal Fife shows him coiled up tightly in his bed. The light illuminates half his face, and his knuckled hand grips his bedspread. His body is bathed in darkness. His face is damp, and he looks terrified. His eyes stare intently, and his lips are pursed. Here, the chiaroscuro lighting creates bold contrasts, showing glimpses of men cast in shadow as they nervously prepare for war.

As the scene continues, a man lit from above, plays a violin as if for the last time. Another boy also lit from above looks down and whittles wood. One soldier appears in medium closeup, wearing a sleeveless t-shirt, screaming, “Open this door! Open this goddamn door!” He, too, is lit from above, and the white lamp illuminates him, emphasizing the moisture on his face and back. The strong lighting emphasizes the

power of his rage. Captain Staros walks among the men, beads of sweat collecting on his brow. His lips are tight and his brow furrows in concern for his men. He walks in and out of top light, sometimes briefly enshrouded in black. One man, illuminated from above, reads the pages of a letter. Another, lit only by the natural light of a window, stares outside, grimly. Another soldier lies on his back in a medium closeup. The right side of his face is lit, and the left side is in shadow. His mouth is barely open, and his brow is creased; he breathes deeply. A group of men look out a window with sweat beads on their faces. Then, as the horn sounds for the men to ready for war, we see the men as they scatter about to get their shirts and jackets on.

Above deck, Malick also uses natural lighting. The men's helmets shade their eyes. We sense their collective anxiety through hurried movements and actions, not looks. We hear a cacophony of voices and planes roaring overhead, and see guns in their packs pointing to the sky. A handheld, shaky camera circles the men as they get ready, furthering the chaos of the scene. The men are in war and facing death. For all they know, they'll be shot down or bombed the minute they reach the beach.

In another brief sequence, the soldiers enjoy a temporary respite from combat. Many of them drink and horse around. When two members of Charlie Company are involved in a fist fight with each other, the disembodied voice of Private Train says, "War don't ennoble men, it turns them into dogs. Poisons the soul." As he speaks, the camera cuts to Private Dale (Arie Verveen) sitting shirtless, solitary, and rain soaked, holding teeth he has extracted from Japanese soldiers. A brief flashback reveals Dale's memory of one soldier in particular whom he taunted so mercilessly. Dale mutters, "What the hell?," and shakes, dashing the teeth to the ground. He cries in anguish and

remorse, his arms wrapped around himself in an attempt to escape his self-loathing. As he cries, the sun, ever so slightly, reveals itself in the sky through the clouds. In this scene, Train's utterances, though disembodied and distant from the actual time and place of the images shown on screen, are nonetheless still partly anchored to the visual representations they coincide with—the questions raised relate in some ways with the visual content of the scenes. Malick uses lighting as a counterpoint to partially redeem Dale, the dog of war, showing that redemption and forgiveness are possibilities in war.

Oftentimes, Malick's loose framing emphasizes open space, and his cinematic style disrupts Hollywood's generic conventions. Malick uses camera distance and camera movements to slow down the pace of the film and to help us ask questions about—or at least to ruminate on—the nature of being. For example, when Witt is AWOL on the Melanesian island with the natives, Malick uses medium closeups and shot/reverse shot editing to suggest an intimacy and harmony in the paradisial setting of the island. Many times, Malick shows medium closeup shots of Witt looking at the natives and nature with a relaxed, satisfied smile. In one instance, Malick cuts to an eyeline match to a closeup of two Melanesians engaged in a song, holding hands.[74] As the scene continues, Witt in medium long shot walks through the village with his shoulders loose and his gait carefree. A cut to a medium closeup of Witt shows him talking to a Melanesian mother, holding her child. He says, "Kids around here never fight." In a reverse shot, the mother chuckles, "Sometimes, sometimes when you see

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[74] Moving musical pieces in *The Thin Red Line* include the Melanesian chants that are sung by natives of the Melanesian village. One of them, "Jisas Yu Holem Laef Blong Mi," depicts the Melanesians living an idyllic existence. This is the only place where Private Witt feels safe; everybody loves each other.

them playing." As the scene continues, Malick cuts to a worm's extreme long shot view up through a canopy of trees, held on for eight seconds. He then cuts back to a medium closeup of the mother, smiling, holding her baby. In this shot, Malick gives us time to reflect on the harmony of the village. Malick then cuts to a medium closeup of Witt thatching a roof with a Melanesian man to a medium closeup of Private Hoke (Will Wallace) laughing with villagers, then to a tracking, tilting, and panning long shot of Witt and Hoke playing with children, spinning them in circles as the children laugh. After a medium closeup of Witt's head in the ocean at dusk, smiling happily, looking at the sky, Malick cuts to Melanesians working with their children in medium closeup and Witt watching happily, then to a dollying long shot of dozens of Melanesians chanting and singing as they walk along the side of the beach, to a medium closeup of Witt looking. The harmony of the sequence with the Melanesians is disrupted by an extreme long shot of a U.S. patrol boat in the distance. In a reaction shot of Hoke and Witt in medium closeup, Hoke tells Witt about the patrol boat's approach, and Hoke and Witt run away with shoulders hunched. Their harmonious time on the island is at an end.

In this sequence, Malick uses medium closeups to create an intimacy between the characters on the island. In his use of such shots, Malick emphasizes the harmony and peaceful way of existence that embodies the natives' way of life. First of all, this sequence occurs to open the film, and a viewer expecting a war film certainly must wonder why Malick chooses to begin the film in a Melanesian village without any relation to the war. As a result, the viewer (as it did with my brother-in-law) is prompted to ask questions about this drastic counter to the conventional war film. In addition, while Witt is assumed to be the protagonist in the film (after all, he is the first character

we see), Malick instead depicts Witt for as much time as he does the Melanesians. We also see shots of Witt framed repeatedly in medium closeup, and Malick employs the shot/reverse shot editing convention to emphasize the intimacy between Witt and the Melanesian mother. The tighter framings of Witt are at times reaction shots, and the camera distance allows Malick to emphasize Witt's facial expressions, which guide the viewer to think approvingly of the Melanesians, too. Malick uses many medium closeups of Witt working with the natives to show just how harmonious existence is on the island. He also tracks, pans, and tilts to depict how happy and unified the natives are—and how they welcome Witt into their lives.

The first extreme long shot that Malick uses breaks this intimacy. The patrol boat seems to invade the garden. That is, the destructive war machine penetrates the idyllic Melanesian island. More often, however, Malick uses camera distance and playful camera movements to depict a way of being that is closer to Being, one far removed from the technocratic rationality of war. Ultimately, this scene enables us to wonder about the nature of being. After all, Malick depicts the village as an idyllic community, one where children do not truly fight, and we enjoy seeing Witt inhabit that community with such pleasure. We witness a world quite unlike our own and one quite unlike the world we are accustomed to seeing in a conventional war film. Malick's sensitivity to that world through camera distance, camera movements, music, and editing provokes our thoughts of being.

In another sequence Malick uses camera distance, framing, and camera movement to elucidate his central concerns. Early in the film, when the men first ascend the hill, Malick pans as the men exit the bamboo and creek that they've been trudging through.

Men walk by the camera and stretch into a long line in up the hill in a deep focus extreme long. Malick then cuts to a grassy plain, again shot in deep focus, as the men skulk through the tiger grass. They drop down nearly to their knees each time the wind blows, making the grass seem up to their necks. Blades of grass touch the camera as it moves deeper into the grass ahead. Malick cuts to a medium closeup of Welsh, rifle in hand as he walks, a serious expression on his face. His eyes stare intently. The camera then moves behind Welsh to show many men inching forward as he does. Hand-held, it follows the men into a clearing, and focuses on two bodies that have been tortured ruthlessly. One man whose legs have been blown off, lies leaned back, shirtless, his chest and body open to the men. Another man has had his arm blown off, and he lies on his stomach, charred and bloody, one arm disconnected at the elbow. The camera tracks and zooms in to show the man's blown-off legs, separated at the knee, as his trunk sits in a pool of blood. This is the goriest shot in the entire film, and Malick shows it before a single bullet has been fired. The camera tilts up to show a soldier covering his face in horror and other men looking on, clearly disturbed. The camera stops on Corporal Fife's petrified face. His eyes look up and his eyebrows are arched in fear. He looks around in terror, his eyes surveying the scene to see what or who is around him. As the men step away, horrified, Malick cuts to a closeup of a soldier with tiger grass draped across his back. The soldier repeatedly tries to shrug the grass off, emphasizing that the oppressive nature of the environment and gruesome scene he has just witnessed. Here, Malick uses framing, camera movement, and acting in ways to engage with his central ideas, ideas such as man's disconnection from and connection to being.

And in *The Thin Red Line*, Malick again employs many long takes, showing long take closeups and medium closeups, for example, of leaves, bats, trees, and other animals. Perhaps the longest take—over thirty-five seconds—occurs at the end as Malick shows the ocean water and the ship's wake as the ship leaves the island. The result of such long takes provides time and space to take in the significance of the meditative voiceovers. As we have learned, Malick uses long takes in unusual ways throughout much of the film.

Elsewhere, shots are shorter, yet equally if differently compelling. Just after we watch Tall yell at Staros, telling him to commit his soldiers to attack the hill straight on, Staros refuses to obey Tall's order. Malick cuts to an extreme long shot bird's eye view of soldiers lying dead amidst an explosion. Malick shows a medium long shot of Beade dying: he is being held by a soldier as sunlight streams down on them through the trees. Staros, says, with desperation, "Just take it easy, son. Take it easy. Take it easy." Offscreen, Beade asks, "Where's Fife?" Staros responds, "Fife? He's right here, son. Fife." Malick cuts to Fife, who has a terrified look on his face, and again offscreen, Beade groans and says, "Hold my hand, Fife. Hold my hand." Malick cuts to Bead in a closeup with a dirty sweaty face. Fife takes Beade's hand and replies, "I got it." Still holding on Beade's face and labored breathing, he says, "Oh. I'm dying, Fife." He cuts to Staros, looking on helplessly, and uses a shot/reverse shot back to Beade crying. Malick then cuts to a point-of-view shot of Beade looking straight up through the trees to the sky, the sun beaming down through the branches, as if he is focused on the heavens as his life slowly ebbs away. Malick cuts back to Staros, and then to a medium closeup shot of a soldier going down to his knees and collapsing on the ground dead, in slow-motion.

Then again, in another slow-motion, now medium closeup, he shows a soldier with his hands clasped to his ears, writing and screaming in terror. Before cutting back to a closeup of Beade, who says, "Oh, Captain," Staros looks on. Then Malick cuts to a long six -econd extreme closeup of three leaves, riddled with holes from bugs with beams of sun shining through. To conclude, he cuts back to Staros as he looks on helplessly as his man dies. In this scene, we see Staros disobey Tall's orders because he refuses to sacrifice his men. Shortly thereafter, we see Staros experiencing the pain of seeing one of his soldiers die.

In another scene, Malick continues to use editing to further his concerns. Witt looks offscreen to a low-angle shot of the night sky through a palm tree up to the moon for seven seconds. Then Malick cuts to a twenty-eight-second long take, extreme long shot of dogs at dusk feeding on dead bodies. Sgt. McCron off screen screams, "Go ahead, come on. Who's deciding who's gonna live? Who's deciding who's gonna die? This is futile!" A low-angle medium long shot of McCron standing with arms raised follows. He screams, "Look at me. I stand right up here and not one bullet! Not one shot! Why? How come they all had to die? I can stand right here. I can stand right up, and nothing happens to me!" In this scene Malick's long take and nature shots don't advance the narrative in any way; in fact, they delay and even minimize the story of characters, and ultimately they serve to undermine the notion of man as the frontier hero or American Adam. In other words, the scene deemphasizes man's sense of his own self-importance in the world.

Malick uses convincing sounds, such as non-diegetic music. Throughout, Hans Zimmer[75] avoids traditional war score elements such as heroic trumpet solos and military snares. In one scene, we witness a muted montage of American soldiers committing atrocities (killing, stabbing, stealing) as they raid a Japanese camp. Both sides—the Americans and the Japanese—are terrified. Nobody really knows what's happening. This element of fear is also present in Zimmer's score. The characters' fear is not expressed directly but filtered through the subject's empathy. The music gives the soldiers a voice amidst their fear.

One of *The Thin Red Line*'s most important tracks is the famous, though simple, "Journey to the Line." In the piece, a three-note motif is repeated in four chords (Stroinski). "Journey to the Line," even though it underscores a bloodbath with the attack on a Japanese village, expresses beauty that doesn't glorify violence. On the contrary, "Journey to the Line" is tragic and full of understanding for both sides of the conflict. In other words, the score doesn't take the point of view of a specific character. During this sequence, we also hear the disembodied voice of Train raise existential questions:

> This great evil—where did it come from? How did it steal into the world? What seed, what root did it come from? Who's doin' this? Who's killin' us? Robbin' us of life and light. Mockin' us with the sight of what we might have known? Does our ruin benefit the earth? Does it help the

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[75] Apparently Malick insisted that most of the score be written before the production started because he wanted to play it on the set to get himself and the crew in the right mood: "The director also asked Zimmer to minimize the number of electronic instruments used in the score and resort mostly to a live ensemble….[Malick is] Renowned for his replacement of composed music with classical pieces….(on *Days of Heaven*, most of Ennio Morricone's music was replaced with the music of Camille Saint-Saens)" (Stroinski).

> grass to grow, the sun to shine? Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed through this night?

As this speculation nears its conclusion, the camera ever so slowly tracks into a twoshot of Private Dale squatting by a captured Japanese soldier, who is trying to crawl up a small mound of dead Japanese bodies. Malick reintroduces sound, and in one of the most horrifying displays of inhumanity in the film, Dale, with a pair of pliers in his left hand, tells the Japanese captive, without a hint of anger, "I'm gonna sink my teeth into your liver." By directly addressing the viewer—"Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed through this night?"—Train's question, in conjunction with the visual representations, forces the viewer to confront or come face to face with the darker side of his own being.

The inclusion of Charles Ives's "The Unanswered Question" is even more effective. Malick inserts it seamlessly where the Zimmer score ends. It plays as Dale menacingly approaches the dying Japanese officer with pliers and ends with Dale reaching over to a nearby body to extract a gold tooth from the mouth of the corpse. Scored for solo trumpet, flutes, and strings, the piece has the trumpet posing the "question" in an angular, enigmatic theme. The flutes provide the "answers." This is repeated a few times until the trumpet poses its question one final time, and the flutes fail to answer. The version heard in the film leaves out the flutes—presumably to better mirror the Japanese officer's defiant statement, which is repeated over and over again to an uncomprehending Dale: "Kisama shinun dayo!" (translated, this means, "Bastard, you too will die!"), and to give added significance to the scene.

What is significant in the Ives piece is that, even though the trumpet poses the question, it sounds bold and confident. While the flutes provide the answers, they sound puny and weak. The solitary wail of the trumpet through the universe (the carpet of strings over which it intones its question) represents the overarching questions of humanity. These examples demonstrate some of the ways that Malick employs music to develop his themes.

However, most importantly, as in his other films and as mentioned in the introductory section here, Malick emphasizes non-diegetic voiceover. Malick relies heavily on Train's non-diegetic voiceover narration. Train's voiceovers appear eight times and are spaced throughout the film.

Train Voiceovers

1:50 "What's this war in the heart of nature? Why does nature vie with itself? The land contend with the sea? Is there an avenging power in nature? Not one power, but two?"

30:50 "Who are you to live in all these many forms? You're death that captures all. You, too, are the source of all that's gonna be born. You're glory…mercy…peace…truth. You give calm a spirit…understanding…courage. The contented heart."

1 hour 50 "This great evil…where's it come from? How'd it steal into the world? What seed, what root did it grow from? Who's doin' this? Who's killin' us? Robbin' us of life and light. Mockin' us with the sight of what we might have known. Does our ruin benefit the earth? Does it help the grass to grow, the sun to shine? Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed through this night?"

2 hours 2 "Hours like months, days like years. Walked into the golden age…stood on the shores of a new world."

2 hours 5 "Can't nothin' make you forget it. Each time you start from scratch. War don't ennoble men. Turns'em into dogs. Poisons the soul."

2 hours 16 "We were a family. How'd it break up and come apart…so that now we're turned against each other…each standing in the other's light? How'd we lose the good that was given us…let it slip away, scattered, careless? What's keepin' us from reachin'out…touchin' the glory?"

2 hours 23 "One man looks at a dyin' bird and thinks there's nothing but unanswered pain…that death's got the final word. It's laughin' at him. Another man sees that same bird…feels the glory. Feels somethin' smilin' through it."

2 hours 40 "Where is it that we were together? Who were you that I lived with? Walked with? The brother. The friend. Darkness and light, strife and love. Are they the workins' of one mind, the features of the same face? Oh my soul, let me be in you now. Look out through my eyes. Look out at the things you made – all things shinin'."

Train's descriptions take on an elevated, even poetic quality, describing ideas that move beyond simple plot commentary. Furthermore, although the initial voiceover speaker is connected with its diegetic character in the interchange between Sergeant Welsh and Private Train (discussed earlier), this voice toys with the conventions of an unseen voiceover speaker—what Michel Chion calls the acousmetre. Michel Chion tells us that "an inherent quality of the acousmetre is that it can be instantaneously dispossessed of its mysterious powers … when it is de-acousmatized, when the film reveals the face that is the source of the voice. At this point, through synchronism, the

voice finds itself attributed to and confined to a body….De-acousmatization can also be called embodiment: a sort of enclosing of the voice in the circumscribed limits of a body—which tames the voice and drains it of its power" (*Audio-Vision* 130-131). However, in this case, while the speaker is identified when the viewer meets Private Train, it is not done so through synchronism of voice with image—rather, a voice-to-voice correspondence accomplishes, technically, the de-acousmatization of the voiceover speaker. And, rather than becoming tamed and limited by the body of Train, the voiceover speaker acquires even greater mystery because of never being synchronized with an image of the character Train speaking throughout the entire diegesis, and because of radical differences between what the voiceover Train and the diegetic character Train think and speak about and between the stylistic features of their discourse. Instead of resolving tension, this de-acousmatization actually adds to it, provokes more questions than it answers: "Who is this man? How could this character be the speaker of that first voiceover? How can we account for the disparity between this character's discourse and the way he speaks in voiceover? Could the voiceovers be uttered from a different time and place than that of the events that are being shown in the narrative? If so, to whom are those questions directed? Is he talking to us?" All difficult questions—none of which we can yet answer.

Therefore, when we hear Train's second voiceover ("Who are you to live in all these many forms?"), no doubt we hope for some resolutions; however, not only are these not granted, but even more questions arise—only to continue to multiply, accumulate, and reverberate within us. The interplay among that second voiceover, the images that

appear with it, the narrative events, and the character development creates for the viewer a series of surprises, disjunctions, questions, and confusion.

A close examination of the series of scenes which occur just after the soldiers come ashore will show how this dissonance is created. The sequence begins with an emphasis on the strange and unknown that the men face. A soldier returning from inland tells Staros, "Darndest thing I ever did see, sir. They got fish that live in trees," after which Lieutenant Band asks, "If they didn't know this beach was deserted, what else don't they know?" Immediately after this scene, the camera cuts, without an establishing shot, to a subjective Steadicam shot of a deep, receding grassy field, emphasizing the soldiers' sense of having no idea of where they're going and what they're walking into. We see a collection of shots of the men in single file, walking carefully through the tall grass, disturbed and nervous, the mood of tension and anxiety clearly mounting. As they continue along a path, the camera shows what they see—most notably, the unexpected approach of a native Melanesian who seems not to acknowledge their presence though they are obviously rattled by his. It lingers on the faces and postures of the men, registering their apprehension as they look around with wide-eyed alertness, turning their faces and guns from side to side, trying to ready themselves for whatever may come their way. The soldiers are then shown in the deep of the jungle, trudging knee deep through a stream, surrounded by nothing but vines and darkness. Strangely, however, the camera cuts suddenly to a worm's-eye view looking up through a lush green canopy, and as long beams of sun shine down through the leaves, we hear the whispered voiceover of Train: "Who are you to live in all these many forms?"

After lingering on the canopy, the camera cuts to a closeup of beautiful, brightly colored parrots, then cuts again to a different shot up through the top of a bamboo stand and finally tilts down into the darkness ahead where we return to the soldiers as they make their way through almost cage-like bamboo. Again in voiceover, we hear Train, still speaking in a low whispered tone, "You're death that captures all. You, too, are the source of all that's gonna be born." A closeup of Sergeant Welsh's face dissolves to a scene of the men ascending a dry, barren hill. The camera finds Bell and pans along with him, and Train's voiceover continues, "You're glory...mercy...peace…" The camera then cuts to a shirtless native guide engaged in a muted exchange with the soldiers, and Train in voiceover says, "truth." The camera tilts down as the native points aimlessly with a stick at the ground, then cuts back to his face and the voiceover says, "You give calm a spirit"

The camera cuts to a closeup of Bell who, still on the hillside, looks down as Train continues, "understanding." At this moment, the camera cuts into Bell's subjectivity to a closeup of his wife's hand clasping his. In voiceover, we hear Train say, "courage…," and the camera tilts up to see Marty's smiling face as Train's voiceover concludes with "the contented heart." We see shots of Bell and Marty gently touching and embracing, and the camera dissolves out of Bell's subjectivity (of a contented Marty) back to the soldiers, who now emerge from trees into an open space, led by Staros.

The combined effects here establish the special role of the voiceover speaker and his power. Completely at odds with what the men are experiencing—nervousness, anxiety, dread—the voiceover interjects, in concert with beautiful nature images, an earnest question and answers offered with a gentle, knowing tone. Such speculations

couldn't possibly be forming in the minds of the soldiers at this point in the narrative, so the viewer must wonder about the voiceover speaker's perspective and point of view, as it contrasts with most of what is shown on-screen. And, as the voiceover speaker's abstractions suddenly shift away from naming the powers of the indeterminate "you" he is addressing (is it nature, the world, a god, 'Being'?)—and his words converge with images that arise from within the subjective mind of Bell, another oddity about perspective must be recognized by the viewer, since Bell's imagining of moments with his wife is doing something very different for him than what the voiceover speaker's words are doing. That is, Bell is reaching within to comfort himself, to allay his fear, perhaps as well to pull himself away from the drudgery, just as he did earlier on the patrol boat when he called up images of his wife to be with him as he prepared for battle. But, while the voiceover speaker says "You give calm a spirit" and is naming one of the powers of some larger force that holds sway over all, Bell is simply trying to use his image of Marty to calm his own spirit. Thus the voiceover paradoxically establishes its difference and separateness from the narrative, "its radical otherness with respect to the diegesis" that Mary Anne Doane says endows the voiceover "with a certain authority" ("The Voice In The Cinema" 342), and also converges with certain images and a character's subjectivity—a performance that defies cinematic convention by doing something Kozloff says is extremely rare, that is, allowing a "narrator" "privileged access to a character's consciousness (focalization 'from within')," which, she says, "does not apply to film….[or] seldom occur[s]" (*Invisible Storytellers* 81).

Unlike the ironic distance that Holly's voiceover creates in *Badlands*, in *The Thin Red Line* the Train voiceovers function both to keep the viewer at an aesthetic distance

from the narrative and also to plunge us into sympathetic connection with the inner worlds of the characters, with their inner experience of being. The voiceover speaker both detaches from the time of the narrative and accompanies non-diegetic images, yet parallels (obliquely, at least) some events, and, strangest of all, enters the inner worlds of other characters, seeming almost to present them to the viewer. His voiceover words produce a tension that juxtapositions of images and events in the diegesis could alone never evoke. Unlike Eisenstein's dialectical montage, no clear synthesis occurs in the juxtaposition of "opposing" voice to image or event, here—rather, the dialectical tension is intensified by it, as the absence of clarity about the voiceover speaker's point of view only gives rise to a crescendo of questions, a ripple-in-the-pond effect whereby the ripples never stop being created because more stones keep disrupting the waters.

The dissonances created by these juxtapositions are not the only ones to be contended with. As has been noted by several critics, the film's departures from convention are many: among them, its challenges to expectations common to the war film genre, its curiously thin, un-eventful plot, especially considering its length and the ambiguity it creates by leaving open the matter of who the "protagonist" is—or even if there is one. In these ways, the film unsettles viewers, leaves unresolved issues and violates conventions that most expect to be made clear.

Dissonances, tensions and challenges to expectations persist and multiply throughout the film—right up to the beginning of the final Train voiceover. At that moment an important revelation is made: all of the Train voiceovers have been spoken from a time later than that of the events shown in the film, a fact made clear by his sudden use of the past tense in his final questions: "Where is it that we were together?

