TEASE ME:

THE POSTMODERN MOVIE TRAILER

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Just a decade ago, movie previews were screened *only* at the movie theater. Now,

consumers can easily download trailers to their smartphones, laptops and watch them on

the television. With of the influx of technology during the past decade, the previously

congruent genre of movie trailers has begun to include radically altered trailers that

refuse narrative techniques of persuasion, because like Lyotard suggests broadly in *The*

Postmodern Condition, "the grand narrative has lost its credibility" (37). A subversive

and very postmodern teaser trailer has splintered off within the genre that constantly

challenges the status quo of the theatrical movie trailer primarily in regards to its lack of

narrativity. The traditional movie trailer upholds the grand narrative, which Lyotard

suggests is the core of modernity, while the teaser trailer exudes the refusal of narrative in

its form and content, acknowledging a lack of credibility towards narrative structure.

Scholars in academia and popular culture identify the movie trailer as simple and

homogenous, a text that has a straightforward and clear definition that is modern in

aesthetics as well as commodity. These scholars fail to recognize that a new sub-genre of

movie trailers exists and that the teaser trailer completely opposes the traditional movie

trailer. The teaser trailer must be identified as a separate and unique text, one that

exhibits postmodern qualities. By exploring the teaser trailer through a postmodern lens, the complexity of the previously undefined teaser trailer will reveal itself.

In *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers*, Lisa Kernan defines the movie trailer as "a brief film text that usually displays images from a specific feature film while asserting its excellence, and that is created for the purpose of projecting in theaters to promote a film's theatrical release" (1). More specifically, she relies on classical rhetoric to explain the appeal of movie trailers through "the art of persuasion, to analyze trailers because they are quintessentially persuasive cinematic texts" (5). For her, movie trailers function primarily as a promotional text of persuasion, a text meant to entice viewers through specific and directed appeals.

While her detailed organizational breakdown of movie trailers over three eras through three different uses of appeals (genre, story, and star) works, Kernan excludes a very important type of the movie trailer: the teaser trailer. The teaser trailer disregards the precept that trailers are merely promotional texts of persuasion through a redefinition opposite from the traditional, rote function and purpose of theatrical trailers. The teaser trailer purposely refuses to be simply a promotional text, while still inadvertently promoting the movie . Kernan's assertion about movie trailers fails to consider whether the trailer has any meaning other than simply a supplemental movie-going experience:

> Trailers are film paratexts. As Gérard Genette has characterized them, paratexts are those textual elements that emerge from and impart significance to a (literary) text but aren't considered integral to the text itself, such as all prefatory material, dust jacket blurbs, advertisements and reviews . . . because of their heavily quotational aspect and the way they rhetorically reconfigure scenes from the film,

endowing them with persuasive content, I would suggest moreover that trailers

are both para- and metatexts. (7)

By cordoning off the movie trailer into a prefatory text, Kernan essentially refuses to see movie trailers as texts that can function aside from the source it quotes. Naming movie trailers as both para- and metatexts limits the movie trailer to a narrative meaning that remains only significant in regards to the movie it references. Her existing assumption that all trailers are alike and homogenous sidelines the teaser trailer. Teaser trailers should be considered a text of their own, with their own logic and design, and most certainly not considered a paratext or a metatext. The teaser trailer is not a part of a whole and does not contain any hidden levels of interpretation and meaning.

Because the postmodern trailer diverges so strongly from a traditional trailer, continuing the comparison between the two will most easily and efficiently illuminate their differences. Kernan says that "trailers are at once ads and more than ads" because they "commonly utilize codes of voice-over narration, sound and sound overlapping, music, graphics, and most importantly, editing, or montage" (8, 10). Kernan also emphasizes the art of repetition in movie trailers and how a repetition of narration, title and visual motifs, actor names, and voice-over play an important role in the persuasive ability that trailers exude. Most importantly, she relies on narrative and editing to ultimately describe the movie trailer. Kernan explains that,

Trailers construct a *narrative time-space* that differs from (and creates desire for)

the fictive world of the film itself. The *fast pace* of most trailers accentuates the

film's surface of cinematic spectacle, displaying the film's shiniest wares, or most

attractive images, positioning it as a commodity for sale. Narrative, however, *does*

not disappear in this process. (10, emphases added)

By reasserting that narrative is not lost through this process, Kernan emphasizes the key

to understanding the traditional theatrical movie trailer; from this point exactly, the teaser

trailer branches away from those specific rhetorical techniques. Kernan provides another

succinct description of how narrative and editing define the traditional movie trailer:

Trailers are themselves little stories constructed within the anticipatory dimension

of capitalist realism in which carefully selected individual cinematic images,

dynamically combined in highly teleological editing structures, shine with a

surface gloss of exaggerated spectacularity." (10)

These narrative qualities comprise a very detailed and accurate description of the

theatrical movie trailer, but not the teaser trailer. The teaser trailer, neglected by Kernan,

exudes quite opposing characteristics rife with postmodern tendencies.

Steven Best and Douglas Kellner in *Postmodern Theory* address the ambiguity

inherent in the word "post." They argue, "'post' describes a 'not' modern that can be read

as an active term of negation" (29). The use of the word "postmodern" suggests an active

rupture from modernity. Simultaneously, the word "post" can signify "dependence on, a

continuity with, that which it follows" (29). The teaser trailer illuminates both aspects

inherent in the implications of the word "post." Without the modern movie trailer to

compare the teaser trailer with, the "anti" or the "not" qualities of the teaser trailer do not

exist.

