

“Breaking the Barriers of Blockbuster”

As a freshman film student trying to pry my way into an exclusive discourse community where I am not only disadvantaged in knowledge but also as a woman, I can't help but feel inadequate for this field. After reading and learning about discourse communities from articles by Swales, and a proper definition of genre by reading articles by Devitt; I've figured out that my situation is common and in fact very normal. I'm feeling as though I now have this tangible definition of genre within me, especially after reading articles from a discourse community I may want to enter. I find one of the more interesting genres within this discourse community is experimental and independent film. Compiled of unshakable self-expression, alternative narrative style and realistic story telling, this genre applies Devitt's principles of a broader more holistic approach to genre, because each film is so apart and different yet connect in the very same way; a way in which everyone in the discourse community can understand and be taught to understand. The genre of experimental and independent film is one that uses the art of story telling as a canvas to paint a personalized artistic interpretation of narrative style. The genre consists of barrier breaking unconventional, blockbuster rebel type films. The aim of the filmmaker is to tell a story usually with the backdrop of a social, or political situation and portray the story realistically.

The conversations among members of this discourse community are between festivalgoers and filmmakers. I analyzed three articles from my discourse community they were either editorial stories or interviews with filmmakers. Two articles came from “Metro Magazine”. “Metro Magazine” is an Australian film and media educational

magazine written by teachers of Media. One Article came from “Film International”.

“Film international” is a magazine that focuses more on in-depth analysis and features interviews, it describes itself as a way to bridge the gap between the academy and the outside world and wants encourage the participation of scholars, free-lance writers, activist, and film makers. In the article from “Metro Magazine” we hear from festivalgoer Rjurik Davidson. Davidson is the writer/editor of “Overland magazine” and creative writing instructor at RMIT. (An Australian university in Melbourne, Australia) He introduces film festivals to the readers as more than just a place to see films. “From what I could see though, MIFF (Melbourne International Film Festival) successfully fulfilled its role as a provider of an alternative to mainstream cinema. But there is more to a festival than simply the films. It is also for many a social event.” (Davidson 49). Festivals become a place where participants are welcome to join the conversation of the discourse community. The article it’s self is structured in an introductory manner. It introduces the reader to festivals and in categories explains what makes them different than seeing a blockbuster in the movies. The article is very inviting, it has many illustrations that are screen shots from festival films, and I believe that is inviting aspiring filmmakers or lovers of movies looking for something new and exciting to read. Davidson explains how this particular genre differs from mainstream Hollywood films. “These are films about something – something more than the usual bland, characterless stories that regularly emerge from Hollywood production line.” (Davidson 49). I found out that this particular viewpoint is shared between people of this community who use this genre. IN the same Magazine I read an article that interviewed Martin Murphy an Australian independent filmmaker on his success of an experimental horror film called “Lost Things”. The

article's title is Edgy, Experimental, and Weird, which will automatically invite new readers into the discourse community because it sounds interesting. This article is also lavishly illustrated; it even includes full-page screen shots from the movie. The interview with Mr. Murphy reinforces my statement that the genre of experiment/independent films is the manifestation of Devitt's new theory of Genre. "We're like everyone else (By this he means everyone else in the discourse community) What we want is genre with a twist...And that's what we're looking for, we were looking to try and take a genre and subvert the conventions, and that's a dangerous path to take." To achieve this "unconventionality" that all experimental and independent filmmakers want Murphy comments on how the screenwriter developed the plot, this was primarily aimed at fellow filmmakers or intermediate students, who would immediately understand the lexis. "Steve (The screenplay writer) brings all the dense conceptualization. I thought he was going to write a straight three-act, linear-progressing horror film...(instead it was layered and had a) interweaving non- linear plot." The article I read from "Film international" was pertaining to the same dialogue. Writer Cian Taylor interviewed an experimental Avant Garde filmmaker Vincent Moon. The same attitude is held toward the unrealistic, commercial, unoriginality of Hollywood productions. "A one -hour - forty five minute movie just isn't life, so I'm interested in a completely different documentary approach." Unlike the other two articles I believe this article was specifically focused on inviting the filmmaker or professors. Mr. Moon mentioned very technical terms such as going into editing details like frame length and rhythm. Also he quotes scenes in detail of independent films such as "Outer Space" by Peter Tscherkassy, that only someone very involved in the discourse community would understand. To close his article he made a

statement that I believe is aimed towards aspiring experimental filmmakers. “Whether this will prove successful or not, the struggle to challenge and redefine the long-established boundaries of cinema is an admirable one.”

The language used between the members of the film discourse community is very particular to its discourse community but also connected to art, and writing. Words such as perspective, realism, political, social, generic, and avant garde. Some unusual lexis that may be slightly misunderstood by outsiders of the community would be phrases like “rough cut” “arthouse” and other coined terms such as “magic realism” and “alternativeness”. These were however in a way roughly explained by the content of the article. “Art house” is a term used to describe something not completely unrealistic or whimsical and eccentric such as Tim Burton. Rather the term “Art house” means a glamorized or perfectified depiction of venues or people, such as what you see today in the media like on commercials and a primary example would be Disney or Disney Channel. I didn’t have any idea what this term meant and I didn’t look it up either. Instead I derived the definition from how it was used in one of the articles it was used in both of the articles from “Metro Magazine”. One of the textual examples are from an interview article in the magazine “...And in came an art house director who’d made a couple of arthouse films and just hated it.... He said , ‘All of these kids- They’re just horrible.’” “They were asking us why we hadn’t taken a commercial approach.” “We didn’t want them to look like they’d walked off a catwalk into our movie.” I believe that the simple fact that I could understand a term I hadn’t yet heard of before is proof of my understanding of how genre works in the discourse community. I now feel a sense of confidence I hadn’t before, and this is from just reading three articles from my discourse

community. I hope to read more, and with my new found understanding of genre and it's role in discourse community and learning, I now am familiar with a way to enter this discourse community educated and informed with maybe even a little expertise in the field.