Who were you that I lived with? Walked with?" We have never seen the voiceover speaker visually attached to any image of his diegetic character speaking because those voiceover utterances are being made in the "present," by an "older" Train thinking back on the earlier time of the war.[76] At last, the careful viewer experiences a powerful epiphany that offers some resolution, some answers. To the viewer of *The Thin Red Line*, it becomes clear only at the film's end that Train, speaker of the poetic, questioning voiceovers and a minor, nervous, chattering character in the diegesis, has operated as an acousmetre. That is, Train, physically absent from the diegesis as he speaks in voiceover from a later time, supplies an electrifying jolt as an acousmetre.

Train's acousmatic presence serves as a powerful organizing device, then—it provides an authoritative viewpoint that has otherwise been missed, one that grounds what could otherwise seem a disparate narrative of multiple private inner voices thinly joined by a story of some events in the battle of Guadalcanal. The function of Train's voiceover presence is, however, not simply as a kind of formal jug that contains the film's other individual voices; rather, that presence, more broadly, exists in relation to the diegetic characters, and ultimately provides the dynamic or internal logic that structures or balances the continuous oscillation of tensions within and between characters, sound and image, and between the viewer and the film.

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[76] Malick has indeed given some clues about the voiceover speaker's point of view in Train's comments within the diegesis. When we first meet Train, for example, he exclaims to Sgt. Welsh: "This war—this war ain't gonna be the end of me…," and sure enough, we understand, now, at the end of the film, that it was not. Also, Train's last words within the diegesis, spoken on the ship as the troop leaves the island, are "I'm getting older now. By no means old, but older," just before the final voiceover begins. Perhaps this may be reaching for coherence after the fact; nonetheless, these are intriguing coincidences, at the least.

This "epiphany" makes clear that the Train of the voiceovers is a "paradoxical acousmetre" (Chion, *Audio Vision* 130) whose presence has framed the film and, at the very least, has hovered over everything shown in the film, but, even more strangely, has demonstrated considerable ability to weave in and out of the diegesis. However, while it puts to rest some questions, this revelation provokes more than it answers—since too many things still remain a mystery. For this has not been a conventional voiceover narrator by any means; Train's words have never explained or guided the viewer through a chronology of events. Despite the fact that we know Train speaks in voiceover from a later time than that of the events shown, his point of view with respect to the diegesis remains unclear and variable; his perspective at times seems quite distanced from the events shown in the diegesis yet at others intimately intertwined with the images and the inner worlds of the characters. Viewers' access to Train's presence by means of his voiceover utterances has joined them to his perspective, which exists beyond the events shown in the diegesis, but if he is anchored to an indeterminate time, place, and "film space," then so are the viewers—not exactly a usual or comfortable position. We know Train's voiceover presence is considerably different from that of his diegetic character, but how to account for so striking a difference in his on-screen and off-screen duality is not at all apparent. Even if we have heard his voice, perhaps his inner thoughts, they are unlike those of the other characters in the film. And, so, we must ask how and why his presence differs from that of the other characters—and why <u>his</u> voice prevails.

With these mysteries in mind the viewer must cycle back into the film to engage in fresh considerations. In possession of a new perspective—enlarged, somewhat like that of the voiceover speaker's—we are now "capable of dwelling in the space of

mystery" (Silverman 323), of inhabiting the state of wonder and questioning that Silverman says the film provokes us to adopt. Even more distanced, at this point, from engagements or identifications that, in the ways of traditional film viewers, we may have desired to establish with the characters, those characters' perspective must be compared with the more sustained and more powerful one of Train. Ultimately, the viewer must contend with the fact that Train's presence, as articulated in his voiceover questions and comments and as it relates to the diegesis, produces a vision of the world that offers considerably more hope than that of the characters in the diegesis.

Train's acousmatic presence possesses a perspective radically different from that of his diegetic character, but, more importantly, one that also differs substantially from that of the other characters. Unlike them, he is not trapped by a singular and individual point of view—his "awareness" ranges far beyond that of the other characters, all of whom use their view of themselves and the world to guide their actions and interactions, and, because they are unable to break free from or see beyond the limits of their views, create the internal conflicts that add to their own suffering.

Such considerations reveal that *The Thin Red Line*'s unique quality arises out of the intimate connection between its narrative structure—which is revealed by the identity of the acousmatic status of the Train voiceover presence—and its theme: the power of the act of questioning beyond what one merely sees and hears, beyond the conventional expectations that shape everyday understanding of experience of the world. Malick's use of modernist techniques—various degrees of subjective focalization, broken, elliptical chronology, and the deferral of resolution—constitute a conflicted aesthetic in *The Thin Red Line*. The film's seemingly elusive formal structure simulates the difficulties of

access to and limitations of knowledge that frustrate its characters and also models a way of thinking—or, perhaps, more accurately, a way of being—that offers a resolution to those difficulties.

The film shows that the failure to ask questions that reach beyond one's individual concerns traps one into either living a lie or dying (whether that be actual, physical death, or spiritual, psychic death) and allows the destructive power of the world to dominate, to choke the life out of the beautiful, creative, caring, thriving power of the world. It enacts the power of questioning; the unusual nature of the connection between form and content demonstrates the adoption of a perspective that recognizes the "horizonal" character of life and asks questions about the larger forces of being in a way that produces the possibility of creating a space within the world in which one's soul can come to presence in a positive, creative way.

At the film's end, when the ship is leaving Guadalcanal, we watch the ship's wake as it briskly moves away from the island. In the final asynchronous speech, we can once again be certain this is Train speaking at a great remove from the actual time of the film. Malick ensures that we notice this by presenting Private Train, the actual character within the film, spouting off in his annoying chatter (in first-person present tense) about how much he has suffered and how certain he is that he's been through the worst of it. Immediately thereafter, we hear his voice—it is still Train's, but it sounds deeper. In addition, his language shifts to the past tense, and the camera pans and cuts across many people and places on the ship, indicating that the perspective is *not* that of the Train within the time of the film. Significantly, as well, he's not making foolishly optimistic assertions about how life can only get better but instead asks profound questions about

the world, and his words demonstrate a process of developing mindfulness that strikes directly to the core of a Heideggerian concept of Being. He says: "Where is it that we were together? Who were you that I lived with? Walked with? The brother. The friend. Darkness and light, strife and love. Are they the workings of one mind, the features of the same face? Oh, my soul, let me be in you now. Look out through my eyes. Look out at the things you made—all things shining." This last entreaty is pure Heidegger: the disembodied Train asks his own soul to allow him to inhabit it and then, from within it, to look out upon the world, the world he and his soul create. These words display a mind in the act of questioning the essence of Being, and of an individual human's relationship to Being: "Being in the world" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 82). Whereas Tom Whalen finds this sort of utterance a "metaphysical hoax," it directly demonstrates the kind of understanding Heidegger called "surpassing to the world" (85), of being making "an entrance to the world" (89). In this final scene (shot not from the perspective of any character shown), we see a straight-on view of the ocean vista, and the rocking of the camera suggests the rocking movement of the boat. Additionally, the many passing ships present in the immediately preceding shots do not appear in this final shot, despite the fact that there is no significant lapse in the time it takes for Train's utterance to be made. Together these elements almost encourage viewers to feel as if they are the ones looking out at the water, and as we hear the continuous voice and "see" what it seems to see, Malick shrinks the space between our consciousness and that demonstrated by the voiceover speaker, thus inviting us to adopt that consciousness—to feel as if we, ourselves, are asking these questions, making this request in a voice within our own minds.

These comments about philosophical questioning within the film, which I believe are correct, are brief and suggestive. A full consideration of its Heideggerian underpinnings is the subject for a separate analysis. What they do demonstrate is that Malick used his understanding of Heidegger to catapult *The Thin Red Line* beyond its predecessor, *The Thin Red Line* (1964) by Andrew Marton, which is every bit a classic example of the war genre–into a much deeper realm of philosophical inquiry into the nature of war and human existence. Even at the very least, the film pushes the boundaries of the war film genre. Perhaps Malick's unusual handling of the genre may explain the film's mediocre box-office returns and the tepid reception by critics—particularly in comparison to *Saving Private Ryan*—but it is precisely that handling which, instead of being off-putting, should instead be considered tantalizing.

Conclusion

If Malick uses the subjective or delusional voice of its protagonists in *The Thin Red Line* to draw our attention away from the present moment and linear narrative and direct it towards a philosophical questioning of the nature of being, then the most unusual of all the film's utterances are those of Private Train: through them we gain access to Malick's most serious, though perhaps most abstract, concerns. Train's asynchronous speeches "disrupt" the film in a manner like the voiceover of the dead Japanese soldier and similarly call attention to their content. Unlike what Colonel Tall thinks to himself early in the film—"The closer you get to Caesar, the greater the fear"— the principle Malick uses in the film's voiceover techniques is "The further you get from the diegesis, the greater the contemplation of universal questions of Being."

Therefore, the fact that Train's asynchronous speeches are so profound can only mean that they are being uttered from a perspective of great distance from the moments where we witness him on screen, and, ultimately, the speeches demonstrate Malick's exploitation of aesthetic distance by creating a disjunction between the man we see on the screen, within the narrative, and the words that we hear him speak in asynchronous utterances. Malick creates this gap between seen and heard character and unseen, asynchronous speeches precisely to jar the viewer into adopting the state of questioning displayed by Train.

Furstenau and MacAvoy seem to be the only critics who recognize the importance of Heideggerian questioning in *The Thin Red Line*. They make a case that Malick, who studied, translated, and taught Heidegger, attempts in *The Thin Red Line* to make Heideggerian questions about Being, which quite naturally arise in response to the threat war poses to extinguish life, the core concern of the film. They argue that "the film must not merely represent [the problems of human existence]; it must present these questions and issues in such a manner that they become questions and issues for us [the viewer]" (183). However, even they fail to recognize the role that Train's disembodied utterances play in this process: whereas the earlier discussion of the individual characters' privately spoken words, memories, and inner thoughts *represent* the problems of human being, all of Train's asynchronous speeches fulfill the latter function—they "become questions and issues for us." Train's asynchronous utterances create widening degrees of distance between the world of the film and the viewer's position in relation to that world. Because Malick never grants us a visual shot that establishes Train as the speaker of these voiceovers, to my knowledge never lets us see through his eyes, we are blindly sutured

into his subjectivity, forced into his introspection, which ultimately gets us closer to inhabiting his consciousness, asking his questions, and achieving Malick's Heideggerian aims.

Chapter VI
Rising and Falling in *The New World*

The New World opens with a black screen and sounds of insects chirping and birds tweeting. The first image is a slow tracking shot of the reflection of trees in water, a take that lasts for an extremely long forty-five seconds. Then, a woman's voice says in voiceover, "Come, spirit. Help us sing the story of our land. You are our mother; we, your field of corn. We rise…from out of the soul of you." Malick cuts to a low-angle shot of that woman, Pocahontas (Q'Orianka Kilcher), standing and praying, reaching to the sky.

The opening credits present a native map being inscribed (Europeanized) as the settlers arrive to America. Near the end of the credits, "Vorspiel" from Richard Wagner's opera *Das Rheingold* begins, a song that slowly rises in pitch and volume. The effect is termed a musical drone, i.e. it is a sustained harmonic effect where a note or chord is continuously sounded throughout a piece.[77] The pitch and volume of the chord continually rise. "Vorspiel" will play throughout the following scenes for approximately four minutes.

After the map has been filled in, Malick cuts from black to a shot from under the water. After five shots, Malick dissolves—from below the water—to a low-angle shot of three Native Americans, on the shore, pointing in the distance. All the while, the drone of "Vorspiel" continues to rise. After a dissolve to the surface of the water, a non-diegetic insert indicates that the time is Virginia 1607. The camera tilts up from the water's

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[77] "Vorspiel" begins with a low E flat, and builds in more and more elaborate figurations of the chord of E flat major. See Robert Erickson's book, *Sound Structure in Music*, p. 94. University of California Press, 1975.

surface to an establishing shot of three ships in the distance. After five shots, we cut to a point-of-view shot of Captain John Smith (Colin Farrell) framed through a window in a black cell, seeing America for the first time. Then, Malick cuts to Smith emerging from the darkness. As Smith glances up, Malick cuts to a worm's eye point-of-view shot of Smith reaching his manacled hands to the sky, limited by the grates of the cell window. Malick cuts to another shot of men on the ship looking to shore. "Vorspiel" continues to rise.

Suddenly, we are on the land**.** A tracking camera quickly tilts down from treetops to an establishing shot of Native Americans running to the edge of the water. After another four shots, we see Pocahontas looking at the ships, and then cut back to the ship and a shot of Smith looking toward the shore. "Vorspiel" rises and rises, reaching a peak that never provides the satisfaction of turning over, never concluding or reaching a crescendo.

After another shot from Smith's point-of-view framed through the blackness of his cell window, Malick cuts to Smith, who smiles in delight as he looks up at the sky. After two shots, a colonist secures the ship to a tree with a rope. Men slosh through water to shore, and one colonist scoops up a handful of water, immediately spitting it out, as if in disgust. Malick cuts back to the ship for one shot, and the scene concludes with Smith looking at the sky. Malick cuts to grass as "Vorspiel" fades to silence.

In this lengthy opening scene, cinematic style complicates what seems perhaps a historical romance. Yet, these opening moments are poignant for a number of reasons. In the scene, Malick uses more sophisticated and disarming editing than were typical of his earlier films. In the first four minutes, he cuts to black, dissolves, employs long takes

and uses jump cuts. He also uses point-of-view shots and eyeline matches, and an active camera tilts, tracks, and pans. He frames shots through windows and shows extreme closeups of hands. Finally, he opens the film with the rising "Vorspiel," and—as he does in each of his other films—with a compelling voiceover.

In this opening, Malick shows that he is the architect of *The New World*, a writer and director who weaves a dense message. Just as Pocahontas indicates that the narrative will be a song, one wherein we rise from out of the soul of Mother (Nature),[78] "Vorspiel" also rises in a way that helps elucidate the film's meanings. "Vorspiel" structures the film, and the song provides a key organizing idea for critical exploration into the early founding of America. "Vorspiel" is a cue for hope: when "Vorspiel" stops, we see a series of disappointments, a fall immediately after the rise when the original possibilities don't work out. Malick believes that the seeds of problems in the contemporary world, the seeds of the rejection of cooperation and the acceptance of violence, based on a European sense of cultural superiority and actual military superiority, were planted in this foundational moment; he also believes they could have been avoided. He interrogates the origins of what became the United States and the early interaction between Native Americans and settlers.

The rising "Vorspiel" plays three times in the film: during the moment the colonists arrive to America in search of a "kingdom of the spirit," a Promised Land—a moment of possibility yet loss; during Smith's time of happiness in and expulsion from a natural Eden—again a moment of possibility followed by loss; and during Pocahontas's

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[78] Lloyd Michaels makes this distinction.

rebirth and acceptance of a new culture, a kind of loss that ends with a return to possibility. In each instance that "Vorspiel" is heard, before it reaches a peak, Malick depicts a fall, a fall that may be read as occurring from the limitations of European horizons. In other words, the film's narrative rises and falls twice, then rises again, leaving us at the end dangling in a space without the satisfaction of a conventional conclusion, a space which, through the interrogation of Being, points to the possibility of living according to a new way of being in the world, a way of being that supplants America's fall from grace in its opening moments.

As in Malick's other films, *The New World* raises and points out the limitations of American cultural myths—the Adamic myth, the myth of regeneration through violence, and the myth of romantic love—at a crucial moment in American history and American myth. The movie is about the settlers and Native Americans trying to establish a new way of being in the world. Malick sees this moment as filled with possibility but one fraught with danger. The film portrays two cultures, one in harmony with nature and the other punitive and authoritarian. Malick is thus interested in exploring both the possibilities for hope and the potential for the destructiveness in this interaction.

In helping Pocahontas's people, and us, sing a story of our land, Malick's film is a poetic song, a work of art, that engages with American cultural myths as Being emerges. Ultimately, this opening scene illuminates the whole; that is, as we will see, Malick's film is a song, one sung to show contemporary America an authentic understanding of Being—the ground of America's roots—in order to offer a hopeful future in our present-day lives as Americans.

In this chapter, I will analyze *The New World's* narrative and stylistic systems, arguing that Malick uses the historical romance as a way to explore how the ideology of American cultural myths, in conjunction with a distinctly Heideggerian technocratic rationality, has separated man from himself, other beings, and from a connection with any larger sense of Being. A crucial concern of the film is its Heideggerian philosophical investigation of the nature of being (Being), which we see through the voiceovers of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith. According to Heidegger, in order to know Being, one needs to situate oneself in a particular place at a particular time—in this case, Malick's film situates us in the founding moments of America. Malick aims to call attention to the ways any audience member, specifically Americans, may be limited by his or her own horizons, which are inherently entwined within and defined by—as Heidegger suggests—the epistemological rationality of western metaphysics that inhibits ontological thinking or the questioning of the meaning of Being.

Production History

A filmmaker's position, experience, and status within the film industry determine in important ways the level of constraints under which he works, and during the era of the New Hollywood, Malick managed to exercise an unusually high level of creative control on his fourth film. This calls to mind what Lloyd Michaels has said about Malick as a director who employs the personal epic mode pioneered in the 1970s by Francis Ford Coppola (*Apocalypse Now*, 1979) and Michael Cimino (*The Deer Hunter*, 1978), a director "who had the resourcefulness to obtain—and the audacity to risk—many millions of other people's dollars on highly intuitive, even eccentric visions" (79). Nevertheless, Malick was ultimately placed under pressure by the studio to re-edit a

shorter version of the film in order to accommodate audiences.[79] Still, Malick was able to gain so much control over *The New World* because he had three critically acclaimed films under his belt and was now considered an established, albeit eccentric, auteur. Between *The Thin Red Line* and *The New World*, Malick worked on a screenplay about Che Guevara's attempts to start a revolution in Bolivia, a script about the last year of Guevara's life. In March 2004, financing fell through, however, and Malick left the project[80] (Tartaglione). Malick began production on *The New World* in July 2004.

As in his other films, Malick's involvement with *The New World*'s film production extended from the initial conceptualization (Malick initially worked on the script for *The New World* in the late 1970s [Sterritt, "Film, Philosophy and Terrence Malick"]) through the entire production process until the film's release in December 2005. From conception to completion, *The New World* took years to make, although Malick shot the film from July 2004 to the end of 2005. The film was shot on location for four and a half months at the Chickahominy River, a tributary of the James River not far from the site of the historic events, and other nearby locations. The scenes in England were filmed over two weeks at Hampton Court Palace and Hatfield House, near London, and outside the Bodleian Library at Oxford University.

Much like his experience with his other three films, Malick managed to maintain artistic control over his fourth film, and the stabilizing nature of the film industry in the

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[79] In fact, Malick cut three versions of the film. There is a general international release version of 135 minutes, and a 150-minute version briefly circulated and then withdrawn. A third 172-minute version dubbed "The Extended Cut" was issued by New Line on DVD in October 2008. My analysis will examine the 135 minute version.

[80] Steven Soderbergh ultimately agreed to direct the film.

mid-to-late 2000s still provided limited opportunities for experienced filmmakers to make more personal mid-level budget feature films. To achieve control over the film, Malick was heavily involved in several aspects of the film. He wrote his own script (which he ultimately didn't follow, choosing instead to improvise by adding voiceover in the editing room),[81] worked with costume designer Jacqueline West and set designer Jack Fisk to achieve authenticity, and collaborated with James Horner on the film's music. He also worked closely with cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki.

Malick continued his practice of using voiceovers in *The New World.* When asked about the voiceovers, Q'orianka Kilcher, who plays Pocahontas, replied, "Well, we did the voice-overs at the end, and I had no clue where they were going to put them … I've had smaller roles—I've never had the main role, so I'm not really sure what is long [time spent recording voiceovers] and what seems not long—but to me it seemed short. I mean, yeah, it was challenging, and it was kind of hard sometimes, but it seemed to go by too quickly" (Rocchi). Christian Bale also commented on Malick's use of voiceover. According to Bale, "with the voice over it was really quite fascinating; Terry would sometimes send me thirty pages of voice over and it was fascinating. He's a wonderful writer. He just likes to amass as much interesting [content] as possible, and then unfortunately has to condense it and lose a great deal" (Stevens, "Interview"). Bale concludes that "I like very much the way that he [Malick] worked" (Murray). As we have learned, Malick emphasizes voiceover in his films, and he worked with Kilcher and

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[81] Malick was heavily involved with editing the film. However, there is no interview with Billy Weber that discusses working with Malick. On the film, Malick worked with only one cameraman, Emmanuel Lubezki.

Bale much the same way that he worked with Linda Manz in *Days of Heaven* and John Dee Smith in *The Thin Red Line*.

Malick also likes improvising with actors and helped Kilcher with her acting when shooting the film. Kilcher says that Malick was always available on the set, that he met with her in the evenings to go over the next day's scenes, and that he always made sure she understood what she was to do (Anderson). According to Kilcher, "We never rehearsed anything, and it was all naturally lit sets and everything.…We would just start filming and we wouldn't stop filming until the camera was rolled out. There was something like a million feet of film shot. We would just be doing spur-of-the-moment things, just whatever felt right. If he had an idea we would do it, and if any of us had an idea, we would just try it, and just do whatever and see what worked and what didn't" (Anderson).

In the film, Kilcher has few lines, and of those lines, few are in English. Nevertheless, Malick gave her direction in the scenes. Says Kilcher, "All the silent things [originally] had huge amounts of dialogue. In the morning, Terry would sometimes come to me and Colin [Farrell] and give us each three pages of dialogue. So we would fry our brains trying to learn it. And then we'd be about to do that scene and he'd come up to us and be like, "Um, yeah, uh, Q'orianka, um, Colin, um, you know, just maybe, uh, just maybe say this one line, and everything else, uh, just say it silently. Okay?" (Yuan). Malick would say, "'Don't say anything else, oh good.' It was in a way like learning a new language and I would try to internalize and convey it through my facial expressions and body movements" (Accomando).

Bale also commented on Malick's use of dialogue and improvisation in the movie: "We were accustomed to that on the set because many times he would say to us, 'Here's the scene. Here's the dialogue.' And we might change it at the last minute, or whatever. But he'd also say, 'If you don't like saying it, don't say it.' And he really meant it. He didn't say it—just say to say it. He really meant that we should do what felt right. 'I don't want you saying any of the lines that I've written if it doesn't feel right.'"

In fact, Malick approached much of his material as if it were a silent movie. This meant that he could call out directions as the cameras were rolling. Says Kilcher, "Sometimes he would see a fennel field blowing in the wind and he would say, in the middle of the shoot, Q'orianka, go run through that fennel field, be the wind, be the wind. And so it would be little things like that that would come in the spirit of the moment and what he was seeing and the beauty that he saw in the simplicity of nature" (Accomando). As in his other films, Malick allows the actors great freedom in this movie.

According to the costume designer, Jacqueline West, working with the costumes on the set was an interesting experience:

> one of the things I loved about *The New World* was that the costumes were so dirty. The actors didn't look like they were doing a reenactment for a museum celebration. That's what I worry about in so many period films; that it doesn't look like a reenactment. We made everything for *The New World* so we could age it, because people had only one outfit and there were no dry cleaners. A lot of the clothes were wool so they didn't wash them because they would shrink. The actors would just live in them

> forever without cleaning them. People smelled, but then everybody smelled, so nobody really commented on it! (Elrick)

Jack Fisk, the art director, has worked with Malick on each of his films. According to him, this film emphasized authenticity—in costumes, location, and settings. Fisk constructed a Jamestown settlement and the Powhatan village based on archaeological evidence and discussions with historians. They used tools and materials related to the geographical and technological environment of 17th century Jamestown, and Fisk even replicated the log fort and mud buildings. Fisk says the design of the Jamestown fort for the movie was in many ways similar to what the APVA Preservation Virginia archaeologists described to him. The fort in the movie, however, did have more gates, doorways, and windows and was actually smaller than the actual fort (Boyle). The film production was so intent on authenticity, in fact, that it sought historical varieties rather than settle for contemporary strains of Indian corn and tobacco plants. In addition, Malick emphasized the use of Native American actors and extras who were trained by Blair Rudes, professor of linguistics at UNC-Charlotte, to speak a form of the extinct Powhatan language, Algonquian (Boyle).

Malick had much control over the music and editing, so much so that it affected musician James Horner's feelings about Malick. Malick's editing led to a partial rejection of Horner's score, which disturbed Horner. Horner, a prolific composer who won an Oscar for his score on *Titanic*, wrote and rewrote his score to scenes that ended up being non-linear, reedited, or cut from the film completely. His score, then, did not fit and didn't make chronological sense. Ultimately, Malick combined pieces of Horner's music with "Vorspiel," the prelude to Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, Mozart's "Piano Concerto No.