Teaser trailers persuade through non-persuasive, postmodern rhetorical strategies.

Theatrical movie trailers are texts of denotation while postmodern trailers are texts of

connotation. The traditional movie trailer provides all the information, images and connections for the viewer to make. The images, through editing, guide the viewer along in the desired direction. The manipulation is very apparent and explicit. On the other hand, teaser trailers allow for a multiplicity of reactions towards the text. The underlying meaning in the teaser trailer remains vague and self-referential at best, thereby demanding that the viewer connote their own meaning of the text.

The postmodern teaser trailer tends to follow certain rules of logic, but is not limited to the following characteristics:

1) postmodern teaser trailers persuade through non-persuasion (i.e. the "not-trailer") and no explicit argument exists;

2) postmodern teaser trailers are aggressively self-reflexive. The camera actively participates in the trailer compared to a removed existence (entirely unnoticed) in theatrical trailers;

3) postmodern teaser trailers also exercise "high concept" techniques, are not finely tuned and are not concerned with "the edit." While traditional movie trailers splice together original footage from the film (i.e. montage) and are highly glossed texts of persuasion, the teaser trailer avoids montage at all costs;

4) postmodern teaser trailers rarely use actual footage from the film itself while traditional movie trailers use many, if not all, scenes from the movie edited together to make a fresh, alternative narrative compared to the original film. Instead, the teaser trailer creates new images, striking and meaningless, to represent the film in an abstract and intangible way;

5) postmodern teaser trailers are short (20-50 seconds) and do not exhibit a traditional film narrative structure while basic movie trailers typically follow a traditional film three-act structure and are longer (two to three minutes);

6) by definition, postmodern teaser trailers cannot give away any plot information or implied meaning of the film. Due to its lack of "montage of attractions" nature, teaser trailers lack a brief synopsis of the plot and the characters, especially any information leading to the conclusion of the film;

7) postmodern teaser trailers remain unresolved. The presented action, or lack thereof, does not illicit any expectations of what to expect in the actual film as most traditional trailers in some way lead the viewer through the first two plot points and create some expectations of what's to come in the film.

There exists a sort of skepticism within the teaser trailer. The teaser trailer questions the genre's legitimacy through radical form and content, undermining the genre from which it diverges. Stuart Sim explains this inherent skepticism in "Postmodernism and Philosophy" as challenging and necessary for postmodern theory. He says the postmodern movement includes skepticism about "authority, received wisdom, cultural and political norms, etc." (3). He also argues that skepticism "is an essentially negative form of philosophy, which sets out to undermine other philosophical theories claiming to be in possession of the truth" (3). The teaser trailer, in a general sense, attempts to refuse the norms and accepted text of persuasion as exemplified in the traditional movie trailer through aggressively skeptical methods.

CHAPTER II

THE POSTMODERN MOVIE TRAILER

The Anti-Argument

The teaser trailer, as compared to the traditional theatrical trailer (defined by Lisa Kernan) and to traditional advertising techniques, emerges as somewhat of an anti-text. It subverts the traditional strategies of its own genre with an entire separate purpose of its own. Thus, it is not surprising that the teaser trailer is located in a theoretical tradition of postmodernism. Postmodernism allows for the insurrection of a part from the whole while still remaining in the hegemonic structure. Christopher Butler explains the general qualities of a postmodern text as one that "resists master narrative of modernism . . . and worries about its own language" (64). The postmodern trailer has its own internal logic that subverts the traditional movie trailer which relies on narrative structure. It also comes across as trivial and ephemeral, qualities that postmodernity exudes.

In addition to challenging the traditional aesthetics of theatrical trailers, the teaser trailer undermines classical advertising. While Kernan argues that the movie trailer positions itself as an ad, but also more than an ad, the teaser trailer essentially refuses to participate in the advertising aspect completely. According to H.K. Nixon, classic advertising principles follow these simple rhetorical techniques: "Arrest, Inform, Impress, Impel" (182). These pared down directives lie at the core of promotional texts, the

theatrical trailer being no exception. The teaser trailer, though, fails to achieve most of these qualities: inform, impress, and impel. Because the teaser trailer does not inform (lack of narrative structure or content information), impress (the purpose of the teaser trailer does not persuade or awe through "spectacularity"; therefore, any attempt of affecting the viewer is not the primary concern) or impel (the teaser trailer is not a text of encouraging or pushing towards a meaning or action, i.e. "go see this movie"), the teaser trailer falls outside traditional advertising techniques.

In *Principles of Advertising*, Nixon explains the five functions of the advertising layout in a way that will further develop the radical nature of the teaser trailer in comparison to the traditional theatrical trailer. The five functions are: "1. To attract attention. 2. To direct attention. 3. To hold the reader's interest. 4. To create a pleasant feeling. 5. To assist in conveying the advertiser's message" (212-3). All five of these functions perfectly align with Kernan's established definitions of the movie trailer because the movie trailer in the most traditional sense is *supposed* to be an advertisement for the film. Without these goals the trailer takes on a different purpose and a completely different aesthetic appeal. In the loosest sense, the teaser trailer attempts to adhere to the first and third function. Attraction and interest in the teaser trailer remains merely a by-product of a complex postmodern structure, though. Direction in the teaser trailer remains open and less focused as the theatrical trailer and the pleasant feeling is removed from the teaser trailer and replaced with unease, fear and even confusion. As well, the teaser trailer does not rely on message or content to convey its internal logic; montage and editing do not appear in the teaser trailer in a fashion that "further" the plot, characters or film content. The teaser trailer creates a feeling in the viewer through implicit meaning.

Illuminating this adverse quality of the postmodern movie trailer, Henry Krips explains the "not-ad" as a "radically reflexive postmodern form" (170). Krips recognizes the unique quality of the "not-ad" as one that refuses to pander directly to audiences, or consumers; instead, the "not-ad" directly addresses the audience's failing trust in product advertising by employing non-persuasive techniques. Robert Goldman explains in *Reading Ads Socially* that the "not-ad" defines itself by "transgressing the camera's boundary rules initiat[ing] a self-reflexive awareness about the nature of this text as advertising, and a momentary refusal to participate in the society of the spectacle" (184). The "spectacle" that he refers to here is the unabashed advertising ploys used by companies to sell their products. Henry Krips relates the "not-ad" to the filmic text (which he calls the "not-film") and ultimately comes to the conclusion that the lack of persuasion on the advertiser's part is "not to create trust in ads (that is a lost cause) but rather to render obscure and thus shift focus from the difficult question (difficult for advertisers) of whether ads are to be believed" (169). This concept of the "not-ad" comprises the foundation of the contemporary teaser trailer. The teaser trailer actively *avoids* the persuasive qualities of advertisement; instead, the modus operandi in the teaser trailer is based on the absence of persuasion. Essentially, the postmodern movie trailer persuades through non-persuasion.

In relation to Krips' "not-film," the neologism of the "not-trailer" defines the postmodern teaser trailer well. This "not-trailer" exemplifies one that would fit Krips' explanation as a "reflexive postmodern form," one that radically breaks from the traditional means of persuasive, rhetorical strategies. The "not-trailer" showcases what audiences generally refer to as the teaser trailer (synonymous with the term postmodern

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movie trailer), those thirty seconds to one minute "teasers" advertised before the theatrical trailer premieres. Typically, teaser trailers appear months, sometimes years, in advance to whet the audience's appetite for a particular film. As well, teaser trailers quickly disappear from the limelight after the theatrical trailers premiere. When more production has occurred, the theatrical trailer offers more to its audience: scenes from the film, narrative content and star appeal.

Postmodern teaser trailers are actively non-persuasive because no overt argument exists in the teaser trailer. Traditional movie trailers persuade the viewers explicitly through argument and exhaustive explanation about the film and its content through montage, voice-over and heavy use of music and dialogue. The teaser trailer, on the other hand, purposely fails to persuade at the level of obvious promotion for the film as such. The postmodern teaser trailer as a "not-trailer" directly associates with the concept of the anti-argument. The "not-trailer" serves as the purposeful failure of an argument which sets the teaser apart in the trailer genre. The teaser trailer takes traditional functions of advertising and subverts that discourse. The lack of argument in the teaser trailer essentially illuminates a refusal of its origins and a creation of a radically new text.

The teaser trailer for *The Omen* (John Moore, 2006) better reveals how the art of non-persuasion functions. The opening shot starts from behind a young boy in a long shot. He sits quietly and calmly on a swing in an abandoned back yard. The footage looks grayish, not just indicating dusk, but almost as though there a layer of dirt covers the camera lens. Slow, continuous camera movement enhances the dank visual nature of the trailer. The camera pans around the swing set to face the young boy in a medium shot. The somber mood solidifies as the boy stares directly into the camera with an empty look.

The trailer cuts to black. All of this takes place in silence with no music and no dialogue and in about 40 seconds. Neither plot information nor any explanation of this child exists, who the child represents, or how he relates to the film in any way. This shot does not appear in the film proper.

The Omen trailer's lack of dialogue and montage posit this trailer as the epitome of the postmodern trailer in every way, but especially in the aspect of the anti-argument. Without dialogue, voice-over, or editing, The Omen trailer almost appears like a three-dimensional poster, the camera moving around the central image as though it were a still photograph, the boy captured in time and space, unaltered. Centered in the frame, the star (or the image) in the postmodern teaser trailer is not the key to the central idea in the trailer. Without spliced against another image, this singular image cannot create meaning in the traditional sense that Bazin suggested in What is Cinema? "The meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator" (46). In addition, Bazin argued that, "montage as used by Kuleshov, Eisenstein, or Gance did not give us the event; it alluded to it" (44). The teaser trailer for The Omen alludes to no event at all. Without any surrounding images, intellectual montage cannot occur, and ultimately meaning fails to be created. Meaning in the postmodern film remains ambiguous. An event is provided, but it is vague and lacks context. Only the image appears in the postmodern teaser trailer, the shadow of the image falling on nothing. The purpose of the postmodern teaser trailer is to create a feeling.

Lisa Kernan states in Coming Attractions that "the montage structure of trailer is key to their production of meaning, and transitions other than straightforward cuts are generally utilized to participate in a trailer's 'hype,' calling attention to the advertising

function of these short film texts" (13, emphasis added). Using Eisenstein's foundational concepts of montage and its variants, Kernan understands the movie trailer as simply a montage. At its core, the movie preview represents itself as just a long montage set to music. The postmodern teaser trailer, though, follows exactly the opposite structure, one of brevity (the teaser trailer as a short text) and long takes (very few, if any cuts or edits appear in a teaser trailer). The montage does not factor into the teaser trailer, its nature one of creating meaning and transitions. Kernan also makes sure to state that "narrative, however, does not disappear in this process [cinematic spectacle]" (10). While in montage-based trailers (traditional movie trailers), narrative cannot disappear from the text. Narrative cannot present itself or escape the teaser trailer because it never existed to begin with. Narrative will elude the postmodern teaser trailer every single time. Narrative devices in traditional trailers offer viewers an answer to, "What's the point?" while postmodern teaser trailers simply bypass the narrative of the trailer in order to purposely not provide any explanation of content or message.