23," and other pieces to create the score. The experience led to resentment from the composer, and in a radio interview with "On The Score" conducted by Daniel Schweiger for Film Music Radio, Horner expresses his disappointing experience working with Malick:

> I played him scenes, I played him everything on the piano and I had the feeling he did not really know what movie music was. He didn't have any experience with real film music being presented to him. Even in *Thin Red Line* it was all cut up. Here I was writing music for him, which he would say was 'beautiful and great' and sounded 'great' on the piano….I never felt so letdown by a filmmaker in my life....It was the most disappointing experience I've ever had with a man because not only did he throw out my score, he loved my score, he didn't have a clue what to do with it. He didn't have a clue how to use music. So what he started to do was, as I said, to take classical pieces, but not even pieces that would be transparent and lovely, he was taking Wagner like a thick blanket and putting it in his movie. (Schweiger)

Clearly, Horner, an experienced composer for conventional movies, was disappointed in the way that Malick, an unconventional director of unconventional movies, uses music. Nevertheless, many argue that Malick's use of music is one of the outstanding aspects of his filmmaking (Power, Wierzbicki).

Malick had equal control over the cinematography although he worked more closely with cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki. Lubezki first met Malick when the director was preparing the project about Che Guevara. Although Malick eventually left

that project, Malick asked Lubezki to shoot *The New World*: "When we met to discuss it, I gave him my ideas, and we talked about not lighting, not using heavy grip equipment, doing it with a handheld camera close to the action. Terry said, 'Man, you're crazy, but this is music to my ears'" (B 49).

Malick and Lubezki subsequently developed a charter for the film, a list of rules that they called "Dogma" in reference to Dogme95, the Danish brand of cinematic Puritanism. "I shouldn't call it Dogma because everyone thinks we're talking about the other guys," says Lubezki. "This was our set of rules, but like many dogmas, it has some contradictions." The most important tenet was "resolution" which led the filmmakers to consider shooting in 65mm. (They eventually opted for anamorphic 35mm.) The rules excluded most of the cinematographer's standard tools: "We wanted to avoid lighting, dollies, tripods, cranes, high-speed work, long lenses, filters and CGI," says Lubezki. According to Lubezki:

> We didn't want any 'postcards'; pretty shots of sunsets. We also didn't want lens flares, which is a contradiction with anamorphic. The sun happens to be a very important character in the film, the most important force in nature, and we wanted to show it in relation to the characters, so we ended up breaking the flare rule many times. We all remember the beautiful crane shots John Toll [ASC] used in *The Thin Red Line*. When I told my key grip we were doing a movie with Terry Malick, he got very excited and said, 'Great! We can use this crane and ...Then I had to interrupt him and say, 'We're not bringing any gear. You're going to help me carry the camera and a bead board, and that's it. He ended up working

very hard.' (Ultimately, a Giraffe crane was used on the production; it was mounted on a boat so the camera could reach up to the English ships.)

The most important article for Terry was 'Article E—E for exception!' We could break any rule, and indeed, we broke them all, but we had these guiding ideas. Perhaps the most radical decision was not to use lighting. 'That doesn't mean we didn't have lights;' Lubezki confesses. I had some just in case, but I didn't want Terry to see them. And, in keeping with 'Article E,' we used them for a couple of scenes—we had to or we couldn't have shot. But this is basically a sunlit movie. When we were shooting, we were extra-aware of how everything in nature is constantly shifting. We became aware of the earth moving, the shadows changing, the color temperature constantly shifting, the rivers changing color, and the tide shifting, and all of that happens really fast. When you're distracted, you don't notice those changes. Shooting studio movies, you tend to want to control the elements, but on this picture we didn't—we wanted to capture life. The moment we embraced life, we turned our backs on artificial light. I think the flow of nature became a theme of the movie. (B 59)

In particular, Malick and Lubezki made a special effort to combine three elements: a widescreen format, natural lighting, and deep focus. Lubezki acknowledges that not using film lights was difficult at first: "We were going against my instincts, but after one or two weeks, I was sold on it. The problem with natural light is that it's chaotic. It's polluted with colors and bounces, and if the skies aren't cloudy it can distort a face or an

object; people can look older or tired. When you light something with artificial light, even if it's just a chair, you're capturing an ideal shape of the chair. When you're lighting with the sun, shadows and colors are constantly changing the shape" (B 50-51)

The New World's strong visual style is established in large part by Malick's fondness for accidents and his extensive and improvisational Steadicam work. According to Lubezki, "We tried to capture the accidents, the things you cannot plan, the moments that feel the most real. For Terry, that was more important than capturing a piece of dialogue. That made operating the camera tense but incredibly interesting. Sometimes we would get something and sometimes we wouldn't. Sometimes Terry would say, 'Pan right' or 'Go left' and sometimes he would just let us go" (B 57). Reflecting on this shoot, Lubezki notes, "Terry created a mood that made us like fishermen, trying to catch fish in the water, moments in the flow of events around us as they were moving and changing. When you're filming, you often develop little secrets that help you find a visual style, and our secret idea was the flow of time and life. We were trying to find that in everything around us—in nature, in the change of the seasons, and in the actors' moments. There is poetry in all the variations" (B 57).

In sum, Malick pursued a consistent set of onscreen effects, even in the absence of storyboards. His "dogma" yields internally distinguished shots in which relations between elements are the major sources of visual concern. Malick had much control over his fourth feature film due to the various industrial conditions that existed within Hollywood at the time. Attention to the production history of *The New World* is a key consideration as one seeks to understand the film.

A *New* Way

In *The New World*, Malick articulates the problems of existence intrinsic to contemporary life—violence, slavish materialism, and the yearning for redemption, all emanating from the celebration of a self-propelling individualism—as he makes a subtle critique of America's cultural myths through the investigation of Being. The questioning or interrogation of Being begins with

> the horizon of a pre-existing but vague understanding of Being; for we cannot ask 'What is '"Being"?' without making use of the very term at issue….Our prior understanding of Being may well be sedimented with the distortions of earlier theorizing and ancient prejudices, which must of course be identified and neutralized as quickly as possible; but they can only be uncovered by unfolding that prior understanding with the utmost vigilance, not by avoiding contact with it altogether….Since Being is always the Being of an entity or entities, then what is interrogated in our enquiry will be entities themselves, with regard to their Being. And the hoped-for conclusion of the enquiry is—of course—the meaning of Being. But, if our interrogation is to deliver what we seek, then we must question those entities in the manner that is most appropriate to them and to the goal of our enquiry. We must find a mode of access to them that allows them to yield the characteristics of their Being without falsification. (Mulhall 13)

Ultimately, the film is a temporal unfolding, an unfolding that finds its mode of access through poetic voiceovers and an unconventional narrative which partially reveals Being.

I develop the rest of the section by showing how the film is unconventional, and by indicating instead how the film uses unique narrative and stylistic elements to develop certain critical meanings or themes and to create an emotional tone that draws us into two of the three protagonists and invites us to reflect on the nature of being.

As in his earlier films, Malick continues to undermine many classical Hollywood conventions as he further develops his own aesthetic. For example, the narrative is not told using an "invisible" cinematic style. As in his other films, there is not a clearly defined individual male protagonist; instead, Pocahontas, Captain John Smith, and John Rolfe all serve as multiple protagonists, and they engage with philosophical matters as voiceover narrators. The film also lacks a clearly defined individual or group antagonist; that is, the colonists struggle with themselves and the natives, who would ordinarily be considered the antagonist in a conventional film, yet in *The New World*, the Native Americans are humanized in a way that undermines their being understood as antagonists. In fact, the film encourages viewers to admire the natives' way of being in the Powhatan village. While the narrative is linear, the plot is elliptical and episodic. The primary conflict in the film is well-defined; the protagonists' surface-level desires and goals are clear—the English settlers aim to colonize the New World, and Captain John Smith and Pocahontas aim to be together. But, the ending of *The New World* is not closed. Granted we witness the fate of John Smith, Pocahontas, and John Rolfe; however, Malick concludes the film with a meditative voiceover and ambiguous images of Pocahontas at play in nature.

Without question, *The New World* employs, yet undermines, conventions of the historical romance, movies such as *The Last of the Mohicans* (Michael Mann, 1992),

Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner 1990), *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), *Alexander* (Oliver Stone, 2004), *Troy* (Wolfgang Petersen 2004), *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Michael Curtiz 1936) and Disney's *Pocahontas* (Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg 1995). The genre is usually marked by a romantic triangle with a couple at its core, but *The New World* fails to allow the central romantic couple to reconcile and achieve a happy satisfaction of their desires in the film's end, thwarting the common trajectory of many romances. However, he concludes the film with the third member of the romantic triangle achieving happiness with the female protagonist. Ultimately, the viewer is left dissatisfied and disappointed with the quality of this relationship.

As he had in *Badlands*, Malick ultimately uses a popular genre to expose the inherent contradictions and failures/limitations of American cultural myths. In doing so, the film exposes the problems with these myths which make it difficult for those who accept these myths to discover the nature of being. In *The New World*, Malick engages with American cultural myths to destroy conventional habits of perception that blind us to the everyday. We find a "hopeful," heroic Adam as "an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched by the usual inheritance of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling...fundamentally innocent" (Lewis, R 5). Captain John Smith is the embodiment of such an Adam.

The frontier myth can, in turn, be described as a mythic part of American self-representation, a deeply ingrained trope in which Americans have conceptualized and legitimated the heroic conquest of open spaces and the acquisitive expansionism that is at the root of both individual and social American aspiration. Slotkin says that the "myth of the frontier" is the "conception of America as a wide-open land of unlimited

opportunity for the strong, ambitious, self–reliant individual to thrust his way to the top.…The first colonists saw in America an opportunity to regenerate their fortunes, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation; but the means to that regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience" (*Regeneration* 5). In *The New World*, both Captain John Smith and Captain Newport (Christopher Plummer), as well as the colonists, are depicted adhering to this myth.

The New World also engages with and complicates the myth of romantic love, which suggests that when we've finally found that one person who truly cares for us, that person will never disappoint us, never fail us, never leave us. At least while it lasts, we get lulled into feeling safe, secure, and on top of the world. When we see lovers together, they are usually consumed with unbounded passion or overcoming internal and external obstacles to being together. We see Malick engaging with this myth with the Captain John Smith and Pocahontas characters in particular.

Rises and Falls

The narrative of *The New World* helps Malick develop these concerns. The film loosely parallels the story of Captain John Smith and Pocahontas. Malick's film combines recorded history with popular myth and generally follows the documented life of Pocahontas, from her youth in the Powhatan village, to her time spent with the settlers in Jamestown, her marriage to John Rolfe (Christian Bale), her trip to London, and her early death. Malick deviates, however, from existing evidence of the founding of Jamestown, preferring the literary tradition that Pocahontas fell in love with John Smith.

At the beginning of the film, Pocahontas prays to her god, Mother, asking her to help sing a story of her land. Pocahontas and other Native Americans then witness the arrival of three ships. The year is 1607, and the ships have been sent by English royal charter to found a colony in the New World. On one ship, Captain John Smith, is chained below deck. Once ashore, Smith is initially sentenced to death by hanging for mutinous remarks, yet he is pardoned by Captain Christopher Newport, the leader of the mission to the New World.

After they settle at Jamestown, disease, lack of discipline, supply shortages, and tension with the Native Americans affect the success of the expedition. To improve their circumstances, Smith takes a group of men up the river to seek trade with a "King," while Newport returns to England for supplies. Smith is captured by a group of natives and brought before their Chief, Powhatan (August Schellenberg). He is nearly executed yet is spared when Pocahontas intervenes and saves his life.

Powhatan lets Smith live in his village; he is treated well and earns the friendship and respect of the tribe. He admires the Native Americans' way of living, and he falls in love with Pocahontas. Over time, Smith begins to question his earlier life as an explorer. However, seeing that his daughter is spending too much time with Smith, Powhatan sends Smith back to Jamestown on the condition that the English leave in the spring.

When he returns, Smith witnesses a settlement in disorder. After a fight in which one man dies, Smith becomes governor of the fort, finding the peace he felt living in the village replaced by death. Smith reminisces about his love for Pocahontas but dismisses the idea of returning to her. He thinks of his time with Pocahontas and the Native Americans as "a dream" from which he has suddenly awakened. The settlers struggle

through a bitter winter and are saved from death when Pocahontas and a rescue party bring food, clothes, and supplies.

In the spring, Powhatan realizes that the English plan to stay. When he discovers that Pocahontas provided the settlers with seeds for corn to stay alive, he orders an attack on Jamestown and exiles Pocahontas. The Native Americans defeat the settlers, but the settlers learn of Pocahontas' exile and organize a trade so that she can be taken captive and used to avoid further attacks. Smith objects to the plan and is stripped of his governorship. When Pocahontas is brought into Jamestown, she and Smith renew their love affair. Captain Newport returns, however, and tells Smith that the King wishes Smith to lead his own expedition to find passage to the Indies. Smith is torn between his love for Pocahontas and the promise of glory, but decides to return to England. He tells a friend to tell Pocahontas later that he drowned while crossing the ocean.

Time passes, and Samuel Argall (Yorick van Wageningen) goes on a trading expedition up the Potomac River to barter for Pocahontas from the Patawomecks in order to use her to negotiate with Chief Powhatan, whom Argall will not harm. During this time, Pocahontas learns the English language and customs and takes a new name, Rebecca. After hearing the news about Smith in Jamestown, Pocahontas sinks into depression. Eventually she finds comfort from John Rolfe (Christian Bale). He helps her adapt to the English way of life, and she is baptized, gets an education, and eventually marries Rolfe, giving birth to a son. She feels happy with her new life yet learns that Captain Smith is still alive. Realizing that she still loves Smith, she has a disagreement with her husband. They are given a chance to travel to England, however, to visit with the King and Queen. In England, Rolfe sets up a meeting between Pocahontas and Smith

because he believes that his wife still loves Smith and that she will not be at peace until she sees him again.

During their meeting, we see how much Smith and Pocahontas have changed. Smith admits that he may have made a mistake in choosing his career over his love for Pocahontas, saying that what they experienced in Virginia was not a dream but instead "the only truth." Pocahontas asks if he ever found his Indies, and he replies, "I may have sailed past them." Pocahontas finally accepts Rolfe as her husband, and she and Rolfe make arrangements to return to Virginia. On the outward passage, she becomes ill and dies.

The film ends with images of Pocahontas and her young son playing in the gardens of their English estate. Rolfe, in a voiceover, reads a letter addressed to their son about his deceased mother. In the film's closing moments, Pocahontas says, "Mother, now I know where you live," and the film ends with Pocahontas playing and images of nature.

A general segmentation of the plot looks like this:

1. Water
2. Credits
3. Land
4. Ship
5. Land
6. Fort
7. Powhatan's Village
8. Jamestown
9. Newfoundland
10. Jamestown
11. England

In *The New World*, then, a linear story combines with both ambiguous protagonists and antagonists, an episodic plot, a perplexing ending, and an intellectual montage that

connects nature shots with elements of the narrative form, other techniques of cinematic style, and meditative voiceover commentary. The result is a tragic tale the central focus of which is on the very early interaction between two cultures and the possibilities and opportunities this interaction offered, and the challenges and obstacles that made positive interaction difficult. In doing so, the film exposes the problems with American and European cultural myths through stunning visual compositions, cinematography, and computer-generated effects, and obscuring moral or ideological judgments about the characters, the English, and the Native Americans.

As in *The Thin Red Line*, *The New World* has no clearly defined individual protagonist, yet Malick's vague protagonists nonetheless encourage a certain level of viewer identification with three of the central characters. The film is neither character nor plot driven, and Malick, for the most part, encourages empathetic characterizations. The key to understanding how Malick uses many protagonists involves the repeated presentation of scenes that show characters engaged through voiceover in private moments of self-reflection. Through the scenes of its two primary characters, Pocahontas and John Smith, for instance, Malick invites the viewer to witness how each repeatedly struggles with the problem of how to align some felt, inner sense or belief with outward actions. The accumulation of and prominence of these scenes—scenes that are more powerful because of their intimacy, stillness, and silence—suggest that the film offers a philosophical questioning of being.

The most engaging characters in the film, Pocahontas and Captain John Smith, advance the narrative. As the film's primary protagonists, they narrate the film in voiceover. Pocahontas's narration begins when she opens the film, asking for help from

Mother, a goddess of Nature, to help her sing a song of her land. Based on Pocahontas' introduction as the film's voiceover narrator, we would assume that she could perhaps be the film's lone protagonist, simply because she is the first character we see and hear. Also, as is the case with *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*, Pocahontas's young age, sex, ethnic difference, and innocence initially encourage the viewer to identify with her. Throughout the film, we see her gaze in rapture at the wind, the sky, and the trees. She looks at the sky in a kind of ecstasy; she plays and laughs easily.

She is also stubborn and willful, as we see when she saves Smith's life. She is also her father's favorite, as Smith indicates in voiceover: "All the children of the king were beautiful, but she, the youngest, was so exceedingly so that the sun himself—though he saw her often—was surprised whenever she came out into his presence. Her father had a dozen wives, a hundred children, but she was his favorite. She exceeded the rest not only in feature and proportion but in wit and spirit too. All loved her." The villagers all defer to her.

After she learns of Smith's "death," however, she is no longer is the happy being Smith met in the forest. Something changes in her, and she has nowhere to turn. She desperately wants to make her peace with the world. Once she meets Rolfe, she seems to accept his kindness and devotion. Though she does not love him, she admires him a great deal. Gradually they settle into a life of quiet domesticicity. Pocahontas takes care of the cattle and leads them to their stalls. She seems to regard her husband with a growing devotion; he has saved her from the sadness of her life without Smith. Her unhappiness is no longer so acute; she appreciates his kindness. Still, one can tell from her distracted manner that she does not regard him with anything like the feeling she once had for

Smith. Also, she does not play in the river or run carefree through the forests. Things change, however, when she has a child, Thomas, whom she loves. In the film's conclusion, although she is wearing the more restrictive clothes of the English, she also somersaults, plays in the water, and runs around gaily in nature, acting as she did when she lived in her village. In other words, she has shown resiliency and managed to negotiate the clash between cultures that makes up the central focus of the film.

Despite Pocahontas' definitive moments as a voiceover narrator, such as the one in the opening of the film, we quickly learn that Captain John Smith will become a dominant force that also propels the narrative forward, a fact that we witness at the beginning of the film once he is freed from hanging for his mutinous remarks on the ship in his journey to America. After his freedom, Smith enters the world as an American Adam. He looks at the world—the trees, the sky—as if for the first time. Shortly after landing in America, Smith enters the forest in awe, as if entering a great cathedral.

Smith is a man of great strength, a warm-hearted rebel, and a lover of play, as we see in his admiration of Pocahontas. As we learn from his mutiny on the ship coming to America, he speaks his mind without mincing words. We assume that he is accustomed to the disfavor of his superiors. With no rank or property, no education or connections, he can only win fame or fortune through his daring. He is a true pioneer, forever leaving the past behind, saying, "How many seas! What blows, dangers! How many lands behind me!" He bears the brunt of danger, contemptuous of fear—a conqueror who makes the shore his home for a while, then inevitably grows bored and moves on to seek his luck elsewhere.

Once he meets Pocahontas, however, things change. He feels his heart and senses unfolding. He has found a kind of passage to the other sea he has been searching for in his life. She is like a lost Eve living in a new world. We gather that he loves her as he has never loved before. We see that his former ambitions seem as nothing now. He is a changed man, and this change is the proof that his old artificial life—his life as a colonist—never was or could be the real one. But even as he knows this is what he has always been waiting for, striving for, he fears that he might be overwhelmed. He is tempted to rush back into the comfort of his former life. Little by little he parts with the ideas that clothe the soul of the European, and above all with the idea that a man attains strength through force. He has assumed, in a way, the dress and manners of the Indians as he discovers a self he never knew he had.

Once he returns to the fort, however, Smith comes to see things with English eyes again. The whole scheme of his former life with Pocahontas and the Native Americans in the forest is called into question and seems now to be an illusion. He wonders in voiceover if he should obey the voice that commanded him in the forest. He wonders whether he should live in the world of the colonists or the one with the natives. It strikes Smith that there is some other way of existing in this world—a different way of being—outside the eternal circle of struggle and desire to get ahead and make new discoveries. His civilized brothers have lost something the Indians enjoy. Deep inside, Smith feels there is something waiting for him, something fine and ineffable, infinitely more exalted than the prospect of fame and fortune that draws the other English on.

But, even as he entertains these thoughts, he half-knows he will not honor them—that the passionate conviction of his time with the Native Americans seems a dream, a

passing fancy. Smith has always believed that sooner or later something good, something special, was in store for him: a destiny all his own. To encourage Smith's endeavors, Captain Newport says,

> You have the makings of a leader, Smith….Make England's name formidable….You could do your nation a great service. All nations! His Majesty is ready to finance a considerable expedition. Needless to say, it will be a very famous man who finds it—the passage—a way through. Shall you be a discoverer of passages which you refused yourself to explore—beyond the threshold? The King wants you to return to England and prepare an expedition of your own, to chart the northern coasts—to see if you might find a passage to the Indies.

Ultimately, Smith relinquishes to the promise of finding the passage to the Indies; he leaves Pocahontas behind, seeing his time with the Native Americans as an artificial life, thereby leaving behind the struggle between the colonists and the Native Americans that is a central conflict of the film.

John Rolfe also briefly drives the narrative forward. Rolfe is a gentlemanly planter who ships in from England. He becomes interested in Pocahontas when seeing her in mourning following Smith's departure. Rolfe walks up to the grieving Pocahontas and says, "I would like to spend the afternoon with you. How do I ask?" He recognizes that Pocahontas loves her freedom. Rolfe cultivates his tobacco fields, while Pocahontas gives him valuable advice, showing him how to nip off buds so as to concentrate nourishment in the leaves, how properly to fallow the land, putting fish at the foot of the tobacco so that it can replenish the soil.

Not surprisingly, Rolfe falls in love with Pocahontas and asks her to marry him. Pocahontas, however, shows reluctance to acquiesce. Rolfe says, "Suppose I asked you to marry me? What would you say?" Pocahontas replies, "Are you asking me?" He nods. "Where would we live?" Rolfe says, "Here. England, if you wish. Perhaps that would be best. You could forget your life in this place….Won't you say yes?" She looks at him for a moment: "All right. If you like." Rolfe says, "You do not love me now. Someday you will." Clearly, Pocahontas still feels grief over Smith yet somewhat yearns to be saved from these feelings. Nevertheless, she is not in love with Rolfe. Ultimately, Rolfe demonstrates an attitude toward Pocahontas that shows his European way of thinking. Pocahontas is someone to be possessed. He believes that she would want her to forget her old life, not asking if that is what she would want to do.

At the Council House in Jamestown, Rolfe discusses his marriage plans with the elders of Jamestown. Newport presides. In an improvised way, the elders discuss their objections to the idea—whether they can allow a precedent for miscegenation. Finally, Newport intervenes and approves the marriage. Despite the objection of the elders, they marry, and Pocahontas bears a child, Thomas. Shortly thereafter, Rolfe tells Pocahontas some surprising news: "We have been invited to England. Or rather, you have." She replies, "By whom?" Rolfe says, "By the King and Queen. There will be a royal audience in your honor." Rolfe leans down to kiss Pocahontas, but she eludes him. Pocahontas, who has learned that Smith is still alive, says, "I cannot do that." "Why not?" replies Rolfe. Pocahontas says, "It would mean something I do not feel." Rolfe asks "What has come over you?" To which Pocahontas says, "I am married to—him. After reacting to this, Rolfe exclaims, "Married? You don't know the meaning of the

word exactly." Pocahontas concludes, "But I am." Rolfe again shows his European kind of imperial thinking; he challenges Pocahontas over her understanding of the word marriage.

While in England, Rolfe comes to terms with Pocahontas' desire to be with Smith. Although her relationship with Rolfe is somewhat distant, Rolfe, admittedly, shows great compassion. He says to her while in England, "I would be wrong to hold you back. I was a fool. In my vanity I thought I could make you love me. You cannot do that, or shouldn't. In any case, you have walked blindly into a situation you did not anticipate." Acting on this realization, Rolfe sets up a meeting between Pocahontas and Smith. Pocahontas rejects Smith, however, seeing him as a dirty rogue who has missed his opportunity with her. Ultimately, Pocahontas chooses Rolfe and embraces her relationship with him. In these moments, Rolfe demonstrates compassion.