Self-Reflexivity and Aggressive Spectator Involvement

Postmodern teaser trailers are aggressively self-reflexive. The camera actively participates as an "actor" in the trailer. Traditionally, the camera functions as a removed existence in theatrical trailers, distancing the viewer and allowing the viewer the comfort of that distance. In *The Establishment of Physical Existence*, Kracauer explains the blind spots of the mind and asserts that "habit and prejudice prevent us from noticing them" (299). In this essay, Kracauer attempts to distinguish the differences between still

photography and the moving image by noting concepts like recording functions and revealing functions. Kracauer explains about revealing functions, "nor do we perceive the familiar . . . we just take it for granted without giving it a thought" (300). The camera uses its power to "expose" the viewer's blind spots and enter the diegesis in a fashion that ultimately jars and unsettles the viewer. In traditional cinema and movie previews, the camera acts as the familiar. We, the spectators, are used to the camera as a non-intrusive object that when the camera enters the diegesis, we are shaken and our "reality" of the movie shifts. When we are taken out of the movie diegesis, the storyworld on screen shatters upon the realization that we are watching a constructed narrative. Lacan describes this moment of realization or interruption an invasion of the Real, a jarring and upsetting moment. The postmodern teaser trailer upsets the familiar, allowing the self-reflexivity of the camera to invade the audience's "safe" position as just a spectator, not a participant, in the film. By upsetting the distance and comfort that traditional films and trailers offer, the teaser trailer overturns the trailer genre as one of a "safe zone."

Self-reflexivity in the postmodern teaser trailer exposes the blind spots in trailers in general, thus making viewers respond to the trailer in ways that they had not previously considered. By avoiding montage as the main visual appeal, the teaser trailer's structure evokes more personal and invasive ways of making connections with the audience. In his introduction to postmodernism, Christopher Butler explains this reflexivity urge in postmodernity, "Many of the innovatory techniques of postmodernist art therefore asked for interpretations that relied on such leading theoretical notions as reflexivity" (85). He says that artist self-consciousness plays an important role in this reflexive role. In the teaser trailer, the camera forces the viewer into the trailer through

self-reflexive means instead of keeping the audience at arm's length. The postmodern teaser trailer draws attention to the fact that the trailer is in fact a trailer. The postmodern teaser trailer includes the camera as a willing participant in the on-screen action, thus propelling the audience into the trailer via the camera. The teaser trailer grabs the hand of the viewer (through the incorporation of the camera into the diegesis) and pulls them into the trailer. The teaser trailer for *The Hills Have Eyes II* (Martin Weisz, 2007) elicits unease by forcing the viewers' participation in the trailer without asking permission or offering any apologies.

The Hills Have Eyes II teaser trailer begins with the camera resting sideways on the ground in a desert. Almost setting, the sun shines brightly into the camera eye. Within the same continuous shot, a man trudges past the camera's point of view, dragging what we assume to be a lifeless body wrapped in some kind of tarp. Another pair of feet steps over the camera's point of view and the rope attached to what the audience assumes is another body begins to uncurl. In just a few paces, the rope stretches out. It becomes apparent that the other end of the rope is attached to the camera itself and thus the viewer. The man apparently drags the camera (us) as a second body along with the other man who drags the first body attached to the other rope. The viewer become the second victim of this murderer in *HHE II* trailer because of the shift from familiar to the unfamiliar, the teaser trailer changing the rules of reality through the subjective camera assertion. The self-reflexive twist in *HHE II* trailer places it in a very unconventional position that situates viewers in a state of unease.

The active self-reflexivity of the teaser trailer stems from early cinema as well cinema of the spectacle. The first person technique appears in movies as early as the

1930s. In *The Black Cat* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1934), the camera becomes the first person

point of view in one segment in which a character (as the camera) walks down an empty

and dark hallway alone. This character hears and sees through the camera, placing the

viewer in the position of that person via the subjective camera technique. Linda Hutcheon

describes this postmodern quality in "Contextualizing the Postmodern," where the

extensive self-awareness of the audience members as participants becomes apparent.

"Many postmodern installations, films, and video art attempt to make the receiver into a

Brechtian, aware participant, self-consciously part of the meaning-making process . . .

this is not just a game; it is a way of forcing the usually private and passive experience of

art into the public space of action" (86). The subjective use of the camera primarily

causes unease and disorientation through a forced familiarity and comfortableness. The

act of making the audience enter the public sphere allows the postmodern trailer to create

its desired participant effect.

       In addition to the strong self-reflexive element in the trailer, the content or

singular image presented also has an effect on spectator involvement. Kracauer explains,

"elemental catastrophes, the atrocities of war, acts of violence and terror, sexual

debauchery, and death are events which tend to overwhelm consciousness. In any case,

they call forth excitements and agonies bound to thwart detached observation" (301). The

grotesque nature of the *HHE II* teaser trailer involves the viewer on the level of content,

even if the only content available remains the realization that the second body dragged by

this unnamed, silent character is ultimately the audience. The shock that comes with that

recognition most definitely thwarts the detached nature of the objective camera

propelling the viewer into a place of overwhelming emotions. Kracauer concludes,

"Cinema aims at transforming the agitated witness into a conscious observer" (302). The teaser trailer aims at transforming the agitated witness into a conscious participant through self-reflexivity and the subjective camera.

<div align="center">High-Concept and Montage-less Attraction</div>

Postmodern teaser trailers also exercise "high concept" techniques. These techniques appear on screen as images not finely tuned with little concern for "the edit." "High-concept" techniques use a singular image or idea to represent the entire film as a unifying structure. The term "high-concept" entered American consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s when films began appealing to a mass audience through planned and purposeful marketing tactics that targeted audiences in an outwardly persuasive way. Justin Wyatt's *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*, explains the direct connection between the industry (Hollywood) and the product (film). The film markets directly through the movie trailer in order to promote products from Hollywood. Teaser trailers focus on a direct appeal through imagery, but the postmodern text diverges radically from the intended outcome of the "high-concept" appeal. Instead of producing a marketable text, the postmodern teaser trailer embodies "high-concepts" at its form, but not at the level of production and industrial marketing. This complicated relationship with what is commonly recognized as "high-concept" techniques furthers the conceptualization of the unique rhetorical and persuasive strategies the postmodern teaser trailer embodies. Teaser trailers are often made outside of studios with no direct link with

Hollywood or main-stream cinema. Because of this modern situation, the "high-concept" techniques serve no other purpose than an art form.

Although unprofessionally made (not produced and marketed by a studio), a teaser trailer for the 2008 release of *The Dark Knight* exhibits a "high-concept" technique. It also does not demonstrate finely tuned graphics and is not concerned with "the edit." The trailer, lasting less than one minute, is a continuous take of a still image. This image is of the Joker, one of the characters in *The Dark Knight*, the sequel to *Batman Begins*. What makes this trailer unique is the original camera framing. The camera opens on an extreme close-up of the Joker's right ear, the image entirely identifiable. Over the one minute's time of the trailer, the camera slowly and steadily zooms out while gradually spinning counter-clockwise until the image of the Joker's face fills the entire screen. Throughout the trailer, thunder claps in the distance, slowly gaining momentum; the sound of a drum beating consistently with the thunder. The camera stops moving and settles on the Joker's image and it fades to black.

The viewer spends the entire trailer wondering what they see, let alone receiving any "message" that the trailer tries to convey. The Joker's face is painted with white makeup, but smudged around his mouth, showing that he has a deformed lip. The image is hardly recognizable as a face until the very end of the trailer when the camera rests on the graphic stilled image of his face and the thunder stops rolling. The "high-concept" technique in this teaser trailer simply presents the image of one character's face, static in time, but also static throughout the trailer. The face never moves and never talks, its stillness drawing attention to the "high-concept" the trailer embodies. The Joker's face represents *The Dark Knight*. No words are spoken. No narrative is conveyed. No edits are

made to create meaning. Simply the concept and stigma of the antagonist "speaks" for itself.

Michel Chion's *The Voice in Cinema* explains the power of the not-said in relation to *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*. It "embodies in a striking way the active power of the not-said. How many times in this film is it not said what is happening, and how many times are people, things and events not named?" (71). Chion recognizes the power inherent in silence and the refusal to explain the narrative. The postmodern teaser trailer refuses this tedious explanation and exhaustive story-based appeal precisely for this same reason. The not-named has power. The not-named exhibits a more interesting and elusive appeal to audiences. "Everything hold[s] together with *nothing*, through the means of the not-named" (73, emphasis added). It appears at first glance that the postmodern teaser trailer provides nothing – that the trailer represents nothing as well; but the essence of the trailer remains this nothingness. The nothingness of the teaser trailer allows the not-said to have power to convey the story without words or narrative communication. In addition, the lack of fine-tuned attention also exemplifies this trailer's position as a postmodern teaser trailer. For example, there is no CGI involved in the trailer and no need for a voice-over. The appeal of this trailer is simply its lack of appeal. Non-persuasion and the "high-concept" of one image substituting for the entire film go hand in hand.

While tending to "high-concept" techniques and to the lack of attention to finely tuned images, the teaser trailer also avoids montage at all costs because the act of montage forces the viewer to make connections and meaning by creating an internal logic of the trailer. While the teaser trailer constructs "a narrative time-space that differs from

(and creates desire for) the fictive world of the film itself," it does not maintain the fast-paced "montage of attractions" form of cinematic spectacle. Kernan asserts that the traditional movie trailer centers on "displaying the film's shiniest wares, or most attractive images, positioning it as a commodity for sale," while the postmodern teaser trailer relies more on slow pacing and deliberate long takes not invested in "showing off" the trailer as a commodity as much as allowing the viewer to investigate the *mise-en-scene* at leisure, even in confusion as is the case with this teaser trailer (10).

The postmodern teaser trailer acts much like a display in an art gallery. The trailer mimics that of the movie poster (a still image) on display for a brief glance as one walks by. No explicit spectacle draws the viewer and no implicit message conveys a narrative. Viewers see the postmodern teaser trailer and still wonder all the same questions (and then some more questions) they had before seeing the trailer. Interest is piqued, but in such a vague and non-focused fashion. In the case of the teaser trailer for *The Dark Knight*, the visual is clearly privileged over the verbal; no dialogue presents itself during the trailer at all. The visual image of the Joker's face makes it so words are not needed to explain the image. The image supersedes reality because there is no context for this image to make sense and thus propels the image above reality. Without a narrative focus, the image remains an image, locked in its own internal logic.