There are no villains in the film. The film does not possess a clearly defined individual or group antagonist, leaving lingering questions about the film's moral perspective. Granted, the colonists battle with the Native Americans. Early in the film, for example, we see a conflict between the settlers and Native Americans develop when a native, who we learn in voiceover had no sense of property, gets shot in the back after picking up and walking away with a hatchet. The colonists also battle with the Native Americans over staying on in the new world beyond the spring season. Once the Native Americans find corn growing in the British settlement, however, the Native Americans grow frustrated, and a battle ensues. The colonists win. Captain Newport returns from England with food and guns, and the colonists' imperial mentality supersedes the

peaceful way of the Native Americans. Despite this vague antagonist, ultimately there is no clearly defined individual or group antagonist in the film.

In the film, many events can be best understood as being caused not by individual characters or groups but by larger forces such as social dynamics and nature. In a way, Malick is saying that the protagonists are slaves to circumstances and a way of being that is so deeply internalized that they are unaware of it. Pocahontas, John Smith, and John Rolfe are all caught within a social force–the European self-willing and imperial attitude of the colonists. The colonists demonstrate a way of being that they believe is "better than" the way of the Native Americans. An example of this comes with the relationship between Pocahontas and John Smith. They demonstrate their love for each other when Smith lives at the Native Americans' village. Despite this love, however, Smith's way of being—his desire to get ahead and make new discoveries for the King—supersedes his love for Pocahontas. This European self-willing shows the characters as slaves to circumstances beyond their control. This is just another way that the conflict between the Native Americans and the colonists manifests itself.

The film's use of "Vorspiel" illuminates the interplay of the Native Americans and the colonists in the film. Malick first plays the rising "Vorspiel" during the moment the colonists arrive to America in search of a "kingdom of the spirit"—a moment of possibility yet eventual loss. In the beginning moments, Malick shows the opportunities which are possible during this founding moment of America. "Vorspiel" is immediately followed by a continuation of this possibility when the colonists first meet the Native Americans. After Smith is freed from hanging, he enters the world an American Adam. He walks through the grass fields and the trees looking in wonder and awe. We see in

Smith a hopefulness to be found in the American promised land. A man brings oysters out of the water and tells Newport that there are fish flapping against their legs and that the men are going to live like kings. Newport says, "All these months at sea—I'm weary of looking further. This place will serve. We have deep water to the shore, we can see up and down the river. Our enemies will have no advantage of surprise.…We must be careful not to offend the naturals. If our crops fail, we shall be obliged to trade with them." Clearly, Newport and the colonists show empathy for the Native Americans and plan to found a colony in a way that coincides with theirs. However, Newport concludes his speech by saying, "Once we're established here, we may go up the river and seek a route to the other sea." At the moment that Newport says this, Malick shows an extreme closeup of a hatchet hitting a tree, a shot that is even more alarming because of the loudness of the contact. Malick holds on the shot to allow the axe to strike at the tree three times. It both foreshadows later violent encounters between the settlers and the Native Americans and suggests the subduing of the natural world that followed the arrival of colonists. In other words, Malick foreshadows the violence that is yet to come in this brief, though telling, shot.

Nevertheless, Malick continues to show hope for the interaction between the Native Americans and the colonists. For instance, Malick shows the Native Americans and the colonists meeting for the first time and things go well. The natives sniff the colonists. They stare at each other and touch each other. They show approval for one another. Smith in particular holds out his hands and touches the hand of one native. Pocahontas playfully watches this interaction with her brother. Smith even says in voiceover, "The savages often visited us kindly.…timid, like a herd of curious deer."

However, the moment that this interaction is over, the bellicose attitude of the colonists appears. Newport says, "Tonight we shall sleep aboard our ships, everyone in full armor. In the morning, we will chop down every tree within half a mile of the moorage and use the straightest limbs to erect a line of watchtowers and to build our fort." One colonist asks, "When might we, uh, be going out to poke about, sir?" Newport adds, ironically we will learn, "we are not here to pillage and raid. We are here to establish a colony." To establish a colony in someone else's land requires pillaging and raiding. Moments later, we see misfortune hit the colonists: "Five kegs is gone since we landed. Somebody stole'em. Rain's gotten to this, and worms here." Newport cuts off the ears of a man who stole stores. Argall says, "Captured these two, sir, talking to the men, spying." Argall presumes that just because the two Native Americans were talking to the colonists that they were spying. Malick depicts the fall when a Native American freely picks up a hatchet on the colonists' moorage and walks around with it. A colonist shoots him in the back, and, thereafter, the colonists lose favor with the naturals. The two groups have become enemies. The film's first fall is complete. "Vorspiel" rose with possibility and promise for the first four minutes of the film, ending the moment that the colonists disembark. That promise is continued for two more minutes. However, over the next five minutes, that promise has led to a fall. The colonists reject cooperation, and this leads to the degradation of the interaction between the colonists and the Native Americans.

Malick plays the rising "Vorspiel" a second time during Smith's happiness in and expulsion from a natural Eden. Again, however, a moment of possibility is followed by loss. In these moments, we see the rejection of cooperation in the relationship between

the colonists with the Native Americans. When Smith is captured, we learn he is to be put to death. The Native Americans respond to Smith's presence in a way just as the colonists did with the Native Americans. However, as we all know, Pocahontas saves him. She risks her own life, asking her father to "spare his life." The Native Americans debate what to do: "We must drive them away, while they are still few." However, others believe "if they do us no harm, why should we care?....It's only a bit of swampland they want." Opechancanough says, "For now…But what will they take in times to come?" Powhatan decides, "He can teach her about his land across the waves." In other words, leading up to the moment that Malick uses "Vorspiel," the possibility for hope exists in the relationship between the colonists and the Native Americans. As the Native American women pray over Smith after he gains his freedom, we see Smith flash back to a shot of a ship's sails unfurling, just as we did when he arrived to the New World. During Smith's time at the Powhatan village, we see many harmonious shots of Native Americans at work and at play. At the same time, Smith moves comfortably through the village, looking in awe at the Native Americans' way of life much as he did at the trees when first arriving to the New World. Smith lives peacefully with the natives, learning their customs and rituals. Malick shows Smith watching the Native American children play and the women collecting beads. Pocahontas teaches Smith her language.

"Vorspiel" begins for the second time when, in voiceover, Smith says, "The King announced that I was free. He was sending me back, and on the understanding that when spring came we were to go back to where we came from. His chiefs had advised him to kill me. I had gained a knowledge of their arms, their strong places. But his daughter assured him I was a good man.…I should tell people that though the naturals lived in

peace, they yet were strong and would not suffer their land to be taken away. There was no sea beyond the mountains, only a land stretching away forever in great meadows. A land which had no end." During this voiceover, as "Vorspiel" plays, Malick shows images of peace and the wonderful love that Smith has developed with Pocahontas. Facing each other, Smith and Pocahontas hold hands, and look at each other with love. She smiles at Smith and gestures with her arms from her body to him, as if showing her full commitment to him. Smith walks comfortably away with the Native Americans; they carry deer and chickens for the colonists. A beautiful shot of the land, tilting down from a sky filled with cirrus clouds to a body of water with trees lining the land in the background, follows. Pocahontas walks, holding her arms out in bliss, through curing tobacco that hangs from long stakes in the ground. She then prays to the sky in a low-angle shot, as she did in the opening moments when "Vorspiel" played. The camera tracks back as Smith is led blindfolded out of the woods, and a bird flies through the sky as "Vorspiel" plays. We see a fast tracking shot in the water of the water and the shore. Malick cuts to black and then shows the Native Americans removing Smith's blindfold. Here we are, back at the fort, the Native Americans having brought food to the colonists, and Smith has experience the bliss of living with the Native Americans. Again, this is another moment of opportunity: the Native Americans and colonists can potentially share each other's culture and learn to coexist with one another in respect. As "Vorspiel" ends, Smith walks through a line of Native Americans to the entrance of the fort. He is met by a sentry, who says, "Captain Smith, you're back. The Native Americans will have to stop here, Captain."

"Vorspiel" has just ended, and the cooperation between the Native Americans and colonists is rejected. Before Smith ever enters the fort, the colonists show resistance to the Native Americans. The moment Smith enters the fort, the happiness the audience has felt instantly wanes. Unlike the plush forest, the fort is destitute and deserted. The ground is muddy. A dog sits in a puddle in the middle of the yard. The sky is overcast, and we are instantly bombarded by starving children begging Smith for food. Again, this shift is relevant because "Vorspiel" is followed by feelings of loss and sadness.

After seeing the fort, Smith faces the task of trying to get the fort in order. The men bicker over everything, including what day of the month it is: "He said today was the 15th of October. I said the 17th." Smith feels despondent over not being with Pocahontas. He feels he was living a dream with the Native Americans and that now he is awake. Smith says in voiceover, "damnation is like this." Smith berates the men, saying, "didn't I tell you to dig the well farther from the shore? Why hasn't this been done?" He takes responsibility for the men in the impoverished fort. In voiceover, he says "the country is to them a misery. A death. A hell.…while they starve, they dig for gold. There is no talk, no hope, no work but this." He calls the men a headless multitude. They will not sow corn for their own bellies. The men would rather eat their fish raw than go locate some wood to cook it. In voiceover, Smith says, "Bad water. Sturgeon gone. Mutterings." The men are out of control, seeking selfish dreams rather than working together as the Native Americans did. Smith takes charge of the men and in doing so loses sight of his time with the Native Americans. Winter comes, and the men eat belt leather. Someone eats the hands of Ackley, a colonist. Ultimately, the promise of communication, peaceful living, and harmony with nature is replaced by the

selfish, destitute way of living of the colonists. As it did in the opening of the film, "Vorspiel" rises with the promise of Smith and Pocahontas' relationship, yet as it falls, it leads to the destitution of the lives of the colonists

Malick uses "Vorspiel" as an organizing device a final time during Pocahontas's rebirth and acceptance of a new culture, this time a kind of loss that ends with a return to possibility, suggesting a way for Americans to locate a future direction in the past. Leading up to "Vorspiel," Pocahontas chooses John Rolfe over John Smith. "Vorspiel" begins on a shot of Pocahontas, smiling with her eyes closed, holding and hugging her son, Thomas. This is a happy moment and the first time we have seen such an embrace. We then see Pocahontas at play with Thomas. They are playing hide and seek in the garden maze at Rolfe's estate. Here, Pocahontas shows her confidence at having embraced two cultures. As "Vorspiel" rises, however, Rolfe begins his epistolary voiceover in a letter to his son, describing Pocahontas' death. We see shots of Pocahontas in bed, presumably dying, as Rolfe holds her hand, himself in tears. The film does not dwell too long, however, on this loss—the unexpected loss of one of the film's central and most sympathetic characters. Instead, shots of Pocahontas running through the countryside, splashing in the water, and doing cartwheels are seen. We then see Rolfe and Thomas leave for America. Malick shows several nature shots (shots that we will examine more deeply in the stylistic section) that signify the promise and possibility of living in the world according to a new way of being. So, the last time that Malick uses "Vorspiel," which ends before the film's final shot, the song rises in pitch and volume, as does the hope for the interaction between two cultures.

Seeing Possibility

In *The New World*, cinematic style also contributes to Malick's meditation on the foundational interactions between the English colonists and the Native Americans. Elements of mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound all contribute to his aims.

In the film, the sets/props, costumes, actors' performance, and other elements of mise-en-scene are used according to the genre and period setting, and communicate to a central contrast in the film—between the way of life of the Native Americans and that of the colonists, particularly as depicted in their living spaces. In the Native American camp in the forest, we see women working to support the tribe. They pick corn, putting it in handwoven baskets. Every scene in the forest is notable for its greenery. Vibrant greens from the grass, trees, and plants permeate each shot. As the native women harvest, Malick cuts to shots of men in elaborate body paint practicing archery. In the background, other men practice combat techniques with each other. Everyone walks through the village with chores to do with peaceful looks on their faces. After he becomes part of the community, Smith, too, strolls through the village freely, with relaxed shoulders and a serene look on his face. He looks up to the trees often. He plays frequently with Pocahontas, who in one scene practices a wind instrument as Smith looks on. The Native Americans teach Smith their rituals and games. In one scene, they stand in a circle around Smith and teach him how to act like a duck. Smith beams. In another sequence, Tomocomo blows smoke from a pipe on Smith's chest and head. They also paint each other in makeup and pour water onto each other. In one scene, Smith lies on his back with a naked baby crawling on his chest. Women watch and smile. In voiceover, Smith comments on the Native Americans' way of being: "They are gentle,

loving, faithful, lacking in all guile and trickery. The words denoting lying, deceit, greed, envy, slander, and forgiveness have never been heard." In these moments, we see the Native Americans sharing their culture with Smith and all live in peace and harmony.

In the fort, however, mise-en-scene signals the authoritarian and misguided technocratic rationality of the colonists, particularly as depicted in their living spaces. In the moments that Malick takes us to the fort, he shows a barren, bleak settlement. Ramshackle houses are spaced apart, and one house is still under construction. The overcast sky emphasizes how bleak the environment is. Garbage is strewn around the hut-like houses. A dog sits in a muddy puddle in the middle of the settlement. A church is only partially built. We don't see anyone working or participating in activities as we did so frequently at the Native American settlement. Toothless, filthy children with pus-filled sores on their faces emerge when Smith enters the fort, drowning him in a cacophony of voices.[82] They see a man slouched on the ground and kick him. Later, a sunken-faced man hanging lifelessly from punitive stocks, punished for who knows what. This contrasts greatly with the existence of the Native Americans. In another scene, Mary (Janine Duvitski), Pocahontas' caretaker, fits Pocahontas with high-heeled shoes. Seeing the free-spirited Pocahontas wobble around controlled and confined by the tight uncomfortable shoes is disheartening. At the fort, the mise-en-scene does not include greenery as we saw with the Native Americans. While *The New World* does not openly

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[82] Comments by children at the colony when Smith returns to the fort intensify the dysfunctional impression created by the mise-en-scene. For example, we hear comments like this: "Where have you been? It's like seeing a ghost. Yeah, you look like you've come back from the dead…We're starving. Did you bring food?...Someone got killed. Just fell over….Four months of stealing and stealing and stealing and stealing." When Smith asks the boys who is caring for them, they reply, "No one. That's all it is, just dying and sickness and all that. Hey, I saw a body in the mud.…I saw a leg in the bed. Four people died last night and they're eating 'em."

criticize the colonists' way of existing in the world, the contrasting handling of the mise-en-scene demonstrates Malick's perspective about the Native Americans and the colonists. Ultimately, Malick shows the difference between the two cultures, and especially the malfunctioning of the colonists through mise-en-scene.

Similar contrasts emerge in the depiction of the manicured grounds of Rolfe's English estate, where Pocahontas' uncle, Opechancanough (Wes Studi), wanders in the cold, looking at the carefully sculpted gardens. He wears face paint lined underneath his eyes, a necklace of bones or wood around his neck, and a fur on his back. His chest is bare. Pebbled paths circle the gardens and statuary, and trees are sculpted into perfect pyramids, lining the pebbled walkways. Concrete stairs lead up to a precise line of evergreen trees, perfectly manicured. Malick raises the volume of the wind in these scenes, emphasizing the emptiness of the estate. In other words, the wind does not blow through a forest of trees as it did with the Native Americans; rather, the wind sounds hollow blowing over the estate. From an omniscient perspective, Malick shows an endless row of evergreen trees, trimmed like upside down ice cream cones. Opechancanough enters the frame and looks from left to right. As Opechancanough leaves the garden, an elaborate iron gate looms behind him. This is a culture that manipulates and subdues nature and people, both.

A third example of pointed contrasts comes when Pocahontas disembarks from the ship when first arriving in England. In the scene, merchants peddle their wares as she looks awestruck. She looks up at the towering stone buildings with her jaw agape. Men in soiled clothing bow down to her, the Princess. She looks through a pane of glass, awestruck. A woman selling bread bows to her. We see merchants selling satchels, fish,

and birds. Malick emphasizes the tightness of the space by highlighting the cacophony of the merchants' voices. Malick continues to use mise-en-scene as Pocahontas nears her meeting with the King and Queen. She rides in a horse-drawn carriage, looking out of the window with her mouth open and a smile on her face. She also looks up at a huge cathedral. She sees peasants and beggers.

In England, Malick also uses mise-en-scene to show the difference between the two cultures and their way of existing in the world. On the ship to England, Pocahontas, now Rebecca, wears an ornate purple dress. Her hair is pulled back and braided in a way quite unlike when she was in the native village where she wore a single deerskin covering her torso and upper legs. Opechancanough, wearing black face paint and an animal skin across his back, says, "Your father has sent me. For each Englishman I come across, I am to place a notch on these sticks. And to see this God they speak so much about." What is striking about this scene is just how cultured and sophisticated Pocahontas appears (after all, she now lives in the culture that worships this God), when compared to the native dress and methods of Opechancanough. All of these elements of mise-en-scene combine to depict a home culture of the colonizers much different from the peaceful, paradisial setting of the Native Americans. Nevertheless, Malick shows a blending of the cultures that ultimately, as we will learn, he promotes in the film's ending.

Cinematography further shows the possibility, opportunity, and potential joining of the two cultures by emphasizing closeups of hands. That is, we see the Native Americans living in harmony in contrast to the punitive, authoritarian nature of the colonists. Shortly after we meet Pocahontas in the opening sequence, we see her

swimming under water hand in hand with another woman, showing that the Native Americans live in harmony with each other. We also see this fact when Malick shows a closeup of the hand of Parahunt (Kalani Queypo), Pocahontas' brother, clasping Pocahontas' hand. In contrast, Malick depicts the colonists in a much different way. When Malick first shows Smith, he uses a closeup of his hands as he reaches his manacled hands to the sky. Similarly, we see a closeup of Smith's roped hands when he is being prepared to be hung. Malick also shows a colonist with his hands clasped together in closeup as he lifts an oyster from water. In this scene, Malick again depicts a colonists not touching another but enmeshed in his desire for a material item. In fact, we even learn that someone at the fort actually ate the hand of a colonist named Ackley. However, when Smith is with Pocahontas, Malick depicts a different way of existing. In the love scene by the ocean, for example, Smith and Pocahontas touch and embrace each other sweetly. The camera pans down and shows them gently embracing each other's hands. Here, Malick shows this foundational moment in American history and myth as one filled with possibility. In contrast to Smith's time in the colony, while he lives with the Native Americans, Malick depicts two cultures that could exist in harmony in nature, showing the potential and possibility of existence between the Native Americans and the colonists.

Malick also repeatedly frames shots through doors, cells, windows, and ceilings to provide a kind of meta-commentary on the situation the characters find themselves in and to remind us of the alternative ways of being of the two cultures. For example, at the beginning of the film, we see a point-of-view shot of Captain Smith looking through his prison cell on the ship. Later, when Smith walks through the marsh with his armor on, he

wears a metallic helmet that has a slim horizontal rectangle for his eyes to see through. He has no peripheral vision, making it easier for the Native Americans to attack him from all sides, hitting him with clubs and strong limbs. Smith's inability to see anything except that which is directly only in front of him signifies the blinders of technocratic rationality that defines his culture. That is, Smith, like the Europeans, focuses directly on what's in front of him. In contrast, he natives demonstrate a different, more wide-ranging and unpredictable combat technique, one that defies the limitations of Smith and, more broadly, European rationality.

Malick also uses tilts. He frequently tilts down from the sky, showing tracking shots of Smith looking in wonder at what he finds in the New World. For example, when Smith is about to be hung for his mutinous remarks, Malick tilts down from the sky and tops of trees to show Smith tied to a noose. In one shot, Malick tilts down from the sky as Smith is walking through the forest. In this scene, we see Smith as an American Adam. The camera tilts down from treetops to show the sun beaming down on Smith as he walks in awe through the forest. In these moments, Malick demonstrates Smith's appreciation for the New World's nature and beauties in a way that the other colonists have failed to do. Malick cuts from a tracking shot of Smith to a tracking shot from Smith's point-of-view as he looks at the sun beaming down from the trees, then back to Smith looking in awe, with his mouth slightly agape and his eyes open, looking upward at the trees in the forest. Smith's point-of-view at times seems to "wander off from a purely individual function in order to embrace a more external, even cosmic vantage point" (Martin 213). The tilting camera imparts a new view on the world, distinct from the colonists' materialism. Before Smith ever meets the Native Americans, he is depicted

as a character who recognizes the beauty of nature. Malick's tilt from the treetops helps to emphasize Smith's appreciation of the natural plentitude of the New World. Malick immediately cuts from this shot of Smith to a colonist hurrying out of the ocean to tell Newport that the men have found oysters as big as his hand and that they're going to live like kings. As harmless as this comment may be, ultimately Malick depicts Smith as a man in awe of nature (much as the Native Americans are) in contrast to the colonists, who are primarily concerned with taking what nature has to offer. In these moments Malick uses tilts to show the European culture at conflict with the Native Americans' way of being, a European culture bound by the horizons of technocratic rationality which prevents them from accessing being in the world in a productive way as Smith is able to do.

Malick also uses cinematography to further his central concerns in other ways. Later, subjective tracking shots show Smith looking at the countryside around him. In one scene, Smith walks in the rain, unfazed as the raindrops pelt down around him. In a medium shot from behind him, Smith walks and looks at the grass. Malick immediately cuts to a traveling point-of-view shot of the camera moving through a thick forest of trees and greenery. There is no rain, and the trees are dry. Malick splices these two images together to show us how Smith has traveled around the land and just how much he admires the greenery and beauty around him.

Malick uses editing to show how the colonists' punitive, authoritarian nature interferes with the Native Americans' culture. In one scene he frames a shot through the open side of a hut in the middle of the camp. The shot is a long take of nine seconds. He tracks in as a Native American enters the frame from the right and picks up a hatchet.

The camera follows the Native American, and then Malick jump cuts back to the shot framed through the hut. A colonist yells, "Hey you." He has a gun drawn on the Native American and shoots him in the back. Malick cuts to natives in the woods looking panic stricken and scuttling about. He cuts back to Smith standing in the fort looking with concern on his face. Malick then cuts (without an establishing shot) to a shot of Smith with the colonist in the ocean where Smith dunks the colonist repeatedly in the water, a way of punishing him. Smith looks off camera at the natives as he repeats this punishment, as the natives look on. As the scene concludes, we hear Captain Newport in voiceover, who says,

> We've lost the favor of the naturals. Had we not sighted land the day we did, I would have turned back. We've eaten the majority of our stores. Our best men are sick with fever. The rest will soon breed mutiny. We might as well be shipwrecked. Now, the naturals tell me of a city up the river with a mighty king who lives there. I propose we send an envoy to this king to see whether he can be persuaded to trade with us.

In these moments, we see the colonists' punitive, authoritarian nature interfere with the amazing early interaction with the Native Americans. A native picks up a hatchet, not having the sense of possession that the Europeans do, and, as a result, he is shot in the back. Knowing that they have lost favor with the naturals, Captain Newport suggests going to see the king because they are out of food. Interestingly, the colonists had no interest in communicating with the natives when they had a plentiful supply of food. Now, however, that is different. When the colonists want something—as is the nature of their instrumentalism—they are willing to negotiate. Nevertheless, Malick, as we will

see, shows that there is still a possibility for hope and communication even in this early interaction between the colonists and the Native Americans. Ultimately, Malick's editing in this scene helps further his central concerns. He uses long takes, cuts, and a jump cut to emphasize the difficulty and promise of the early interaction between the two cultures.

Malick uses cuts, the absence of shot-reverse shots and eye-line matches, cinematography, and music to depict the promising possibility in the negotiation of the two cultures in the film's second four-minute "Vorspiel" sequence. The entire sequence is not narrative driven; rather, it is a montage of images designed to show the rising connection and possibility between Pocahontas and John Smith, or, more broadly, the two cultures. In the sequence, Malick cues "Vorspiel," and the scene begins with an interior shot of the temple. The camera, which seems always to be moving in the film, tracks through religious artifacts, and Pocahontas asks, "Mother, where do you live? In the sky? The clouds? The sea?" Malick then cuts to one of his customary shots, a low-angled shot up through a forest of trees to the sun, providing a space where the viewer can mull over the investigative questions that Pocahontas has just asked. He cuts to another low-angled shot of Pocahontas looking at the trees, praying to the sky, just as she did at the beginning of the film.

At this point during the second "Vorspiel" sequence, the music rises as Pocahontas continues in voiceover, "Show me your face. Give me a sign." Malick cuts to a two shot of Pocahontas and Smith outside, circling around each other as they look lovingly into each other's eyes. Pocahontas says in voiceover, "We rise. We rise," as "Vorspiel," too, continues to rise in pitch and volume. Malick then cuts to a low-angle shot of Pocahontas, with her hand embraced in Smith's (just as Malick does repeatedly

throughout the film to show connection between individuals), pulling him to his feet. After one shot, Malick cuts back to a two-shot of Pocahontas and Smith walking in the forest, looking at each other, next to a tracking two-shot of Pocahontas and Smith in a loving embrace. Interestingly, in this entire four-minute sequence, Malick eschews shot-reverse shot editing and eyeline matches. That is, he relies on two shots which include both Pocahontas and John Smith in the same frame, as if to show that they are connected as one being—that the negotiation of cultures is complete and that they are blended into one.