New Footage/Unfilmed Promotional Trailer

Postmodern teaser trailers rarely use actual footage from the film itself. To enhance this "meaningless" imagery and non-narrativity through "high-concept" images,

the postmodern teaser trailer usually consists of new images (new footage) that do not

exist in the film's existing diegesis. In contrast, traditional movie trailers use many, if not

all, scenes from the movie, edit the images together to make a fresh, alternative narrative.

Lisa Kernan reinforces this notion:

> The hopeful dimension of trailers often lies in the spaces between the montage of
>
> promotional images (the ideal film we create out of the trailer's fragments), thus
>
> belonging not so much to the texts as to an often amorphous anticipatory
>
> potentiality available in the trailer spectatorship. (25)

While the postmodern teaser trailer does not rely on this space between the montage of

images to create anticipation, it can create an obsessive interest in the film. The trailer is

by definition an unresolved text. The inherent desire to complete what has been started

cannot be averted concerning the postmodern teaser trailer, but the direction the teaser

trailer takes characterizes one of indifference towards the viewer's desire and one

preoccupied with inticement. The theatrical movie trailer aggressively and actively

encourages viewers to engage themselves emotionally and psychologically in scenes

from the actual film and to succumb to the trailer's blatant advertisement for the film

through dialogue, stars, music and action. On the other hand, the postmodern teaser

trailer denies the viewer that rote "pleasure" of seeing actual footage from the film. The

images shown stand in for the film, but are not a part of the film itself. The concepts at

stake are metaphor and metonymy. The traditional theatrical trailer relies heavily on

metaphor while the teaser trailer uses a mix of metonymy and metaphor as its structure.

Iconography comprises many of the images seen in postmodern teaser trailers. A

different teaser trailer for *The Dark Knight* appeared online touting the Batman symbol as

the only image on screen. The screen opens with utter black while small streaks of light pierce the darkness, one by one. The light appears to be shining from behind a black object which finally takes form halfway through the trailer. As the object becomes fully defined as the Batman symbol (a bat), the light that once defined the symbol (in backlighting) begins to shatter the symbol. The black bat starts to disintegrate, splintering black pieces of the bat symbol towards the screen, and thus towards the audience. When the bat symbol finally shatters and the light shines directly at the camera, a joker playing card flies from the source light along with the last bits of the black bat symbol and past the camera.

What remains shockingly postmodern about this teaser trailer is that the image reflects how Stephen Best characterizes postmodern theory: "[It] rejects modern assumptions of social coherence and social notions of causality in favor of multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminancy" (4). Specifically, this teaser trailer for *The Dark Knight* literally fragments in front of our eyes. The symbol that stands in for the film gets blown to pieces by an unknown force (yet another singular image), assumed to be caused by the owner of the joker playing card. Batman has been defeated, visually speaking. The postmodern-ness of this trailer emphasizes a lack of causality and reason other than destruction of one symbol for another. It also emphasizes the fragmentation and indeterminancy of the symbol representing the film.

Put simply, the bat symbol stands in for the film, a representation with an implied history of the character, but without causality or contextual meaning to the current installment of the story. The bat shape provides more than enough imagery to stir recollections of the previous five Batman films. This heavy use of the bat symbol in this

teaser trailer likens itself to the DVD cover and poster for the first *Batman* film (Tim

Burton, 1989). This image does not appear as such in the film (back lit and being torn to

bits by streams of light), but the bat shape remains a recognized symbol loaded with

contextual information that fans use to infer details. As a living movie poster, this *The*

Dark Knight teaser trailer does what traditional movie trailers cannot: rely on an existing

image to capture the essence of the film without showing any footage from the film itself.

The traditional movie trailer might use iconography as explained in *The Dark Knight*

trailer, but it is always paired with the rhetorical strategies that explain that symbol or

image, not allowing the image to speak for itself.

The Powerful, Yet Brief Text

Postmodern teaser trailers are short (20-50 seconds). This brevity emphasizes the

nature of the postmodern teaser trailer as abstract and allows it to rely on all the previous

qualities in order to actively avoid narrative and argument. In rejecting traditional

narrative, the teaser trailer relies on "high-concept" techniques which reinforce the

succinctness of the text. While traditional movie trailers typically last two to three

minutes, the teaser trailer usually ends before the viewer realizes what the movie the

trailer even represents. The hegemonic way of advertising a film promotes the traditional

three-act structure: introduce all the characters, show them interact via scenes from the

film, set up the conflict and the danger and include music to tie all the scenes together.

This kind of advertising takes time, but the teaser trailer opposes time. Time allows

narrative development and planned interest in a text. The postmodern teaser trailer acts as

a surprising spectacle at its structure, but does not provide any narrative content to satiate the unfilled desire in viewers. It appears vacant or devoid of content because of the brevity of the text, but the postmodern teaser trailer is anything but empty.

America's traditional form of advertisement generally offers excess because, as Wolfgang Haug claims in *Commodity Aesthetics, Ideology and Culture*, "the appearance always promises more, much more, than it can deliver" (50). The teaser trailer, *by definition*, promises nothing, offering much less than the consumer expects. By its own internal linguistic rhetoric, the teaser trailer teases. A tease implies desire without climax. The brevity inherent in "the tease" also puts the postmodern teaser trailer at odds with traditional means of advertising for profit through persuasion and ultimate satisfaction. One can be incredibly satisfied when there has been a small and indistinct taste for what movie the trailer promotes, as seen in the teaser trailer. Some might argue that the teaser trailer elicits more excitement and satisfaction in viewers than the traditional trailer simply because it offers so little in comparison.

The teaser trailer, mainly through brevity, acts as an asyndeton, a text of omission. The asyndetic nature of the teaser trailer reflects the missing conjunctions where they "should be" in order to communicate a story (as seen in traditional theatrical trailers). The omissions from the traditional montage of attractions trailer *are not* essential to the teaser trailer because the essence of the teaser trailer lacks information and persuasion through a logical narrative. Without the narrative portion of montage to hold the trailer together, the teaser trailer must rely on what remains: the image. This image, shown only briefly, comprises the teaser trailer. The image creates a feeling, and then ultimately, a reaction in the viewer. The power of the teaser trailer is great.

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The teaser for *Saw II* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2005) represents this visual

asyndeton by exemplifying the essence of brevity. The trailer opens by showing a man

strapped to a chair with a metal device locked around his head. The camera pans over to a

television set when the man notices motion (from the screen) and hears what appears to

be a clown figure apparently laughing at him. The victim screams, and the camera cuts to

black with the title of the film appearing on the black screen as the sound of something –

the contraption on the victims face is insinuated – snaps shut. The trailer reads: "A man is

in danger – he is scared." This all occurs in less than 25 seconds. The brief introduction

of the actual murderer, the clown in the television, is not substantial enough to convey

any substantial narrative to the victim, nor to the viewer of this trailer. The victim is not

recognized as a star, and the clown is an inanimate object appearing in another television

screen. The trailer's brevity works for itself, leaving the horrific image to speak for itself.

Kracauer's explanation of acts of violence and their effect on viewers applies to this

trailer, the grotesqueness of the situation captured as a whole in the teaser trailer

functioning as "the spectacle."

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard suggests:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the

unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good

forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively

the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for the new presentations,

not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the

unpresentable. (81)

The teaser trailer denies montage and narrative driven images; also, through its paratactic

nature the teaser trailer attempts to present the unpresentable. By omitting the narrative

focus (the key characteristic of the traditional movie trailer) through the shortening of the

text, the teaser trailer delivers on presenting the unpresentable. The teaser trailer presents

the material that most trailers leave out or omit, thus presenting the unpresentable. The

teaser trailer remains difficult to interpret because of this focus and reliance on

unpresentability. The trailer appears as though it is merely a fragment of the "real" trailer

and the "real" trailer is still to come. The feeling that something is missing is mostly due

to the little amount of time the teaser trailer utilizes to present the material considered

unpresentable.

Plotless, Non-Narrativity

It is impossible for postmodern teaser trailers to give away any plot information

or explicit content of the film. Traditional movie trailers *by definition* give a quick

synopsis of the plot and the characters in the film and even sometimes the ending. Lisa

Kernan explains that "trailers commonly utilize codes of voice-over narration, sound and

sound overlapping, music, graphics and most importantly, editing, or montage" (10).

Kernan describes the quintessential theatrical movie trailer by listing most of the

techniques that the teaser trailer refuses to incorporate. According to Kernan, the most

important code in the movie trailer is "editing, or montage." Andre Bazin understands the

importance of montage in film saying "the very definition of montage, namely, the

creation of a sense of meaning not proper to the images themselves but derived

exclusively from their juxtaposition" (44). Kernan, relying heavily on the concept of montage to ground the trailer, overlooks the role of the teaser trailer and its lack of purpose as a trailer simply because montage does not remain the central defining trait of the teaser trailer. Images in a theatrical movie trailer create meaning or an internal narrative exclusive to the trailer. Instead of this approach, the teaser trailer allows the image to represent the trailer without creating a narrative or conveying a plot (either for the film or for the trailer logic). This central difference between the trailers ultimately sets apart the teaser trailer as a separate genre within trailer rhetoric.

A second teaser trailer for *The Dark Knight* serves a perfect example of the problems that can occur within the boundaries of traditional means of storytelling. Using as its central image a high-angle shot aimed towards a pile of playing cards haphazardly being thrown to the ground, the trailer focuses on this pile of playing cards and then the final card thrown on top: the joker. The camera zooms in on the joker card at the end of the trailer and then cuts to black. While the teaser trailer exemplifies a text that does not rely on montage or "edit," this trailer challenges this claim. The trailer, although focused only on a singular image of tossed cards into a pile, includes multiple edits. The edits, though, do not cut to a separate image and create meaning through juxtaposition. The cuts made during this trailer only edit together one after the other, speeding up the time it takes to deal an entire deck of cards onto the floor in less than 35 seconds. The cuts simply edit to the same image, just seconds later. By not cutting to another separate image, these edits do not serve the traditional purpose of intellectual montage. Hence, the edits are only reinforcing the singular image representative of the "high-concept" and non-narrative focus of the teaser trailer.

In addition to the postmodern editing techniques, the voiceover for the trailer reinforces the indeterminate nature of the teaser trailer. Kernan catalogues voice-over narration as a quality that defines the traditional movie trailer. While this teaser trailer for *The Dark Knight* has a voiceover, it is completely indiscernible. Because of the indecipherable nature of this voiceover, the trailer moves away from narration and into confusion. For example, while the cards are thrown (by an unknown and unfelt presence), the voice-over whispers, but does not speak, the narration. Extremely hushed and at such a low timbre, the whispering we do hear is indiscernible. "You know what's funny? . . . the act of laughter . . . the essence of laughter is insanity." Because of the inherent misreading, the concepts that make up postmodernity in the teaser trailer drain the only interpretation from the film, leaving the viewers with meaningless whispers and a pile of playing cards.