Moments later, Malick confirms this fact. As the scene continues, Malick cuts to a panning long shot of a bird flying through the sky from left to right, as Pocahontas says, "Two no more." After Smith and Pocahontas embrace lovingly by a tree, Malick cuts to a two shot closeup of Pocahontas hugging Smith, and she says, "One." Again, in this sequence, Malick emphasizes the possibility of the two cultures coexisting through Pocahontas's comments in her voiceover. Malick cuts to a tracking two-shot closeup of Smith looking into Pocahontas' eyes and then to a tracking shot from right to left of Smith looking at her, as Pocahontas again says, "One." Smith and Pocahontas lie on the ground in a loving embrace with their eyes closed. She says, "I am. I am" as Malick cuts to a shot of water with trees reflected in it. He cuts to a low-angled shot of trees to a closeup of Pocahontas touching Smith's face. Malick shows a closeup of Smith and Pocahontas embracing hands, again showing how camera distance helps emphasize the possibility of harmony between the two cultures.

As "Vorspiel" continues to rise, Smith says in voicoever, "His [Powhatan's] chiefs had advised him to kill me. I had gained a knowledge of their arms, their strong

places." Malick cuts to a two shot of Smith looking at Pocahontas. Smith continues, "But his daughter assured him I was a good man." Pocahontas puts her hands to her waist and opens them toward Smith in a gesture that suggests they are one. Malick pans to Smith as he and Pocahontas walk away and says, "I should tell people that though the naturals lived in peace, they yet were strong and would not suffer their land to be taken away. There was no sea beyond the mountains, only a land stretching away forever in great meadows. A land which had no end." In this four-plus-minute montage sequence, Malick uses elements of editing, cinematography, and sound to reveal a juxtaposition of images that depict the early relations between the natives and Smith. Malick uses cuts from disconnected images, low-angled shots, tracking, pans, and tilts to convey his central concerns—that is, the rising nature of the relationship between Smith and Pocahontas, a rise that parallels the rising structure of the narrative elements in the film.

Malick also quick dissolves to black after Smith meets Pocahontas for the first time. After Parahunt lures Pocahontas away from Smith, Malick fades to black for two seconds. The fade is ominous because we go from the hopefulness of the first interaction between Pocahontas and Smith (an interaction that we've come to know through legend) to a shot of a sad looking dog wandering through tall grass. This shot of the dog is followed by our learning that the colonists' stores have spoiled or been stolen by the men. Overall, the fade to black bisects the hopefulness and possibilities of the early interaction between the Native Americans and colonists from the limited horizons of the colonists who turn to stealing from each other rather than embracing a connection with the natives.

Malick uses non-diegetic music to comment on the initial possibilities of the relationship between the colonists and the Native Americans. As we have learned, to the

dismay of James Horner, Malick eschewed Horner's music, using it sparingly throughout the film, and instead incorporated two classical pieces. The second movement of Mozart's "Piano Concerto #23," Adagio in F-sharp Minor, is one of his most haunting and tragic piano movements which possesses a spareness that makes it all the more heartbreaking and makes it an appropriate accompaniment for the failures and flaws of the relationship between Pocahontas and John Smith, and, more broadly, between the natives and the colonists.

The first time we hear the spare piano of the second movement occurs just after Pocahontas walks up to Smith who is out in a field cutting limbs from trees for punishment. Smith says, "They said they were going to fetch you. I was against it." Pocahontas looks hurt; her eyes lower. Smith turns away, then turns back around and reaches for her hand—just as he has many other times throughout the film. Pocahontas backs away from his reach. Smith says, "I didn't want to harm you. And now there's disaster all around us. We should've stopped before it was too late." Just as Pocahontas steps back to him, Mozart begins. The piano is spare, melancholic, and tragic. As the music plays, Pocahontas reaches out for Smith's hand in an embrace, which Malick shows in closeup. Smith looks at Pocahontas, and then a jump cuts shows Smith looking away from her, an indication of his struggle between being with her and fulfilling his duty to the colonists. Opting for love, Smith turns back around and steps in and hugs Pocahontas sweetly, holding her head tightly in his hands. The camera tracks forward through a forest of trees, still accompanied by the Mozart. Pocahontas says in voiceover, "What is right? Give." Malick cuts to a closeup of Smith's hand touching Pocahontas' shoulder. She says, "Wrong. Who is this man," as their hands clasp together. Malick

then shows Pocahontas holding Smith's head in her arms, and she says, "Now, all is perfect. Let me be lost. True. You flow through me. Like a river." Malick cuts to a closeup of Smith on his back on the ground and a seated Pocahontas bending over to kiss him. She says, "Come. Follow me," as she walks in a field away from the camera. At this moment of harmony, Malick cuts to a shot of the colonists chattering and arguing with each other followed by a shot of Newport. The Mozart fades out. In this sequence, "Piano Concerto #23" comments on the conflicted, yet still possible relationship between Pocahontas and Smith, or, more particularly, the Native Americans and the colonists. The tragic sound of the piano emphasizes both the conflict occurring within Smith to be with Pocahontas and her own confusion about the relationship. Overall, the spare piano haunts the scene, conveying the waning possibility of a positive interaction between the two cultures.

The same concerto movement is heard again at the end of the film, and here it accompanies the end of the love affair between Smith and Pocahontas, which also marks the failure of the myth of the American Adam. When Smith comes to visit Rebecca at Smith's estate, Rebecca walks outside and sees him. She is visibly shaking. The camera tracks in as she steps toward him and the haunting melody of Mozart's "23rd" begins. Malick cuts to an omniscient point-of-view shot of perfectly lined and manicured shrubs. Rebecca looks at Smith, up and down. Smith says, "Did I make a mistake in coming here?" Rebecca again looks at Smith. Smith and Rebecca, in a two shot from behind, walk side by side. Smith says, "I would've come before except I've been away from the capital. Perhaps I'm out of order to speak with you this way." Rebecca looks at Smith, almost with disdain. He continues, "But I've thought of you often. After I left, it went

well for you." Again, she looks Smith up and down. "I heard the King and Queen received you. Everybody says you were a great favorite. They all speak of you. One hears them on the streets. Her Ladyship. Who'd have guessed it?" Smith stops and looks at Rebecca. Malick cuts to a two shot of Rebecca and Smith with her walking ten feet in front of him. She turns and looks back at him; she is crying but tries to conceal it. Malick cuts to another shot of a pathway lined with perfectly manicured trees from an omniscient point-of-view, and a closeup of Smith looking off camera at Rebecca follows.

The movement fades out, and natural sounds of wind and birds fade in, as Smith says, "You knew I had promise, didn't you?" Malick cuts to Rebecca, and she says, "Yes," then adds, perhaps with a hint of irony, "Did you find your Indies, John? You shall." Malick cuts to Smith, who looks at Rebecca longingly and says, "I may have sailed past them." Malick cuts to Rebecca, who smiles faintly. Following a shot of Rebecca walking through a manicured garden, Malick cuts to a shot of Smith, who says, "I thought it was a dream. What we knew in the forest. It's the only truth. It seems as if I'm speaking to you for the first time." Rebecca looks at him, bows her head, and walks away. Here, the Mozart prefigures the end of the relationship as well as of the dream of existing as the natives lived in the forest. In doing so, Malick undercuts the myth of romantic love. In terms of romantic love, Malick shows the final impossibility that the Native Americans can live according to their way of being with the colonists. The film enacts a romantic triangle between Pocahontas, Smith, and Rolfe that is central to the plot, but the narrative fails to allow the central romantic couple, Smith and Pocahontas, to reconcile and achieve a happy satisfaction of their desires in the film's end, thwarting the common trajectory of many conventional romances.

Simultaneously, the scene undermines the myth of the American Adam. Smith, freed after making mutinous remarks on the ship to America, is the embodiment of Adam throughout much of the film as "an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched by the usual inheritance of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling...fundamentally innocent" (Lewis, R. 5). However, by leaving Pocahontas and following the wishes of the King to seek a passage to the Indies, Smith chooses to go in search of fame and fortune, relinquishing the promise and possibility with Pocahontas and between the two cultures. At the end, Smith is left alone and defeated. As Smith says, the truth the two knew in the forest has faded away into a dream that could have been realized during the early interaction between the natives and the colonists. Malick's use of the Mozart movement emphasizes the impossibility of these two myths: the piano creates a haunting, tragic look at the waning relationship between Pocahontas and Smith.

Finally, at the film's end, Malick inserts Wagner's "Vorspiel" for the last time, and he uses these four minutes of music along with cinematic style to further the belief that hope and possibility exist despite Rebecca's death. As previously noted, the sustained harmonic effect of the droning chord in "Vorspiel" continuously rises in pitch and volume. In the sequence, Rebecca plays with her son, showing her deep love for him, and she bounds through the wild countryside with great energy. Rebecca holds Thomas around her neck, hugging him as they play a kind of hide-and-seek in a maze-like garden. Malick shows a laughing Rebecca running gaily along a long line of bushes, searching for her son. She whispers, "Thomas, where are you?" Malick cuts to a closeup of Rebecca standing proudly and confidently, saying happily in voiceover as she closes

her eyes, “Mother, now I know where you live.” After a montage of Rebecca’s death, certainly a sad moment in the film, Malick presses on quickly, showing heartwarming images of Rebecca immersed in energetic play and pure joy. For example, the camera tilts down from a great tree to show Rebecca rubbing her hand across its bark. The camera shows a long shot of her running, now seemingly far away from the perfectly pruned garden, out in a more natural, wild setting that closely resembles her time with the Native Americans. Her dress is splotched with water high above the hem; in other words, it is not perfectly pressed and clean as it was when she was with Smith. Rebecca does a cartwheel near a small pond, then Malick cuts to an extreme-long shot of her bouncing gaily and twisting in circles in pure delight by the pond. He cuts to her standing breathlessly in the pond by its shore holding her hands out to her sides. She looks at the sky, beaming with a smile and raises her arms to the sky. She bends over and splashes water onto her face. Then Malick shows another shot of her running, running toward and past the camera. He cuts to a four-second shot of a bird flying in the sky. As the “Vorspiel” plays, these energetic images of Rebecca depict possibility and hope, for she demonstrates the ability to negotiate two conflicting cultures. In the sequence, Rebecca wears the civilized dress of the English, but the film returns to its beginning, when Pocahontas was praying to Mother. That is, in these final images, she still prays to the sky, to Mother; her religious beliefs have not been jolted out of her.

At the end of the “Vorspiel” sequence (as the piece rises and rises, nearing its peak), Malick concludes the film with seven shots of nature located in the New World, shots loaded with energy, hope, and promise for America’s future. In the sequence, we see a swift tracking shot in a river of grass growing from the water at dusk. He cuts to a

shot of the setting sun out from the harbor where the ship disembarked. He shows a closeup of white water rushing over rocks to another shot of water rushing over rocks. Malick cuts to an amazing fast tracking shot—tracking almost like a sprint—up through the treetops with the sun peeking through. He shows two more energetic shots of water rushing over rocks. After "Vorspiel" fades out, Malick includes one more shot to end the film. The final shot is a fourteen-second low-angle shot up through trees. After ten seconds of this long take, a leaf falls. Despite the lost opportunities between the colonists and the Native Americans, nature still remains. The falling leaf, which will decompose to create life-giving soil, reminds us that it is necessary to have death in order to have more life. While Malick depicts a loss during the final playing of "Vorspiel," he follows up that loss quickly with promise. Ultimately, he ends the film with a promise that the interaction between the Native Americans and the settlers still has possibility, that there is an alternative way of being that we can live according to in the world. Malick leaves a space which, through his interrogation of Being, points to the possibility of living according to a new way of being, a way that supplants America's fall from grace in its opening moments.

Conclusion

While Malick believes that the seeds of problems in the contemporary world, the seeds of the rejection of cooperation, were planted in this foundational moment in America, he also believes they could have been avoided. He interrogates the origins of what became the United States through the interaction between the Native Americans and the settlers. Malick's film, and more broadly his aesthetic, wrenches us out of the ordinary and reveals something that we didn't see before so that we may discover a way

of being that promotes playfulness, communication, and hope as we negotiate our way through the world. In other words, by understanding where things went wrong, we can avoid those traps and seek a more authentic understanding of being. *The New World* is a song, one sung to show contemporary America an authentic understanding of Being—the ground of America's roots—in order to offer a hopeful future in our present day lives as Americans.

In his use of narrative and cinematic style, Malick's *The New World* offers an example of what Heidegger characterizes in *Being and Time* as "destruction" (22-44), that which destroys the traditional consciousness or conventional habits of perception upheld, for example, by classical Hollywood cinema that have blinded us to the everyday in Western culture. One form of destruction, says Heidegger in his later career, is poetry, for poetry breaks up tradition and the everyday (it destructs) and recovers grounding, or a digging deep into our—in this case, American—roots to facilitate a beginning whereby we discover our future in our past. As we are learning, Malick's work, like Heidegger's, venerates the powerful potential of art and the belief that an artist—a "poet in destitute times"—might emerge to redeem positively our modern era in America through destruction. Malick's film, and more broadly his aesthetic, wrenches us out of the ordinary and reveals something that we didn't see before so that we may discover our future in our past, a way of being that promotes playfulness and hope as we negotiate our way through the world. So besides conveying Heidegerrian destruction, the film conveys Heidegerrian grounding, the historical process by which a particular people, Americans, gain some knowledge of their identity in the present. Ground in art is specifically the

historical legacy of a particular people in a particular time, a model for any authentic understanding of Being.

As we will see, Malick continues to articulate this message, while blending it with a more theological understanding of the world, five years later in his fifth film, *The Tree of Life*.

Chapter VII
Coda: *The Tree of Life* and the Evolving Achievement of Terrence Malick

As we learned in the previous chapter, the hope suggested in *The New World* is inspiring albeit not clearly defined. Malick concludes the film with seven shots of nature from the new world, shots loaded with energy, hope, and promise for America's future. During this sequence, he also shows images of Rebecca praying to the sky, to Mother, as she did at the film's beginning, as well as heartwarming shots of her immersed in energetic play and pure joy with her son. She bounces gaily and twists in circles in pure delight, running in a more natural, wild setting that closely resembles her time with the natives. Together, these energetic images of Rebecca and nature depict for us the possibility and hope that exists for our future. While these shots are invigorating, for the most part, these images can also be perceived as puzzling, for the methods by which we attain this hopeful future are never adequately clarified.

In *The Tree of Life*,[83] however, Malick's autobiographical film quickly articulates specifically what that hope or way of being is and how it can be achieved. At the film's beginning, Malick shows images, as he did in concluding *The New World*, of nature and a mother, Mrs. O'Brien (Jessica Chastain), watching her three children play. Then, in voiceover, she says:

> The nuns taught us there were two ways through life—the way of nature and the way of grace. You have to choose which one you'll follow.

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[83] *The Tree of Life* won the *Palme d' Or* at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, where the film's first press screening resulted in a mixture of loud booing and cheers throughout the Palais. The *Tree of Life* went on to garner wide praise for Malick and the performances of Sean Penn, Brad Pitt, and, in one of her first performances, Jessica Chastain. In addition, on April 26th, 2012, Roger Ebert included *The Tree of Life* in his list of top ten films of all time ("Roger Ebert's Journal").

> Grace doesn't try to please itself. Accepts being slighted, forgotten, disliked. Accepts insults and injuries.
>
> Nature only wants to please itself. Get others to please it too. Likes to lord it over them. To have its own way. It finds reasons to be unhappy when all the world is shining around it. And love is smiling through all things ….The nuns taught us that no one who loves the way of grace ever comes to a bad end.

Through Malick's cinematic style and allusive, associative narrative structure (later the film reaches back in time for a twenty-minute sequence that depicts the origins of the universe), we learn that the children's parents, Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien, exemplify, respectively, these two ways through life, the way of nature and the way of grace.[84] Early in the film, for example, Mr. O'Brien (Brad Pitt) tells his sons that to survive in the world, you must have "fierce will," "have control over your destiny." Mr. O'Brien's attitude parallels that of Malick's father, whose worldview, we have learned, was symptomatic of the era of the Ideology of Liberal Consensus, which was in many ways rejected by his son and many of his generation. Ultimately, Mr. O'Brien is the embodiment of Heidegger's self-willing individual that Malick exposes with Kit in *Badlands* and continues to depict in various ways in each of his other films. In *The Tree of Life* Mr. O'Brien is the picture of the good man. He attends to his sons, he provides for his family, he is a faithful husband, a hard-working employee, and he attends church

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[84] This parallels Malick's own relationship with his parents; as we have learned, he was devoted to his mother but often had terrible fights with his father Malick, like Jack in the film, was the oldest of three brothers. Larry, the youngest, committed suicide in 1968, about the same year that Jack's brother in the film, R.L. dies.

regularly where he plays the organ. Nevertheless, misfortune befalls Mr. O'Brien, and after he loses his job, he undergoes a shift. He becomes aware that he's been deluded: by being a "good man," he has lost out on the glory of life and love amidst his insistence on success. "I dishonored it all," he says. "Didn't notice the glory." Mr. O'Brien is humbled; he realizes that no matter how much we work and strive for things, we're all still delicate beings in need of grace.

Mrs. O'Brien, on the other hand, is the embodiment of this grace; she personifies an alternative, albeit arguably simple, way of being in the world. She lives her life to "Do good," to "Hope," and to "Wonder." She loves all things, saying, "The only way to be happy is to love" and that "Unless you love, your life will flash by." Between the two O'Brien parents, their oldest child, Jack (Hunter McCracken) witnesses dual approaches to seeing and participating in the world. Jack is troubled by the uncertain nature of life. Malick negotiates the two perspectives by introducing Father Hayne's sermon that Jack hears midway through the film: The priest preaches that the Book of Job explores the cultural myth that we inhabit a more-or-less equal universe in which those who live virtuously inevitably receive blessing, while those who live badly suffer a painful fate (Page). Father Haynes says that the tragedies that befell upon Job demonstrate that there is nothing in life than can protect us from the possibility of pain. He acknowledges that it is tempting to question God: "Is there some fraud in the scheme of the universe?" he asks in his sermon. As an adult, looking back over his life, amidst marital problems on the anniversary of the death of his brother, Jack (Sean Penn) looks back in search of some kind of meaning. Like Job, the older Jack gradually learns to fully accept the suffering as an essential part of life. Malick's film aims to guide us to that place within ourselves

where we can make the existential choice and experience the ultimate prevailing power of love: "Do good." "Hope." "Wonder."[85]

Here we see Malick, as we did when he was a Rhodes scholar, concerned about conflicting perspectives, like we see between the O'Brien parents, just as he was during the Vietnam War. In the Rhodes Scholar letter and his films, Malick demonstrates that imagination and flexibility must be used to come to terms with contradictory positions and perspectives in American culture. By asking questions rather than making judgments, the director/philosopher contends humans can achieve, more broadly, unanimity and peace. In addition, in the obituary on Martin Luther King in *The New Yorker* Malick and Brackman see King as possessing the potential to set up a world of unanimity For them, King has the ability to maintain a power of disclosure. Similarly, Malick's work, can help us surpass contradictory perspectives and human self-assertion to "construct a view of the world that is open to the full potential of Being," an "Open" where things appear in their "unifying oneness" (Singer and Dunn 123). As we have seen, asking questions and stressing imagination and intellectual flexibility are lynchpins of Malick's movies and his way of providing a kind of solution that encourages an alternative way of being in the world, one that discloses the limitations of our Western horizons, and strives for a world of unanimity and "unifying oneness."

In Malick's first and second films, *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*, he employs, as we have learned in his undergraduate thesis, the concept of horizon—that is, that which is

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[85] In his *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger speaks in depth on wonder. He explains that wonder is the disposition by which the Greeks first approached the world; that is, before the inception of the instrumental thinking that grew to define Western metaphysics. According to Heidegger, wonder reveals that the way things are need not be the way things are (140-64). Malick's interest in wonder as an approach to the world appears to continue in his next film to be released in 2013, *To the Wonder*.

determined by our pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, those pre-existing attitudes and beliefs which bind us to the world in which we live—to challenge the ways in which we understand and behave in the world so that we may gain deeper ontological knowledge into the nature of being. In his thesis, he argued that a horizon becomes evident when we see its limits and "like rules, limits reveal themselves for what they are only when they are transgressed. We can get a fix on a limit by violating it in different ways. If we conceive the limit of a world (or horizon) as a border, then it is an unmarked border that we back over and mark by backing over. We only know we have trespassed beyond it when we find ourselves talking nonsense or at a loss or deserted" (21). In *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven* Malick exposes narrative, stylistic, generic, and cultural conventions and limits by transgressing and violating them.[86] In doing so, Malick's first two films, unconventional narrative elements such as ambiguous protagonists, undefined antagonists, an episodic plot, loose framing, long takes, intellectual montage, music, and non-diegetic voiceover create an emotional tone of uncertainty and questioning that initiates an aesthetic distance which demonstrate the limitations of horizons and invite us to reflect on the nature of being.

In *The Thin Red Line*, Malick further develops the philosophical investigation of the nature of being. In the film, Malick holds open a horizon to expose to us in these "destitute times" our mode of being, a Western mode of self-assertion and instrumental thinking that has distorted the world, transforming it into objects to be manipulated and consumed. The film shows how we have become forgetful of what it means to be human,

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[86] For a discussion of Malick's interest in conventions during his time as a reporter for The New Yorker—and their relationship to Heidegger, see pages 37-38 and 48 in Chapter II.

forgetful of our relation to Being, that generative source that remains always and necessarily beyond our ability to comprehend it fully. Malick develops his aesthetic by employing more protagonists than his two earlier films, using philosophical, poetic, and questioning voiceovers, elliptical editing, and low-angled shots up through trees to disclose the limitations of the individual characters' worldviews and to call attention, in turn, to the ways any audience member may be limited by his or her own horizons.

Malick's use of narrative and cinematic style in *The New World* is similar to that in *The Thin Red Line*, for it offers an example of what Heidegger characterizes as "destruction," that which destroys the traditional consciousness or conventional habits of perception upheld, for example, by classical Hollywood cinema that have blinded us to the everyday in Western culture. One form of destruction, says Heidegger in his later career, is poetry, for poetry breaks up tradition and the everyday (it destructs) and recovers grounding, or a digging deep into our—in this case, American—roots to facilitate a beginning where we discover our future in our past. Malick's film, and more broadly his developing aesthetic, wrenches us out of the ordinary and reveals something that we didn't see before so that we may discover our future in our past, a way of being that promotes playfulness, communication, questioning, and hope as we negotiate our way through differing perspectives in the world.

As he finally demonstrates in *The Tree of Life*, Malick articulates that by living according to the way of grace with wonder, we can achieve hopefulness, unanimity and peace. Doing so provides a kind of solution that encourages an alternative way of being in the world, one that surpasses the limitations of our Western horizons. As Malick argued in his undergraduate thesis, our horizons never differ so radically as to make

mutual understanding impossible; therefore, it is possible to reach unanimity in the world, a fundamental understanding within which things, people, and history all cohere within a shared horizon, a shared understanding of significances and purposes. In the progression and development of his films, Malick negotiates differing horizons to propose a kind of unanimity, a universal horizon, or world, that surpasses group differences by asking questions, something attainable by living according to the way of grace.

In his essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger argues that at certain times in history, an artist or poet might emerge to redeem the era by reminding readers of humans' relation to Being. In *The Tree of Life*, Malick's work has matured, and one could argue that he fulfills the role of Heidegger's poet by using a variety of imaginative formal elements. The film's narrative is unconventional and nonlinear. The narrative jumps in time from the 50s to the 60s all the way to the present, all within the first fifteen minutes. Malick then abruptly leaps back in time to depict the origins of the universe which leads up to the life of a family in the 1950s. Malick concludes the film with a heaven-like sequence that addresses the afterlife or the end of time. In terms of cinematic style, Malick's mise-en-scene continues to depict elements from the genre and era that the director addresses. The cinematography emphasizes images of nature with a camera that is always on the move—gliding and swooping—and through quick, elliptical and mercurial editing conducted by a five-person team. Malick interweaves these elements of film form with classical music. In fact, here Malick delves deeper into his knowledge of music, using approximately thirty-seven songs in the film, songs such as "Lacrimosa" (Zbigniew Preisnerand) during the origins of the universe sequence and Brahm's

"Symphony No. 4 in E Minor" during moments of discord between young Jack and his father. Malick's original use of music here is similar to the way he used it in *The New World*, yet even more complex. As always, the director employs questioning voiceovers from four of the characters, philosophical and poetic voiceovers that come and go over a montage of Malick's lush and beautiful images.

David Sterritt provides a particularly insightful account of Malick's chief concerns in the film:

> *The Tree of Life* puts genre elements into play for the purpose of exceeding and transcending them, using them as building blocks for a risky, resourceful tour de force that moves from earthly, psychological concerns to heavenly, sacramental ones in a manner that might well have pleased one of Malick's heroes, Martin Heidegger, who believed that modern philosophy's most important task is to dig out from under the traditional metaphysics that has long dominated Western thinking[…] His goal is to evoke the shining of the world with reverence and awe, showing that the way of mortal nature is a misleading, ultimately illusory detour from the abiding way of immortal grace. ("Days" 52)

Much as we have argued in this study, Sterritt recognizes the imaginative way that Malick employs formal and generic conventions to expose cultural concerns that he engages with through Heideggerian philosophy.

Malick's films aim to reveal for the audience the possibilities of a fuller, more aware, more productive, and creative mode of existing in the world, enacting this experience by drawing on specific features of Heideggerian philosophy and engaging

critically with American cultural myths. These elements ultimately work to organize a distinctly "ontological" aesthetic, one which attempts to provoke in viewers a reflexive questioning by juxtaposing contrary ideas, emotions, and filmic conventions. To this end, Malick's aesthetic serves as a critical exploration for the ideological contradictions crippling a perspective which many Americans blindly accept as the literal truth. To expose this illusion, Malick's aesthetic disorients habits of perception to elicit a questioning that can awaken a fresh sense of our place in relation to ourselves, others humans, nature, and Being.

In this study of Malick's body of work, I aimed to provide a close analysis and probing look at the key features of his films—with chapters on *Badlands*, *Days of Heaven*, *The Thin Red Line*, *The New World*, and this conclusion which briefly engages with his most recent film *The Tree of Life* —providing an original and insightful critical perspective on an elusive American director whose aesthetic has established his reputation as an auteur, yet has not been adequately examined in the field of film studies. As I write, it appears that Malick is about to become a more prolific filmmaker, with at least four upcoming projects: *To the Wonder* (2012) in post-production, a romantic drama that involves a man who reconnects with a woman from his hometown after his marriage to a European woman falls apart, starring Rachel McAdams, Jessica Chastain and Rachel Weisz; the *Voyage of Time* (2013) also in post-production, a drama that looks at the birth and death of the universe, starring Brad Pitt and Emma Thompson; *Lawless* (2013), a musical drama that is currently filming, which involves two intersecting love triangles and sexual obsession and betrayal set against the music scene in Austin, Texas, and stars Christian Bale, Ryan Gosling and Natalie Portman; and finally, *Knight of Cups* (2013), a

drama in pre-production that depicts a man who searches for love and truth, starring Christian Bale and Natalie Portman. Naturally, given Malick's deliberate working methods in post-production, one wonders if he will be able to make these films as quickly as the 2013 release dates promise

I hope this dissertation has contributed to a better understanding of Malick's body of work. I also hope that we might say about Malick what he said earlier (quoted in the epigraph at the beginning of this study) about his attempts to understand Heidegger: if his [Heidegger's] descriptions of his purposes have not been very helpful, then we must educate ourselves to them. Towards that end, we can assert that the films of Malick the auteur articulate a vision whose purposes need not baffle; though complex and challenging, they are far from "nonsense," and they reward close analysis. Malick's use of key concepts of Heideggerian philosophy, his engagement with the lack of viability of American cultural myths, and his innovative use of film form, I believe, provide the building blocks to apprehend the aesthetic of this distinctive American poet.

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Appendices

Appendix I
BADLANDS: PLOT SEGMENTATION

1. **Holly's Bedroom (Holly Voiceover):**
    a. Holly sits on her bed
    b. Holly pets her dog
2. **Side Street Alley**
3. **Neighborhood**
4. **Neighborhood Side Street Alley**
    a. Garbage truck drives into the shot
    b. Men working the garbage truck
    c. Kit touches a dead dog
    d. Cato slings garbage
    e. Kit slings garbage
5. **Neighborhood:**
    a. Holly twirls a baton in the street
6. **Neighborhood Side Street Alley:**
    a. Kit tries to get garbage man driver to buy old boots
    b. Kit throws an apple at a dog
    c. Kit fingers through garbage can

Opening Credits:

- **a. Kit quits his job for the day**
- **b. Kit balances an old mop**
- **c. Kit walks down an alley, kicking a can**
- **d. Kit sees Holly twirling her baton in her front yard**

7. **Holly's House:**
    a. Kit walks up to Holly
    b. Kit talks to Holly
    c. Kit walks with Holly in the street by her house
    d. Holly runs to her house after her Father calls for her
8. **Holly's Backyard:**
    a. Holly's dad paints
    b. Holly talks with her Father
    c. Holly's Father splashes her feet playfully with paint
9. **Outside Garbage Business:**
    a. Kit talks with proprietor
    b. Proprietor fires Kit
    c. Kit tosses keys into drum of oil
    d. Proprietor throws an apple at Kit
10. **Unemployment Office:**
    a. Kit answers questions about employment
    b. Kit looks like he doesn't care
    c. Unemployment man says there's a job at the stockyards
11. **Holly's House:**
    a. Holly looks out the window

b. Kit walks up
c. Holly walks outside and talks to Kit on the porch
d. Kit offers Holly a cigarette

12. **Street in Town:**
    a. Kit kicks a paper bag
    b. Kit says hi to a woman walking past who ignores him
    c. Holly gets into Kit's car
13. **Stockyards:**
    a. Shot of a cow looking through a gate
    b. Kit working, tagging cows
14. **Holly's House:** Kit picking Holly up
15. **Stockyards:**
    a. Kit feeding cows
    b. Kit kicking a cow in the head
    c. Shot of cows grazing
    d. Kit picking up hay
    e. Shot of a dying cow
    f. Kit walking away from the job
16. **Outside by a Tree and a River:**
    a. Kit and Holly play cards
17. **Holly's Backyard:**
    a. Holly's Father painting
    b. Holly's Father looks through a Stereopticon
18. **Neighborhood Street:** Kit driving with Holly
19. **Football Field Sidelines:** Holly sits watching football practice
20. **Behind Football Field Bleachers:**
    a. Holly and Kit kiss
    b. They laugh and embrace
21. **Stockyards:**
    a. Shot of a Kit looking through a fence
    b. Shot of cows in a muddy fenced in area
    c. Shot of cows standing, looking, in small area
22. **Outside:**
    a. Holly and Kit talking
    b. Holly smoking
23. **Holly's House (montage) (Holly Voiceover):**
    a. Huge catfish in a tiny fishbowl
    b. Holly throws out the fish into watermelon patch
    c. Kit and Holly walk on the sidewalk
24. **Stockyards:**
    a. Kit kicks a dead cow
    b. Kit walks on a dead cow
    c. Kit looks around to see if anyone has seen him
25. **Kit's House:** Kit sitting in tiny single bed
26. **Outside by Tree and River:**

a. Kit tucking in his shirt tail after sex
b. Holly buttons up her dress
c. Kit puts on his jean jacket and walks down to the river
d. Holly brushes off her socks
e. Kit stands on a rock in the river
f. Holly throws a deck of cards in the river
g. Kit gets a rock to remember the day they had sex
h. Kit releases a huge red balloon with mementos in it

27. Near Holly's House:

a. Shot of Holly's dog
b. Holly in tall grass
c. Holly's Father with a gun
d. Holly in tall grass
e. Holly's Father shoots her dog
f. Holly runs away through the field
g. Holly's bloody dog
h. Holly's Father dumps a bag with Holly's dog into the river

28. McKenzie School of Music: Holly looks longingly out the window

29. The Badlands:

a. Kit walks up to Holly's Father, painting a billboard (Kauzer's Feed and Corn)
b. Kit talks to Holly's Father
c. Kit throws a peach
d. Holly's Father paints
e. Holly's Father tells Kit to stay away
f. Kit walks away
g. Shot of the billboard dwarfed by the sky

30. Holly's House:

a. Kit walks up to Holly's house (as Holly's Father picks her up from school)
b. Kit walks into Holly's House (as Holly drives home)
c. Kit starts packing Holly's things in a suitcase
d. Holly's Father appears at the top of the stairs
e. Kit walks to Holly's Father
f. Holly walks up the stairs
g. Kit pulls out his gun
h. Holly's Father walks down the stairs
i. Kit chases him to top of stairs
j. Holly's Father looks up
k. Kit shoots
l. Holly's Father goes to call the police
m. Kit bounds down the stairs
n. Kit shoots Holly's Father
o. Holly bounds down the stairs
p. Holly runs to her Father and touches his face
q. Kit closes a kitchen door
r. Kit talks to Holly in the kitchen

s. Kit touches Holly's Father for breathing
t. Nighttime outside of Holly's house
u. Kit drags Holly's Father into the basement
v. Kit grabs a toaster
w. Kit talks to Holly
x. Kit leaves
y. Holly walks up the stairs, smoking
z. Holly looks out the window, seeing kids arguing

31. Record Recording Booth at Bus Station:
a. Kit records suicide message
b. Kit leaves the booth

32. Holly's House (night):
a. Kit douses the house in gasoline
b. Holly's house in flames
c. Kit and Holly leave the house
d. Holly takes a picture
e. Kit takes a lamp and starts the record he recorded
f. Holly and Kit pull away in car
g. Shots of objects ablaze in Holly's house (song)
h. Fireman at Holly's house

33. Holly's School:
a. Holly gets books from her locker
b. Holly goes back for her ruler
c. Holly runes to Kit's car

34. Kit's Car: Holly and Kit talk

35. Outdoors (montage) (Holly Voiceover):
a. Kit and Holly drive down a road
b. A tree drifts in a river
c. Grass
d. A tree limb
e. A black beetle on a tree
f. An evergreen tree limb
g. A budding tree
h. Wood being chopped

36. Tree house (Holly's Voiceover Continues):
a. Kit secures the tree house with twine
b. Kit shucks bark from a tree limb
c. Kit thatches the side of the tree house
d. Below the tree house
e. A picture in the tree house
f. Kit sleeping in the tree house with his gun
g. Holly sleeping
h. Kit plucking eggs from a tree and dropping them to Holly
i. Kit trying out a booby trap
j. Kit practicing combat tactics

k. Holly carries wood like a marionette
l. Holly paints her eyes with black make up (Holly's voiceover ends)
m. Holly and Kit dance to radio ("Love Is Strange")
n. Kit catches a carp
o. Kit loses the carp
p. Kit gets fed up and tosses his fishing net
q. Holly walks around with curlers in her hair
r. Kit shaves with a makeshift mirror/sink
s. Holly reads aloud to Kit in the tree house

37. River near tree house: Holly walks barefoot through the water

38. Tree house: (montage) (Holly voiceover)

a. Llama walking in the woods
b. Holly looking through binoculars
c. Kit eating apple and reading *National Geographic* in tree
d. Stereopticon slides in the grass—picked up by Holly
e. Holly holding Stereopticon
f. Kit hauling tree on his shoulder passes Holly looking at the Stereopticon
    i. Stereopticon image of Rio de Janeiro palm fringed canal
    ii. Sphynx and pyramid in Egypt
    iii. Cows and boats on a river in a canyon
    iv. A woman holding a baby
    v. Two women by a piano
    vi. Many people picnicking/playing in the front yard of a house
    vii. A military man kissing a farm girl in a field
g. Kit fishing for carp (Holly's voiceover ends)
h. A man on the shore sees Kit fishing
i. Kit tries to shoot fish
j. Holly puts on lipstick, looking into a mirror in the field
k. Shot of a rooster in a make-shift cage
l. Kit as a lookout in the tree house
m. Kit looks through binoculars into the forest
n. Shot of a rooster in a make-shift cage
o. Holly biting her fingernail
p. Kit looking through binoculars
q. Men approaching the tree house
r. Kit hollers at Holly and bounds down from the tree house
s. Holly runs to the tree house
t. Kit grabs his rifle
u. Kit dives in an underground secret hatch
v. Holly runs away through the woods and hides beside a downed tree
w. Shots of the forest, with wind blowing
x. Kit looking through the secret trap
y. Men approaching
z. Holly looking

aa. Forest shrubs
bb. Budding tree
cc. Men approaching the tree house
dd. Kit lifts the trap door and shoots a man in the back
ee. Kit shoots another man
ff. Kit chases a third man away and shoots him in the back
gg. Shot of Holly walking away through the field
hh. Kit loading up the car
ii. Kit throws away a bird cage and frees a rooster
jj. Holly chews gum and gets into the car

39. **The Road:** The car dwarfed by the vista
40. **Cato's Place:**
    a. Cato looking out the screen door
    b. Kit and Holly driving up
    c. Kit gives Cato a live chicken
    d. All three eat a picnic table lunch
    e. Holly tells a joke
    f. Cato mentions gold coins in the field
    g. Kit hurries up eating his beans
    h. Holly bites an apple
    i. Holly throws a metal lid at Kit like a frisbee
    j. Kit throws rocks
    k. Cato takes off back to the house
    l. Kit shoots Cato through the stomach and runs after Cato
    m. Cato stumbles back to the house; Kit and Holly follow
    n. Cato sits down in bed
    o. Kit looks through Cato's junk
    p. Cato looks at himself in the mirror
    q. Car drives up
    r. Kit looks through the screen door (paralleling Cato)
    s. Kit talks to couple who get out of the car
    t. Kit pulls his gun
    u. Kit leads them to the nuclear fallout shelter
    v. Holly talks to the girl
    w. Kit demands that the boy and girl get into the shelter
    x. Kit fires two shots into the shelter and runs away with Holly
    y. Cato is dead and Holly pokes him with a stick
    z. Kit takes Cato outside to the barn and lays him down inside
    aa. Holly stands and watches, looking forlorn
    bb. Kit paces around the barn
    cc. Holly watches and walks into the house
41. **The Road:**
    a. The car dwarfed in long shot
    b. Holly and Kit close together talking as Kit drives
    c. Kit and Holly pass an old abandoned car

i. Deserted town street
ii. Sheriff standing with a rifle
iii. Man holding bullets
iv. Old man standing with a long stick
v. Man leading kids out of school with a man with a rifle
vi. Man (Malick) pointing at a dead bird on a wire bench
vii. Kids being taken out of a front yard
viii. Old man holding a volume of a book (L-Z 1959)
ix. Man sitting on ground with a rifle
x. Women holding open a book facing the camera
xi. Men readied with their guns, signing up for duty
xii. Bullets being handed out to men
xiii. Caravan of cars with rifled men ready

42. Rich Man's House:

a. Deaf maid looks through upper window
b. Kit and Holly walk up to the door
c. Deaf maid answers and invites them in
d. Kit meets the Rich Man
e. Shot of a painting
f. Holly fingers a wine glass
g. Kit rings a bell
h. Holly moves a bust
i. Kit moves a glass of wine
j. Kit moves a picture
k. Holly tries out chairs
l. Holly grabs a cane and wanders outside
m. Holly wanders across the lawn
n. Kit speaks into a Dictaphone
o. Holly talks to the Rich Man upstairs amidst covered furniture
p. Kit reads newspaper (doorbell rings)
q. Kit takes gun from the mantle
r. Kit replaces picture to mantle
s. Visitor holds blueprints on the doorstep of the Rich Man
t. Kit talks to Visitor and hands him a message
u. Inside the house, Kit throws the message into a vase
v. Kit grabs the Rich Man's hat and coat
w. Kit gives the Rich Man a list of the items he's taking
x. Kit locks the Rich Man and his maid in a closet
y. Kit wipes his fingerprints off the doorknob to the closet
z. Kit and Holly leave the Rich Man's house with a trophy, and groceries
aa. Kit grabs Holly's butt
bb. They walk through the backyard
cc. Kit opens the car door for Holly
dd. They steal the Rich Man's car

43. The Road:

a. Kit and Holly race across the Badlands
b. Holly reads a Hollywood magazine to Kit, asking Fact or False
c. They travel under phone lines
d. They head to the Sierra's in the distance
e. They travel by cows
f. Shot of grass
g. Kit getting gas from oil well
h. Kit and Holly cook dinner at sunset
i. Kit stands in long shot like James Dean with rifle across his shoulders, staring into the sunset
j. sunset and sierras in the distance
k. Pheasant shot
l. Iguana shot
m. Lightning shot
n. Bird shot
o. Kit and Holly kiss in the back seat of the car
p. Shot of a passing train
q. Kit shoots a football
r. Kit buries a magnifying glass, a trophy, a doll, Holly's Stereopticon slides, cigarettes in a bucket in the Badlands

44. Train Tracks:

a. Kit and Holly hide from a passing train
b. Kit spins a bottle to determine which direction to drive
c. Kit tosses the bottle
d. Kit and Holly drive away at night

45. The Road:

a. Shot of oil well burning flame at night
b. Shot of the city
c. Shot of the road from headlight perspective
d. Kit drives and Holly smokes
e. Holly reads a magazine
f. A bird flies by the car's headlights
g. Kit and Holly dance (Nat King Cole's "A Blossom Fell")
h. Kit looks in love
i. Holly looks to be elsewhere
j. They drive at sunrise
k. Clouds at sunrise with the sierras in the distance
l. They drive off road in the Badlands

46. Oil Well:

a. Kit approaches an oil man, asking for gas
b. Holly looks absently at a piece of machinery
c. Kit tries to trade his car for the oil man's
d. Kit shows his gun
e. Holly signals that a helicopter's coming
f. Holly walks behind machinery and crouches down

g. Oil man runs away
h. Kit tells Holly to go with him
i. Holly says no
j. Kit kicks up dirt
k. Helicopter nears
l. Kit grabs a fender and runs toward the copter, shooting a man
m. Kit jumps in car and drives away
n. Holly walks with hands up to the copter while pilot checks on dead man
o. Kit drives away
p. Helicopter lifts away with Holly

47. Gas Station:

a. Kit pulls into the gas station
b. Kit talks to the attendant
c. Kit goes to throw away Holly's belongings
d. Kit keeps a diary
e. Cop cruise drives by
f. Kit throws the diary into the car and jumps into the car
g. Cruiser turns around

48. The Road Chase:

a. Kit races away from the gas station in his car
b. The police race after him
c. Inside of Kit's car, Kit driving, changing the radio channel, grabbing a gun
d. Kit goes off road and races by cows, shooting at the police
e. Kit drives through a barbed wire fence
f. Kit bumps the police car
g. The police shoot at Kit
h. The police car takes a turn and flips over
i. Kit checks his hair
j. Kit puts a hat on
k. Kit stops the car
l. The cop car continues on
m. Kit gets on top of the car and checks his pulse
n. Kit collects rocks
o. Kit builds a shrine
p. The cop car approaches
q. The cops get out and Kit puts his arms up
r. The cops subdue Kit who says that's where you caught me
s. They cuff Kit
t. They put a gun to his head and walk him to the car
u. Deputy fires off a shot

49. The Police Car:

a. Kit talks with the police
b. Police man throws Kit's hat out the window
c. Deputy says Kit looks just like James Dean

50. Airport:

a. Policeman bustle
b. Kit stands on the wing of a plane
c. Kit gives away his lighter
d. Kit gives away his comb
e. Kit gives away his pen
f. Policeman crowded around Kit
g. Holly with policemen who caught Kit
h. Shots of military
i. Deputy asks Kit to sign papers
j. Kit led to Holly
k. Kit talks to Holly
l. Plane arrives
m. Military and police lead Kit and Holly to plane
n. Man and son point at Kit
o. Kit signs papers
p. Kit shakes hands
q. Plane starts
r. Kit gets into plane
s. Plane rolls
t. Military walk after plane
u. Plane leaves

51. Airplane:

a. Kit talks to policeman
b. Holly looks at Kit
c. Holly looks out the window
d. Beautiful shot of clouds and sun

End Credits

Appendix II
DAYS OF HEAVEN: PLOT SEGMENTATION

C. Credits

1. **Chicago Factory**
    a. Abby sifts through junk
    b. Bill argues with Mill Foreman who grabs Bill from behind and Bill strikes him with a pipe, presumably killing the foreman.
    c. Bill flees (Linda voiceover)
2. **Shack near train tracks:**
    a. Linda sews paper flowers
    b. Bill comforts Abby about leaving Chicago
3. **Train tracks: Bill, Abby, and Linda hop a train**
4. **Train: All three travel to Texas Panhandle (Linda voiceover)**
5. **Train Depot: Bill meets Farm Foreman and they are hired as wheat sackers**
6. **Farm:**
    a. They arrive; Bill walks through open fields and gazes at the scenery and space; Linda converses with new friend and they try to catch grasshoppers; Bill, Abby, and Linda horse around at dusk
    c. Farmer examines the wheat indicating it's time for harvest
    d. Prayer ceremony led by priest
    e. Harvesting begins
        i. Workers harvest by hand and with aid of machines
        ii. Animals are seemingly startled by machinery
    f. Meal Time:
        i. Farmer sees Abby for the first time
        ii. Bill fights with another worker over relationship with Abby (hostile throw of food)
        iii. Bill, Abby, and Linda relax
    g. Back at work in the fields
        i. Farmer asks older foreman about Abby
        ii. Old foreman docks Bill and Abby's pay: Bill confronts Foreman (paralleling opening scene) and Abby pleads with Bill not to fight: Bill backs off
    h. After work
        i. Bill notices cut on Abby's hand and promises to get her some lineament from the Doctor who passes by
        ii. Workers play
7. **Farmer's House (Linda voiceover):**
    a. Bill steals lineament from Doctor and overhears that the farmer is dying
    b. Abby, while chasing pheasant, approaches the house and meets the farmer
8. **Nighttime on the farm by a campfire: Bill and Linda talk**
9. **Daybreak on the farm by a haystack: Bill tells Abby that they'll travel to New York after the harvest, but Abby appears unhappy and disillusioned**

10. Farm:

a. Harvest continues: Abby and Bill are worn down (Linda voiceover)
b. Accountant tells the farmer that he had a prosperous season
c. Farmer gazes at Abby through a telescope
d. Machines and workers finish harvesting wheat (Linda voiceover)

11. Next to machines:

a. Farmer asks Abby to stay after the harvest
b. Farmer asks Abby who Bill is and she says that he's her brother

12. Pond on the farm:

a. Bill and Abby flirt in the water
b. Bill and Abby talk about taking the farmer up on his proposal to stay.
    i. Bill convinces Abby to stay
    ii. Bill washes Abby's feet

13. End of the harvest:

a. Bill and Abby walk by the farmer's house
c. Bill and Linda talk about staying
d. Linda says goodbye to her friend and comforts her over lost boyfriend (Linda voiceover)
e. Linda dances with tap dancer
f. Bill and Abby further discuss staying on the farm
g. The workers enjoy a post-harvest party and dance in front of a bonfire
h. Abby dances with the farmer and Bill watches, alone
i. Workers and Linda's friend leave the farm by train

14. Farmer's House: Bill, Linda, and Abby stay (Linda voiceover)

a. Abby tells Linda about her past when she rolled cigars
b. Foreman asks Linda about where she's from
c. Bill and Abby relax in each other's arms
d. Bill tells the farmer about working in the mill in Chicago and how he now has had to settle
e. Abby dances for the farmer and he says he loves her

15. Inside of a barn: Bill convinces Abby to requite the farmer's love because he is dying and because he hates Abby having to work so hard under bad conditions

16. Forest: marriage of the farmer and Abby

17. Farmer's house:

a. Abby and the farmer talk in bed
b. They depart for honeymoon
c. Bill and Linda move into house and he appreciates the luxurious furnishings

18. Back at home after the honeymoon: (montage) (Linda voiceover)

a. Farmer and Abby walking in a forest
b. All four enjoying the life of leisure on the farm

19. Outdoors by the gazebo: (Linda voiceover)

a. Linda throws food and Abby scolds her
b. Bill and Linda horse around

    c. The farmer shows concern over Bill and Abby's relationship as he watches them walk together towards the gazebo

20. House: Bill sneaks into the farmer and Abby's bedroom and they leave

21. Out by the fields and pond: Bill and Abby love scenes

22. Farmer's house: Bill and Abby return and she lies to the farmer about where she has been

23. Farm: montage of Linda reading picture books; the farmer writhes in pain; Bill watches Abby dress

24. Outside a barn: the farmer and foreman have a falling out over Bill and Abby

25. Well: Foreman tells Bill that he knows that he's deceiving the farmer

26. Bedroom:

    a. Farmer declares his love to Abby
    b. Abby feels guilty

27. Train tracks:

    a. President Wilson passes by on a train
    b. Bill looks on jealously at farmer touching Abby's feet (paralleling his own actions in the pond scene) (Linda voiceover)

28. Farm:

    a. Bill and farmer hunt
    b. Bill refrains from shooting the farmer
    c. Bill and the farmer pluck feathers and Bill storms off

29. Flying circus lands on the farm: (circus performers montage)

30. Gazebo where everyone watches the circus entertainers (Linda voiceover)

    a. Farmer watches as Bill and Abby whisper to each other

31. Bedroom:

    a. Farmer confronts Abby about her relationship with Bill
    b. Abby lies to the farmer

32. Outside the house:

    a. Abby asks Bill if he's spoken to the farmer
    b. Bill realizes that Abby loves the farmer
    c. Bill leaves on a plane with the circus performers

33. On the farm: (montage) life without Bill and the deepening of Abby and the farmer's relationship; (Linda's voiceover); seasons pass from winter to spring –next harvest and return of the workers

34. Outside the house: Bill returns and Abby and Bill gaze at each other and Linda greets Bill happily

35. Barn:

    a. Bill realizes that Abby loves the farmer and they part with a kiss
    b. The farmer watches as they kiss and renews his jealousy
    c. Farmer sick with jealously

36. Farm: (montage of nature scenes; disquiet among the animals and wind whips up)

37. Grasshoppers appear on the farm:

    a. Kitchen: grasshoppers appear while Linda is preparing food; swats at them

b. Farm: Bill sees them; the animals are bothered by them
c. Bedroom: Abby sees them
d. Farm: Workers mobilize to fight the grasshoppers; the farmer orders workers to smoke them out; Montage of efforts to get rid of them; scenes of grasshoppers eating; Workers overwhelmed by number of grasshoppers

38. In the field:

a. Bill tries to console the farmer
b. Farmer loses his cool and pushes Bill; his lantern catches the wheat on fire
c. The farm is engulfed by fire; workers try to put the fire out in vain

39. House: Farmer confronts Abby about her love for Bill; he grabs a gun and runs down the stair; ties her to the porch post

40. In the field:

a. Farmer riding on horse
b. Linda sifts through rubble
c. Farmer comes up to Bill who is repairing his cycle
d. Bill and the farmer fight; Bill stabs farmer in heart with screwdriver
e. Bill runs off
f. Foreman discovers dead farmer; he is grief stricken

41. House: Bill and Abby decide to leave

42. Farm Entrance Archway: The three of them leave in the car

43. Riverside: They sell things to get a boat

44. On the boat and riverside: they escape down the river (Linda voiceover); Foreman searches for them

45. Forest and Riverside:

a. Bill walks through the woods to the edge of the river; sees the police and foreman and runs back to campsite and grabs a gun
b. Cops chase Bill, who runs back to the river
c. Cops shoot Bill in the back; Abby and Linda watch, horrified
d. Abby mourns over Bill's dead body; Linda looks on with tears in eyes

46. Finishing school: Abby drops off Linda at the school; says goodbye to her

47. Town center: Abby walks down the street, watching activity and other women who are like she used to be; Linda's friend sees her

48. Train station: Abby gets on the train; she is helped aboard by a couple of soldiers

49. Finishing school: Linda uses a sheet rope to escape from window; meets up with her friend

50. Street: Linda and Friend run to the train to wait for the friend's boyfriend, who never shows up

51. Train tracks: Linda follows her friend, walking away down the tracks (Linda voiceover)

E. END CREDITS

Appendix III
THE THIN RED LINE: PLOT SEGMENTATION

1. **Jungle:**
    a. Alligator enters the water
    b. Dissolve to base of tree
    c. Pan from worm's eye view up through trees **(Train VO)**
    d. Dissolve to snake coiled around tree, choking it
    e. Dissolve to roots at base of tree
    f. Dissolve to more roots
2. **Melanesian Village:**
    a. Children bang open nuts with rocks
    b. Melanesians gather rocks
    c. Children play game with rocks in a circle
    d. Children swim under water
    e. Dissolve above water to Private Witt rowing
    f. Boy walking with fishing pole
    g. Dissolve to mothers and children playing in a pond
    h. Witt watching them
    i. Mothers and children playing
    j. Witt watching
    k. Dissolve to Witt talking
    l. Hoke playing with a bird
    m. Witt thinking (FLASHBACK: Dissolve to Witt's home)
        i. Witt's mother in bed
        ii. Girl hugging parent
        iii. Dissolve to sky/water
    n. Witt sitting on beach (VO)
    o. Shot of a boat on the beach
    p. Witt looking
    q. Melanesian holding shells
    r. Melanesians picking up shells
    s. Witt looking
    t. Melanesians holding hands
    u. Will walking through village
    v. Witt talking to mother, playing with child
    w. Shots of trees
    x. Witt thatching with Melanesian man
    y. Hoke laughing with villagers
    z. Witt and Hoke playing with children
    aa. Witt in water, looking at sky, smiling
    bb. Melanesians working
    cc. Witt watching
    dd. Melanesian with child
    ee. Melanesians chanting and singing

ff. Witt looking
gg. Melanesians singing
hh. Hoke with children on a stump
ii. Boat in the distance
jj. Hoke looking at the boat
kk. Hoke telling Witt patrol boat's coming
ll. Hoke and Witt hide

3. Inside of the Patrol Boat:

a. Welsh talks to Witt
b. Witt lights match, talks to Hoke
c. Shot of grate floor (FLASHBACK). Witt playing in hay as a kid with father
d. Witt thinking, looking at a flame

4. Outside of the Patrol Boat:

a. Tall thinking
b. Quintard maps out strategy
c. Tall thinking (VO)
d. Tall walking with Quintard, talking about staying upright
e. Train smoking
f. Tall and Quintard talking about wanting "it"
g. Tall thinking (VO)
h. Shot of water

5. Inside of the Patrol Boat:

a. Train talking to Welsh about how scared he is
b. Soldier and Tills talk about air raid
c. Shot of Fife scared
d. Doll says he's going to get him a pistol
e. Enraged soldier screaming open this door
f. Doll steals pistol
g. Shot of Captain Staros
h. Shot of man playing violin
i. Shot of man carving wood
j. Staros walking among the men
k. Bell explains why he became a Pvt (FLASHBACK)
    i. Marty walking outside
    ii. Marty hugging Bell
    iii. Marty rubbing Bell's back (VO)
l. Men readying on deck
m. Boats charging shore
n. Men praying, waiting

6. Beach:

a. Men charge the beach, ready for combat
b. Staros informed that Japanese have hauled ass. Fish live in trees
c. Shot of native with a knife

7. Inland:

a. Shots of grass
b. Men walking through grass
c. Native walks by
d. Walking through river with trees
e. Shot of an idol in the trees
f. Worm's eye shot up through canopy of trees **(Train VO)**
g. Extreme closeup shot of beautiful birds
h. Tilting shot through trees
i. Men walking through bamboo
j. Dissolve to men on a hill
k. Shot of Bell (Train VO continues)
l. Native talking without sound
m. Shot of Bell (FLASHBACK)
    i. Holding hands with Marty
    ii. Bell kissing Marty's head
    iii. Marty looking at Bell
n. Dissolve to soldiers walking by a hill
o. Men walking in grass, ducking
p. Dissolve to tall grass
q. Welsh pointing gun
r. Shot of man dead with no legs and man with severed arm
s. Shot of Fife scared
t. Dissolve to camp site

8. Camp Site:

a. Men gathering
b. Taking care of wounded
c. Witt walking with shirt off (Witt VO)
d. Witt tending to the injured
e. Witt rubbing water on man's neck
f. Shot of water in a river
g. Dissolve to trees and hillside
h. Tall talking early morning strategy
i. Staros saying they're out of water

9. Hill:

a. Staros leading
b. Shot tracking up through grass
c. POV shot of Japanese stronghold
d. Panning shot of grass
e. Shot of sky and island
f. Shot of mountain
g. Shot of Staros (FLASHBACK?)
    i. Dissolve to Staros at night
    ii. Asking God if he's there
    iii. Extreme closeup of candle flame
    iv. Staros: "Let me not betray you. Let me not betray my men."

    v. Flame
    vi. “In you I place my trust.”
h. Shot of Rosy fingered dawn
i. Tall talking Greek to Staros over head set
j. Shot of grassy hill, then explosions on that hill
k. Shot of Bell with men
l. Shot of Welsh, hunkered in grass
m. Extreme closeup of Bell’s hands, holding locket picture of Marty
n. Shot of soldier breathing hard
o. Hill explosions
p. Staros looking
q. Keck talking to men (Sico sick scene)
r. Long tracking shot of grass; men creeping through it
s. Keck leading men through scene of approaching upper hill
t. Whyte points, men shot, Whyte breathes in horror
u. Men shot down in chaos, many tracking shots over grass
v. Witt asks to participate again
w. Blood hits blade of grass
x. Tall yells at Staros
y. Seven second low angled shot through grass to sky
z. Eighteen second tracking shot through grass
aa. Doll shoots Japanese soldier on the hill (Doll VO “worse than rape”)
bb. Keck blows his own butt off
cc. Doll agrees to write Keck’s old lady; later refuses
dd. Slo mo of butterfly
ee. Savage losing his mind, lost all of his men
ff. Welsh gives morphine to dying soldier
gg. Staros tells Welsh he is going to recommend him for award
hh. Welsh: It’s all about property
ii. Tall yells at Staros, telling him to commit his soldiers to attack the hill straight on
jj. Staros refuses to make move, refuses to obey Tall’s order (shot reverse shot with Tall)
kk. Bird’s eye view of soldiers
ll. Soldier dies, asking for Fife
mm. POV shot through trees to sky
nn. Slo mo shots of soldiers going down
oo. Shot of tattered leaves with light shining through
pp. Tall walking into camp (Tall VO: shut up in a tomb)
qq. Staros explains situation’s changed to Tall
rr. Tall yells at Staros about trying to take ridge by nightfall
ss. Savage lost his mind, says we’re all just dirt
tt. Men proceed up the hill led by Bell (Flashback)
    i. Bell holding Marty
    ii. Extreme closeup of Bell’s and Marty’s hands

iii. Scene shot with jump cuts
iv. Shot of curtains blowing
v. Marty in water (Marty VO: Come out where I am)

uu. Bell's POV through grass
vv. Bell throws grenade at Japanese
ww. Japanese firing at soldiers

10. Camp

a. Tall giving talk to soldiers about reducing bunker by next day
b. Bell volunteers to go back up hill
c. Cusack volunteers to lead
d. Tall says Guadalcanal might be turning point in the war
e. Tall talks to Staros about how many men he'd be willing to sacrifice
f. Shot of sky
g. Witt sitting across from Welsh
h. Welsh states one man, just this rock
i. Witt just looks
j. Shot of sky through a tree, moon
k. Twenty eight second shot of dogs feeding on dead bodies
l. Savage standing and wondering why no one shoots him
m. Shot of Bell in grass
n. POV shot looking up at sky through blades of grass (Flashback)
    i. Marty walking in bedroom
    ii. Jump cut of Bell holding Marty
    iii. Jump cuts of Bell and Marty intimate (Bell VO: Water)
    iv. Eight second shot of Bird flying from Bell's POV
    v. Marty in bathtub in water
o. Staros eating (Staros VO: my light, my guide)
p. Shot of moon
q. Dissolve to trees and mountain
r. Doll asleep in morning
s. Tall talks to Gaff

11. Hill:

a. Men go up hill, camera tracks, dollies
b. Shot of hill from Japanese POV
c. Men stop and talking about taking Japanese on ridge
d. POV of Japanese
e. Bell calls in coordinates to bomb ridge
f. Shot of sky
g. Bombs hit
h. Men take ridge
i. POV of Japanese shooting
j. Witt watching injured man
k. Battle for ridge
l. Doll full of fear about making move to take ridge
m. Men take ridge, throw grenades, take prisoners

n. Gaff whistles for victory
o. Bell terrified
p. Men punching Japanese
q. Japanese terrified
r. Japanese soldiers sitting captured
s. Witt POV of soldiers, offering piece of gum

12. Camp:

a. Tall arriving on scene full of glee about effort and victory
b. Gaff asks for decorations for men
c. Tall says he'll nominate Cusack for decorations
d. Gaff asks for water
e. Tall says if some of the men pass out, then they'll just have to pass out
f. Fife looking (Fife VO)
g. Witt looking
h. Japanese solder's face (Staros VO)
i. Shot of fire
j. Shot of sky

13. Post-Hill:

a. Bullets whizzing by in the fog
b. Men preparing to keep moving through fog
c. Shot of sky through trees
d. Battle ensues (most emotional music in the film) (**Train VO**; this great evil). Men stealing
e. I'm gonna sink my teeth into your liver (VO: what are you to me? Nothin)

14. Camp:

a. Witt pouring water on his head, plant (Flashback)
    i. Reflection of tree in water
    ii. Melanesians playing in waterfall
    iii. Shot of water coming down waterfall, splashing on Witt
    iv. Melanesians playing
b. Witt with hands in water
c. Tall talks to Staros, relieving him of duty, says Lt. Band will take over
d. Staros exhales deeply
e. Tall says, "Nature's cruel, Staros," recommending him for the Silver Star and Purple Heart
f. Staros sitting alone as Welsh leaves news of week's rest off the line
g. Tall looking, empty after victory
h. Shot of dead feet
i. Shot of bamboo chimes
j. Shots of men at night starting fire, bamboo tinkling
k. Men play and argue in jeep, Train seen (**Train VO**: hours like months)
l. Men celebrating
m. Staros explains to men he's going home
n. Doll thanks him
o. It means you've been like my sons (Staros VO: You are my sons)

p. Staros' plane leaves
q. Men play in water
r. Doll with wonder (**Train VO**)
s. Men fighting
t. Dale, who stole Japanese teeth, sits in rain and repents (Flashback to Japanese men)
u. Emotional music
v. Shot of sky through trees and Bell walking (Bell VO: My dear wife) (Flashback)
    i. Bell looking out to water at someone in a canoe
    ii. Marty in fetal position
    iii. Person rowing closer
    iv. Marty looking out to water
    v. Marty looking to water hitting rocks
    vi. Marty on swing set
w. Flares falling through sky
x. Men running through bombs in accelerated mo
y. Men sleeping in tent
z. Welsh talking about numbness with Reilly
aa. Men have captured alligator
bb. Bell eating fruit talking about not touching another woman (Flash to Marty in present)
    i. Marty looks out of window
    ii. Shot of doorknob
    iii. Shot of Marty in bed with another man
    iv. Shot of bird flying
    v. Marty looking at sky with soldier walking to her
cc. Men receiving mail
dd. Bell reading Dear John letter (Bell Flash to present)
    i. Shot of mirror and Marty in bedroom
    ii. Shot of Marty's bed
    iii. Shot of curtains blowing
ee. Shot of sky through trees
ff. Shot of tree creature
gg. Witt walking through Melanesian village
hh. He sees sickness and plague and arguing
ii. Witt tries to touch a boy who refuses
jj. He sees human skulls
kk. Witt looks stunned (Witt flashback)
    i. Dissolve to butterfly
    ii. Melanesians in leaves (**Train VO**: We were a family)
    iii. Melanesian boys playing
    iv. Hen and chicks
    v. Shot of coconuts in tree
    vi. Shot of Melanesian father holding son

vii. Shot of wind blowing through Melanesian woman's hair

ll. Dissolve back to Witt looking at decayed Melanesian village
mm. Witt walking
nn. Witt walking through grass
oo. Witt coming up on soldier with wounded leg, offers to take him to camp
pp. Witt back at camp shaking hands with soldiers, touching them
qq. Witt looking at the men
rr. Bell by himself sitting
ss. Melanesians holding hands, Witt smiling (Quick flashback?)
tt. Witt and Welsh talk. You're a magician to me. I see a spark in you.
uu. Witt touches birdcage
vv. Welsh walking among the men at night (**Train VO**: One man sees a dying bird)
ww. Welsh sees Witt sleeping
xx. Men stamp out a fire

15. Post-Hill, River

a. Men walking through river
b. Bill talks to Welsh about oncoming explosions
c. Lt. Band shows incompetency
d. Band picks Fife and Coombs to go see where line is cut
e. Witt volunteers, says to Band it's a bad idea
f. Witt, Fife, and Coombs stepping through river
g. Shot of owl
h. Shot of river that the Japanese enter into in extreme long shot
i. Witt says they need to go back to tell Band
j. Coombs is shot
k. Doll seems scared
l. Shot of bat hanging in tree
m. Shot of bats in tree
n. Japanese approaching
o. Witt volunteers to stay to ward off the Japanese
p. Witt helps Fife, tells him to let go after he hears fire
q. Shot of lizard in a tree
r. Witt runs through brush, Japanese follow
s. Coombs lets go
t. Fife returns to Band. Bell asks where Witt is
u. Witt runs into patch of grass and Japanese surround him
v. Japanese surround Witt
w. Witt stares into other world, raises rifle
    i. Shot of sky through trees
    ii. Shots of Melanesians swimming with Witt
    iii. Low-angle shot up at tree with roots
x. Welsh kneeling by Witt's grave
y. Forlorn men
z. Welsh asks, "Where's your spark now?"

aa. Shot of birds flying away

16. Preparing to Leave

a. Dissolve to Welsh (Welsh VO: Everything a lie)
b. Clooney talking about being the father, Welsh the mother
c. Dissolve to men walking to ship
d. Walking past graves
e. Shot of Doll
f. Train Something to come back to, some kind of foundation
g. (**Train VO**: Where is it that we were together)
h. Shot of Doll
i. Shot of Welsh
j. Shot of Doll
k. Shot of water's wake as the boat moves away from island

17. Island:

a. Boat of Melanesians together, canoeing
b. Shot of two colorful birds in tree
c. Shot of plant by rock or helmet at beach in water
d. End music is Melanesians

E. END CREDITS

Appendix IV
THE NEW WORLD: PLOT SEGMENTATION

1. **Water:**
    a. Black screen; insects chirping
    b. Reflection of tree in water for 45 seconds; (Pocahontas VO)
    c. Low angled shot of Pocahontas praying, reaching to sky
2. **Credits: Near end, "Vorspiel" from *Das Rheingold* begins:**
3. **Under Water:**
    a. Fish swimming
    b. Three girls swimming under water
    c. Low angled shot from under water of Pocahontas touching water
    d. Worm's eye view under water of girl swimming
    e. Two girls with hands clasped swimming
    f. Pocahontas swimming to surface
    g. Dissolve to two Native Americans above water, pointing
4. **Above Water:**
    a. Virginia 1607
    b. Tilt up to three ships in the distance
    c. Tilt down from sails to Captain Newport
    d. Cut to tracking shot of ships
    e. Men on deck looking to shore
    f. Men adjusting sails
    g. Ship arriving
    h. Cut to POV shot of Captain John Smith framed through cell
    i. Smith looking
    j. POV of Smith reaching his hands to the sky above his cell
    k. Men on ship looking
5. **Land:**
    a. Tracking tilt down from tree tops to Native Americans
    b. Native whistling
    c. Pocahontas looking to ships
    d. Jump cut to Pocahontas looking
    e. Jump cut to Pocahontas looking with cousin
    f. Natives gathered, looking
    g. Tracking, tilting, panning of no POV to ships
    h. Pocahontas looking
6. **Ship:**
    a. Smith looking
    b. Smith POV framed through cell
    c. Smith smiling looking at sky through cell
    d. Ships
7. **Land:**
    a. Man securing ship with rope
    b. Men sloshing through water to shore

c. Back to boat for one shot; Smith looking at sky through cell
d. Open field; men walking into frame
e. Newport looking
f. Shot of grass blowing in the breeze ("Vorspiel" ends)
g. Drumming; tilt down to noose and Smith
h. Shot of Smith's hands
i. Newport arriving, saying to let Smith go
j. Shot of Smith nodding
k. Cut to black
l. Tracking shot moving down a river
m. Smith walking through grass
n. Tilt down from trees to Smith walking
o. Smith POV up through trees
p. Smith looking
q. Man finding oysters
r. Extreme closeup of man with hands together raising oyster from water to surface
s. Newport says, "This place will serve"
t. Shots of men bringing items from ship aboard (Newport offscreen voice)
u. Low-angled shot of flag of England up through grass
v. Shot behind Smith walking
w. Straight on tracking shot (Smith POV) through trees, not raining
x. Extreme closeup of axe chopping tree
y. Low angled shot of sky with Native entering frame
z. Shot in grass of native
aa. Shot of Newport and other men entering frame
bb. Newport approaching native
cc. Native sniffing Newport
dd. Shots of natives touching men
ee. Smith holding out hand to native
ff. Pocahontas creeping up to men
gg. Pocahontas and brother running away
hh. Shot of native from behind through grass (Smith VO mic'd close); the natives often visit us kindly, timid like a herd of curious deer
ii. Shot of natives listening
jj. Smith from behind looking at natives
kk. Shots of men preparing the fort (Voiceoff Newport about securing the fort)
ll. Shot of Pocahontas creeping through grass
mm. Smith writing in journal
nn. Pocahontas running in grass, through the frame
oo. Natives looking on (Smith VO) "How many seas? What blows and dangers? Fortune ever my friend"; tinkling music
pp. Shots of natives looking at fort with men looking at them
qq. Shot behind Smith of him walking through grass

rr. Shots of Pocahontas playing like a deer
ss. Three shots from behind Smith of him approaching, seeing Pocahontas
tt. Smith looking; his POV of Pocahontas 3x
uu. Shot of Pocahontas and cousin with hands clasped
vv. Shot behind Smith walking
ww. Fade to black
xx. Two shots of dog running through saplings
yy. Native climbing Jamestown frame

8. Fort:

a. Men arguing over lost kegs
b. Stores spoiled
c. Cut off man's ears
d. Captain Argall arriving
e. Shot of native walking among stores, picking up axe
f. Man shooting native in the back
g. Shots of natives running away
h. Smith looking concerned
i. Smith dunking head of shooter (Newport voiceoff)
j. Native looking through grass
k. Newport reasoning; we've eaten the majority of our stores; we might as well be shipwrecked; the naturals tell me of a city up the river; send an envoy to native king; Newport will return to England for supplies; Radcliffe will be in command; Smith will communicate with native king
l. Shot of Smith walking
m. Tilt down to natives entering frame
n. Tilt down from cross to natives feeling foundation of cross
o. Shot of ocean and shore for 14 seconds (Smith VO); "Who are you whom I so faintly hear? Who urge me ever on?"
p. Behind Newport telling Smith he has the makings to be a leader

9. Water; Boat to see Powhatan:

a. Men rowing and Smith watching
b. ELS of boat
c. Smith patting man on back
d. Tracking shot from water of tree for 9 seconds (Smith VO); "What voice is this that speaks within me…guides me towards the best?"
e. ELS of boat at night with flames
f. Low-angled shot of grass; native enters frame, looking at water
g. Shot of Smith and men on boat; Smith has hand placed on man's shoulder
h. Shot of water and shore for 14 seconds (Smith VO); "We shall make a new start. A fresh beginning."
i. Shot of men on boat.
j. Shot of water from POV of boat for 43 seconds; (Smith VO); "Here the blessings of earth are bestowed upon all. None need grow poor. Here there is good ground for all, and no cost but one's labor. We shall build a true commonwealth, hard work and self-reliance our virtues. We shall

have no landlords to rack us with high rents or extort the fruit of our labor."

k. ELS shot of boat from marsh

10. Land:

a. Counterpoint: Shot of men and native in bonds, stealing; (Smith VO); None shall eat up carelessly what his friends got worthily or steal away that which virtue has stored up. Men shall not make each other their spoil."
b. Shot of Smith looking, hearing imitation bird call; native escapes

11. Water:

a. Bird's eye view of canoe
b. Shot of men canoeing
c. ELS tracking shot of men canoeing
d. Shot of men canoeing
e. Shot of bird flying
f. Smith walking with native in marsh
g. Shots of Smith walking in marsh
h. Shots of Smith being attacked by natives
i. ECU of Smith showing compass to natives
j. Smith showing native compass
k. Opechancanough approaches Smith feels his armor and hair

12. Powhatan's Village:

a. Shots of natives taking Smith to Powhatan
b. Shot of Powhatan's hut framed by doorway

13. Powhatan's Hut:

a. Closeups of natives looking
b. Longshot of native slinking across frame of hut
c. Smith looking up
d. Track in to Powhatan and Tomocomo
e. Low-angled shot of Smith up through light at top of hut
f. Shot of natives
g. Straight on shot of Smith
h. Shots of natives
i. Shot of Smith
j. Smith demonstrating gun powder
k. Natives scurrying away
l. Shot of Pocahontas
m. Shot of Powhatan
n. Shot of Smith (shot/reverse shot)
o. Shots of medicine man reaching; jump cuts; montage
p. Natives around Smith; native charging Smith
q. Cut to black
r. CU of Smith
s. Smith's POV up through skylight (paralleling earlier shots on ship); (Smith VO); "At the moment I was to die, she threw herself upon me."

t. Pocahontas rescues Smith
u. Shots of natives
v. Shot of Smith
w. Pocahontas pleads with Powhatan to spare Smith's life
x. Women praying over Smith
y. Powhatan tells Pocahontas she will teach Smith their ways
z. Smith flashback; to sails unfolding—his view from jail
aa. Women praying over Smith
bb. Pocahontas looking
cc. Natives lift Smith out of hut
dd. Powhatan leaving hut

14. **Powhatan's Village:**
a. Shot of water over rock for 7 seconds
b. Low-angled shot of corn
c. Shot of natives picking corn
d. Shot of natives practicing bows and arrows
e. Smith walking
f. Native tending to picked tobacco
g. Pocahontas walking on a tree
h. Smith following Pocahontas
i. Native children playing
j. Shots of Pocahontas teaching Smith language—sun, sky, water
k. Shots of natives working
l. Shots of Pocahontas teaching language—face
m. Natives watching
n. Shot of water; (Smith VO): "All the children of the king were beautiful, but she, the youngest, was so exceedingly so that the sun himself, though he saw her often, was surprised whenever she came out into his presence.
o. Smith and Pocahontas playing with two parrots
p. Pocahontas combing Powhatan's hair; (Smith VO continues): Her father had a dozen wives, 100 children, but she was his favorite."
q. Smith watching Pocahontas plays a flute; (Smith VO continues); She exceeded the rest not only in feature and proportion, but in wit and spirit too. All loved her."
r. Shot of water growing small saplings
s. High-angled shot of Pocahontas on her back making circles with her arms; shot/reverse shot with Smith
t. Shots of Smith playing game with the natives; Tomocomo offers peace pipe, blows smoke on Smith
u. Shots of natives putting mud on each other
v. Shots of Smith with baby; (Smith VO); "They are gentle, loving. Faithful. Lacking in all guile and trickery. The words denoting lying, deceit, greed, envy, slander and forgiveness have never been heard."
w. Indians gather shells with Smith

x. Counterpoint--Smith looks at Pocahontas' cousin who looks envious and jealous
y. (Smith VO continues); "They have no jealousy, no sense of possession"; Counterpoint--Cousin looks at Smith's necklace
z. Native woman dancing (Smith VO continues); "Real, what I thought a dream"
aa. Shot of water with reflection of trees. Raindrops spatter the water, breaking the illusion of real trees
bb. Smith and Pocahontas playing footsie; sharing breath; Smith rubbing her arm
cc. Native walking at night; outside of Powhatan's hut
dd. Pocahontas painting Powhatan's face; shot of Pocahontas; "Promise me you will put your people before all else." She says, "I know myself"; "He is not one of us."
ee. Smith entering village from behind
ff. Pocahontas putting mud handprints on Smith's chest
gg. Behind Smith, looking out at Pocahontas in the water
hh. Smith feeling her hair; they clasp hands; he feels her shoulder and arm; shots of her taking a feather from her hair and giving it to him
ii. Smith touches her face. Low-angled shot of the two; (Smith VO); "Love. Shall we deny it when it visits us?"
jj. Shots of natives fishing; (Smith VO); "Shall we not take what we are given?
kk. Smith and Pocahontas in water; jump cut to them in water;
ll. Shot of natives praying to sky; (Smith VO); "There is only this. All else is unreal." "Vorspiel" begins for 2nd time
mm. Shots of Pocahontas praying; (Pocahontas VO); "Mother…" Track in to spirit hut; "Where do you live? In the sky? The clouds? The sea?"
nn. Low-angled shot of sky through trees
oo. Low-angled shot of Pocahontas praying; (Pocahontas VO continues): "Show me your face. Give me a sign" Twirling shot of sky framed through skylight in hut; shot of Pocahontas circling Smith; "We rise. We rise."; Low-angled shot of Pocahontas clasped hands with Smith, lifting him up
pp. Shots of spirit woman; extreme closeup of her hands
qq. Pocahontas and Smith walking among trees
rr. Tracking worm's-eye shot up through trees to sky; "Afraid of myself. A god, he seems to me"; Low-angled shot of Smith looking down; Smith and Pocahontas walking embraced; Smith showing Pocahontas a piece of glass; Pocahontas looking at glass; Pocahontas laughing with Smith; "What else is life but being near you?; Smith looking at her; extreme closeup of pages of a book; shot of natives practicing with spears; "Do they suspect?" Pocahontas and cousin—she blocks his arm; Pocahontas pouring water on Smith; Smith dancing at night with natives; "Oh, to be given to you…you to me"; Hand touches closeup of water; shot of flock of

birds in sky; “I will be faithful to you.”; Tracking shot closeup of Pocahontas framed by sky; “True.” Low-angled shot of grass to sky; Low-angled shot of Pocahontas with arms down; shot of bird flying; “Two no more.”; Tracking shot of Smith with Pocahontas; Hugging; “One.” Handheld of Smith and Pocahontas embracing in the grass; Zoom in of Smith; “One.”; Smith laying on Pocahontas; “I am”; Shot of water with reflecting tree; “I am.”; Low-angled shot of sky through trees; Pocahontas touching Smith’s face; native summoning Smith; Pocahontas looking over her shoulder of Smith walking away;

ss. Tracking inside Powhatan’s hut; “(Smith VO); “The king announced that I was free. He was sending me back and on the understanding that when spring came we were to go back to where we came from.”; shot of Smith with Pocahontas clasping hands; “His chiefs had advised him to kill me. I had gained a knowledge of their arms, their strong places. But his daughter assured him I was a good man.”; Low-angled shot of them releasing their hands; Tilt down to Pocahontas with hands from waist to Smith; Pocahontas turning to walk away; “I should tell people that though the naturals lived in peace, they were strong and would not suffer their land to be taken; Shot of natives with Smith entering frame; Tilt down from sky to water; “There was no sea beyond the mountains only a land stretching away forever in great meadows. A land which had no end”; Pocahontas walking happily amidst tobacco; low-angled shot of Pocahontas praying; backward tracking shot of Smith blindfolded being led away; bird flying away; tracking shot of water, paralleling Smith’s entrance to native camp; cut to black

15. Jamestown:

a. Natives taking off Smith’s blindfold
b. Natives lined up at fort
c. Guards looking at Smith in awe—Smith entering barren Jamestown fort
d. Children bickering
e. Long take (longer takes at Fort); Wingfield scolding Smith; “I wear the medal now and you have been stripped of your captaincy.”
f. Captain Argall shoots Wingfield
g. Smith nominated to lead as Captain; given medal
h. Smith enters house
i. Smith sitting, smelling Pocahontas’ feather and putting it in a box: (Smith VO); “Tell her. Tell her what? It was a dream. Now I am awake.”: Smith walking above fort; Smith walking in field, looking at dead plants; “I let her love me. I made her love me.”
j. Smith on top of fort; (Smith VO); “I must. Damnation is like this. The country to them is a misery, a death, a hell.”
k. Smith helping dig a well. Men digging for gold. (Smith VO); “While they starve, they dig for gold. Smith watching boat come in; There is no talk, no hope, no work, but this.”: Smith chastising men for digging for gold; (Smith VO); “Bad water. Sturgeon gone. Mutterings”; Men framed

by house muttering; “Love good and hate evil”; Spider crawling across a fungus tree; Smith holding feather; Smith talking to man about death and madness

l. Shot of a tree into night sky
m. Men cooking shoe and belts and eating leather
n. Man framed by house: “Ackley’s dead. Somebody ate his hands.”
o. Shots of men around dead guy in chair
p. Smith in house looking at guy outside framed by house—long take; (Smith VO); “To go back up that river. To love her in the wild.” Shot of sky through roof; “What holds you here?”; Shot of snow framed through window; “What are your intentions toward her? Towards them?”; Shots of men and boys shivering outside
q. Shot of cold coast
r. Shot of natives walking to fort; (same music as when Pocahontas saved Smith); Natives provide food for colonists
s. Pocahontas looks at Smith; “Why have you not come to me?”; “Don’t trust me. You don’t know who I am”; Smith does not hold her hand
t. Pocahontas leaves—colonists bow; (Pocahontas VO); “Who are you whom I love?” Shot of Smith; shot of icy cold shore; shot of blooming flowers;
u. Shot of men in boat, paddling; Smith walking ashore
v. Shots of colonists trading with natives; natives want coin money
w. (Smith FLASHBACK) Pocahontas in field; Pocahontas walking on log dropping leaves on Smith; Smith reaching for Pocahontas’ leg. He says, “There’s something I know when I’m with you that I forget when I’m away. Tell me, my love, did you wish for me to come back and live with you again?” (Pocahontas VO—within Smith flashback—”Free.” (Smith VO); My true light.” Hands clasped in field’ (Pocahontas VO); “Can love lie?”; (Smith VO); “My America”; (Pocahontas VO); “Where are you, my love?”; Shot of Smith looking; traveling shot over water; (Smith VO); “That fort is not the world. The river leads back there. It leads onward too.”; Shot of trees in water; “Deeper. Into the wild. Start over.”; Pocahontas sneaking up behind Smith; (Smith VO); “Exchange this false life for a true one. Give up the name of Smith”; SMITH COMES OUT OF FLASHBACK , crying where trading with the natives
x. Shot of Pocahontas looking out at boat on the water
y. Natives skulking in the grass, seeing corn—”they do not intend to leave”
z. Powhatan scolding Pocahontas, furious: “Who gave them the seed?”
aa. Pocahontas running away from camp, natives chastising
bb. Tracking shot outside fort; Pocahontas by fire at night; She asks Smith to come away. Powhatan sees you mean to stay. Smith: “Where would we live? In the woods? On a treetop? A hole in the ground?” Jump cut shots of Pocahontas; they clasp hands; Smith implores her to come into the fort; she runs away
cc. Shot of sliver of a moon

dd. Pocahontas walking through downed trees; ELS of her with downed trees
ee. Shot of birds in a flock flying away
ff. Low-angled shot of Pocahontas looking down, paralleling shots of her praying to the sky
gg. Tracking shot of fire in a boat
hh. Natives approaching fort
ii. BATTLE ENSUES; Pocahontas running away; her mourning; Smith killing; cousin being shot; shot of sky; Pocahontas holds cousin; POV to sky through grass (paralleling Beade in TTRL); Spirit woman blows; natives take Pocahontas hostage; colonist claims only those who can improve the land can own it; Smith talks with Opechancanough; (Smith FLASHBACK to speaking with Tomocomo); battle ensues in fort; (Smith VO); "Lord, turn not away Thy face. You desire not the death of a sinner. I have gone away from You. I have not hearkened to Your voice. Let us not be brought to nothing."; Natives victorious

16. Powhatan's Village:

a. Pocahontas taken into Powhatan's hut
b. Powhatan: "You were the light of my life. My joy."; Pocahontas puts her hands to her head as she did to her waist with Smith; "I am sending you away. This is the last time we shall speak"; (Pocahontas FLASHBACK To feeling a tree); "You are no longer my child."
c. High-angled shot of Pocahontas sleeping in auburn tree leaves

17. Jamestown:

a. Natives destroying colonists' corn
b. Smith walking a top fort
c. Low-angled shot of flag of England
d. Shot of native pot burning
e. Colonist tells Smith that the Princess is up the river at Pastancy. They sent her to her Uncle Patowomeck, lord of the naked devils of that region. He will sell her to the fort for a copper kettle (but he likes combs). Smith says they will not take hostages—the King would not approve; (Smith VO); "Flesh fly!" to Argall; Smith refuses to take her hostage to protect the fort and it displeases Argall; Argall takes charge and says, "I shall wear the medal now."
f. Smith in chains
g. Low-angled shots of man false praying over Smith and whipping him: (Pocahontas VO); "Come near. Come near me. You touch me now. In all things may I stand by you." Argall ordering Smith to hew timbers and be hung by ankles at night
h. Smith hanging upside down on a ladder
i. Ship arriving to Pastancy
j. Argall trading copper kettle for Pocahontas; (Pocahontas VO); "Oh Mother, has he sent this ship for me?"
k. Argall: "Conscience is nuisance. A fly, a barking dog. If you don't believe you have one, what trouble can it be to you

l. Shots of ship traveling
m. (Pocahontas VO); “Mother, you are my strength, or I have none.”
n. Shots of Pocahontas walking ashore, looking around the fort; men stare at her: “It’s the princess”
o. Pocahontas introduced to her new house, looking around the house, extinguishing flame from candle; looking at a book and smelling it; shot of Argall framed by inner window
p. Ships arriving; (Smith VO): “The ships returned, firing their cannons, causing the naturals to sue for peace; natives watching ships arrive; “The tide now swung to the English side. “; Powhatan looking at ships; Pocahontas alarmed at cannon fire
q. Smith chopping tree; Pocahontas walks up in the grass; he reaches for her and she backs away; she reaches for his hand; Smith hugs her
r. Straight on POV tracking shot of trees: (Pocahontas VO); “What is right? Give”; Smith touching Pocahontas’ arm; “Wrong? Who is this man?”; She embraces Smith’s head; “Now, all is perfect. Let me be lost. True.”; kissing; “You flow through me like a river. Come”; Pocahontas walking; “Follow me.”; Men muttering;
s. Captain Newport arrives
t. Low-angled shot of Smith sawing; Newport tells Smith that the king wants him to return to England to prepare an expedition of his own to chart the northern coasts to see if you might find a passage to the Indies; shot of a cannon framed by a house; shot of natives praying in water at dusk; “I remember when you had sight and ambition. Shall you not press on?”; Smith looking at Newport; “Shall you be a discoverer of passages which you yourself refuse to explore beyond the threshold that is?; (Smith FLASHBACK); Pocahontas running in the grass; “The King has great hopes for you. Plans.”
u. Mary arrives to take care of Pocahontas; Pocahontas says that’s not her name anymore; Shots of domesticating; (Pocahontas VO); “I shall find joy in all I see.”
v. Smith looking; Newport: “Look beyond these gates. Eden lies about us still. We have escaped the Old World and its bondage. Let us make a new beginning and create a fresh example for humanity. We are the pioneers of the world, the advance guard sent on through the wilderness to break a new path…”; tracking shot through fields of corn; “…God has given us a promised land, a great inheritance. Woe betide if ever we turn our back on him.” Shot of Jamestown framed by house—counterpoint; “Let us prepare a land where a man may rise to his true stature”; shot of field framed by house; “a land of the future, a new kingdom—counterpoint; A bleak shot inside Jamestown fort soaked in water; Smith looking toward ocean
w. Shot of bridge leading out to the water
x. Smith approaching newly cultured Pocahontas

y. She is happy; (Pocahontas VO); "Am I as you like? His eyes."; Smith: "You knew me as I was long ago. I have never truly been the man I seem to you to be." (Pocahontas VO); "What does he say? Mean?"; Pocahontas: "I can't sleep til I see you again…I belong to you."
z. Shot of water from shore; (Pocahontas VO); "He knows."
aa. Smith pining in his tent, looking at her feather
bb. (Smith FLASHBACK); (Pocahontas VO); "Where am I?" low-angled shot of Pocahontas in grass; Smith throws table; cut to black
cc. Bird flying in the sky
dd. Smith says to wait two months and tell her I am dead. Drowned.
ee. Pocahontas sleeping
ff. Smith leaving
gg. Pocahontas walking out of the fort to find him gone; despondent, pulling grass and crying
hh. Shot of extinguished fire; Pocahontas crying by cannon, comforted by colonists woman
ii. Pocahontas being taught culture; "He's left you princess. He told you a pack of lies.
jj. Shots of spirit woman; Pocahontas opening her arms. (FLASHBACK?); Shots of spirit woman; man tells Pocahontas Smith drowned in the crossing; Pocahontas rubbing ashes on her face
kk. Shots of Pocahontas despondent; (Pocahontas VO); "You have gone away with my life. Killed the god in me." She dunks her head in water; cut to black

18. Powhatan's Village:

a. Shots of natives fleeing
b. Colonists burning natives crops and huts
c. Powhatan leaving
d. Shots of natives leaving
e. Powhatan praying in hut; shot up through skylight
f. Tracking shot of corn in smoke; fade to black

19. Jamestown:

a. Pocahontas sleeping outside
b. Pocahontas helping man with head in wooden hole
c. Rolfe seeing Pocahontas framed by well
d. Pocahontas pouring water
e. (Rolfe VO): "When first I saw her, she was regarded as someone finished, broken, lost. "; Pocahontas gathering lettuce in garden; Rolfe sees Pocahontas framed by house; (VO continues); "She seemed barely to notice the others about her
f. Pocahontas walking in garden by tall wooden wall; Rolfe: Um, I would like to spend the afternoon with you. How do I ask?"
g. Mary voiceoff: "A nature like yours can turn trouble into good. All this sorrow will give you strength and point you on a higher way. Think of a tree—how it grows around its wounds. If a branch breaks off, it don't stop

but keeps reaching towards the light"; tilt up a tree; "We must meet misfortune boldly and not suffer it to frighten us."; Rolfe enters her house; "We must act the play out, then live our troubles down my lady."

h. Rolfe teaching months; Pocahontas: "What is a day, an hour?"; Rolfe explains; "Why does the earth have the colors?; Rolfe perplexed
i. Mary: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and the Holy Ghost. Amen"
j. Pocahontas entering house, framed by door; (Rolfe VO); "She has accepted my invitation to work in the fields. She understands the culture of tobacco. The people were sorry at her going."
k. Rebecca working in the field; (Pocahontas VO); "The loss of my wife and daughter has led me to understand her loss as well.; shot of her feeding chickens framed by house with Rolfe looking; Pocahontas burying fish by tobacco and cutting leaves; Rolfe tying tobacco; (Rolfe VO); "Hours pass, she speaks not a word."; Rolfe and Pocahontas walking in grass; Pocahontas holding her own hands; (Rolfe VO continues); "Who are you? What do you dream of?"; (Pocahontas VO); "We're like grass."; Rolfe eats grass; Pocahontas: "Are you kind?"; they embrace; courtship; (Rolfe VO); "She weaves all things together. I touched her long ago without her knowing her name"; Pocahontas catching butterflies; Rolfe looking; Pocahontas petting cow; running in rain; Rolfe: "Suppose I asked you to marry me. What would you say?"; Pocahontas: "Are you asking me? Where would we live?"; "You could forget your life in this place"; Pocahontas smiles but shirks from his touch; "Won't you say yes"; "If you like"; she cries—she must be happy. "You don't love me now. Someday you will."
l. Pocahontas getting married
m. Pocahontas sleeping; Rolfe watching
n. Pocahontas bed empty; Pocahontas climbing stairs
o. ECU of Pocahontas wedding band
p. Shot of sky
q. Pocahontas standing in tree
r. Pocahontas praying out window from inside of the house
s. Rolfe looking framed by house
t. Rolfe trading
u. Pocahontas looking; (Pocahontas VO); "Mother, why can I not feel as I should? Must?"; Pocahontas and Smith on opposite sides of house; Pocahontas looking framed by house; She washes Rolfe's back; (Pocahontas VO continues); "Once false, I must not be again. Take out the thorn."; Pocahontas walking in mud in garden—she falls; Rolfe lifts her out'; "He is like a tree. He shelters me. I lie in his shade"; she feels his hair; "Can I ignore my heart?"; shot of stove; "What is from you and what is not?"; chickens enter home; she prays out window; "Great Sun, I offer you thanks."; baby born; "You give life to the trees and the hills"; Shot up through trees; "To the streams of water…to all"; she sings to baby

and Rolfe watches; native moves tobacco; they play with water and child; "Mother, your love is before my eyes. Show me your way. Teach me your path"; Family inside wooden fence of garden; "Give me a humble heart."; Invited to England with a Royal audience in her honor with the King and Queen; Pocahontas out at night looking at light

20. Newfoundland:

a. Shot of water crashing against shore
b. Native holding fish
c. Stream of water
d. Smith looking
e. Shot of native girl
f. Low-angled shot of Smith
g. Water crashing—cold

21. Jamestown:

a. Pocahontas walking, hearing that Smith is alive
b. Learns he was sent back to London
c. Pocahontas walks by frame of house by ladder and empty chair
d. Pocahontas crying
e. Pocahontas scooping water from well
f. Pocahontas: "It would mean something I do not feel. I'm married to him. He lives"; Rolfe: "You don't know the meaning of the word, exactly"
g. Cut to black
h. Preparing to leave for England; (Rolfe VO); "Sweet wife, love made the bond. Love can break it too. There is that in her I shall not know."
i. Opechancanough: "Your father has sent me. For each Englishman I come across, I am to place a notch on these sticks. And to see this God they speak so much about."

22. England:

a. Pocahontas looking at the chatter and businesses
b. Pocahontas happy looking out of carriage
c. Tilt down from church steeple to Pocahontas looking up
d. Pocahontas framed by doorway
e. Pocahontas sees black man
f. Tilt down from steeple to wooden doors and low-angled shot of Pocahontas
g. She gives money to a bum and touches his face
h. Pocahontas walks into palace
i. She does not kiss King's hand
j. Raccoon in a cage
k. Eagle inside
l. Pocahontas sees inside the palace
m. Stained glass that Opechancanough looks at
n. Shot of manicured trees
o. Shot of steps to garden

p. Opechancanough walks through garden; desolate and no insects chirping; the wind blows loud
q. Pocahontas combs hair
r. Smith arrives; Rolfe: "I think you still love the man and that you will not be at peace until you see him. In my vanity, I thought I could make you love me, and one cannot do that, or should not. You have walked, blindly into a situation you did not anticipate." Pocahontas: "You are the man I thought you were. And more"
s. Low-angled shot of Smith
t. Pocahontas has changed clothes
u. Smith framed by doorway
v. She is breathing heavily
w. Smith waits
x. POV shot of perfectly manicured shrubs
y. Pocahontas looks at Smith, up and down, scornfully; (real what I thought a dream song)
z. Pocahontas in front of Smith crying
aa. POV of shrubs; "Did you find your Indies, John?"
bb. "I may have sailed past them."
cc. Smith watching Pocahontas walking by a maze
dd. "I thought it was a dream what we had in the forest. It's the only truth"
ee. She bows and walks away
ff. Pocahontas standing in tree
gg. Rolfe waiting
hh. Pocahontas walking up to Rolfe, grabbing his arm
ii. She looks at her ring
jj. "Could we not go home"; "My husband"; she kisses him
kk. Child playing
ll. Rolfe playing with child
mm. Pocahontas lying in grass
nn. Rolfe looking
oo. Pocahontas playing with son and sheep ("Vorspiel" begins)
pp. Rolfe looking
qq. Pocahontas holding son
rr. Pocahontas playing hide and seek with son; (Pocahontas VO); "Mother, now I know where you live"
ss. Son can't find mother; (Rolfe VO); "13th of April, 1616. Dear son, I write this so that someday in the future you might understand a circumstance which shall be but a far memory to you." Rolfe holding Pocahontas' hand in bed; "You dear mother, Rebecca"; Reflection of them in the mirror; "fell ill in our outward passage at Gravesend."; Rolfe crying by her hand; "she gently reminded us that all must die."; son looking for her in garden; "Tis enough, she said that you, our child, should live."
tt. Shot inside church windows
uu. Empty bed

vv. Native sitting in a chair, running out the door framed
ww. Shot of a tree—Pocahontas touching it
xx. Shots of Pocahontas running, cartwheeling, playing in water
yy. Bird flying away
zz. Rolfe making trip with son
aaa. Ship leaving
bbb. Pocahontas grave
ccc. Marsh and water
ddd. Pathway to water
eee. Water over rocks
fff. Water over rocks
ggg. Trees, fast tracking
hhh. Water over rocks
iii. Water over rocks ("Vorspeil" ends)
jjj. Low-angled shot up through tree
kkk. Leaf falls

E. End Credits

Vita

Charles Clinton Stivers was born in Louisville, Kentucky, to the parents of Charley and Lynda Stivers. He has one sister, Cassie Purdy, two nieces, Karson and Lindley, and a nephew, Jake. After graduating from Henry Clay High School in 1991, he attended the University of Kentucky on a soccer scholarship. He completed his B.A. in English and Psychology in 1996, and conducted graduate work at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill from 1998-99. He worked as a roofer in Lexington, Kentucky for two years and completed his M.A. at Eastern Kentucky University. He returned to graduate school at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where he has taught Freshman Composition, Introduction to Film Studies, and classes on Hollywood Genres, The Hollywood Renaissance, and The New Hollywood. He received a PhD in English in August, 2012. He continues to teach film classes and composition in the University of Tennessee English Department.