Ihab Hassan includes a long dichotomous list of modern vs. postmodern concepts in "Toward a Concept of the Postmodern," two of which represent the misrecognition of this trailer: antithesis and absence. The thesis established in this teaser trailer was a voiceover narration indicating plot and creating a relationship between the images and the voice. Because the voiceover soon becomes an absent, or negative, function, the antithesis turns out to be the essence of the meaninglessness. Once again, the trailer as asyndeton reinforces the antithesis inherent in postmodernity, but more specifically, the teaser trailer.

In regard to the plotless, non-narrativity intrinsic quality in the postmodern teaser trailer, even popular entertainment magazines quickly to recognize untraditional persuasive devices in the realm of trailers. A review in the *Entertainment Weekly's*

"Trailer Park" on September 28, 2007 described *Youth Without Youth* as "Beautiful

images from Francis Ford Coppola . . . that signify nothing. Intriguing, I'll give it that. B"

(87). While not concerned with the grade that this film reviewer gives, the open

recognition that the trailer simply provided images "that signify nothing" opens doors for

a wider reception of postmodern teaser trailers. Yet another blatant admission to the

appeal relating to the lack of narrative appeal appears when Lionsgate's marketing team

leader, Tim Palen explains the appeal of the teaser trailer, "for the upcoming horror film

The Descent, we started the whole campaign thinking, let's do the anti-trailer – where

there's no music, no voiceover, only ambient sound – and play on everyone's fears of

claustrophobia and fear of the dark" (LaPorte 4). Palen completely understood the idea of

the "not-trailer" by calling it the "anti-trailer," one where the traditional use of music and

voice-over is not utilized.

In *The Power of Movies*, Colin McGinn points out that viewers don't "passively

observe things; [they] actively construct an interpretation of what [they] are seeing" (53-

4). Teaser trailers challenge viewers by making them actively search for meaning (even

though it is vague). Traditional movie trailers allow (and even encourage) viewers to be

thoughtless and passive by spoon-feeding them all the details. Viewers watching a teaser

trailer play an active role and are constantly stimulating their senses. By omitting a

narrative utilized through intellectual montage, the teaser trailer ignites this active

participation from the viewer to the extreme. McGinn continues, "Movie watching is

inherently an imaginative act" (54). Once again, the teaser trailer does not only draw in

viewers by offering a text that lacks narrative (thus creating the need for the viewer to

make connections them self), but the teaser trailer also is a text that naturally encourages

the viewer to use their imagination when watching. While this might be the case in general when discussing films and audience participation, this behavior amplifies when watching a teaser trailer, encouraging viewers to be much more active and to use their imagination in a much more liberal fashion.

Unresolved Issues

While the traditional movie preview most often gives too much information (scenes from the film flashing past one after the other), the postmodern teaser trailer represents a radical paucity of form. Postmodernism is not concerned with exclusion or inclusion; there is no question mark. The teaser trailer lasts such a short time and does not bother with questions or answers. The postmodern teaser trailer cannot mislead the viewer because there is so very little to misinterpret. In "Toward a Concept of the Postmodern," Ihab Hassan explains postmodernity in a fashion that explains what the structure of the teaser trailer enforces:

> Any definition of postmodernism calls upon a four-fold vision of complemetarities, embracing continuity and discontinuity, diachrony and synchrony . . . thus we cannot simply rest . . . on the assumption that postmodernism is antiformal, anarchic, or decreative. (89)

The postmodern teaser trailer is, by definition of its theoretical foundation, not formless, anarchic, or decreative in a general sense. In fact, the teaser trailer's creativity and form remains unique and not as simple and clear-cut upon first glance. Embracing what Hassan

claims as the "four-fold vision of complementaries" reveals the many layers in the postmodern teaser trailer.

The most important concept directly applicable to the postmodern teaser trailer is Hassan's discussion of self-less-ness and/or depth-less-ness: "Postmodernism vacates the traditional self, simulating self-effacement – a fake flatness, without inside/outside – or its opposite, self-multiplication, self-reflection . . . It diffuses itself in depthless styles, reusing, eluding, interpretation" (168-72). The teaser trailer seems to abandon its own genre in search of another form of representation. The trailer eludes and self-reflects which constantly places the viewer in a position of uncertainty. This state of unease forces the viewer to questioning the text as the text seemingly questions itself.

In *Rocking Around The Clock*, Kaplan provides clear and easily understandable tables and charts to examine the dichotomy between the classical Hollywood text and the avant-garde text: "Realism/narrative, history and complicit ideology vs. non-realist anti-narrative, discourse, and rupture of dominant ideology" (41). Because of the ruptured discourse of the teaser trailer, dominant ideology (motion picture hegemony) ignores or suppresses the radical postmodern shift that the teaser trailer embodies. Kaplan describes what Jameson and Lacan call the schizophrenic stance that postmodernist texts are "fixated on the detached signifier, isolated in a present from which there is no escape" (45). The lack of premise or conclusion in the teaser trailer creates a cyclical text in which the postmodern text floats freely. The viewer is not allowed the privilege of linearity with the postmodern text; instead, the viewer experiences a lack of communication riddled with incoherence. Kaplan concludes:

What characterizes the postmodernist [text] is its refusal to take a clear position vis-à-vis its images, its habit of hedging along the line of not communicating a clear signified…each element of a text is undercut by others: narrative is undercut by pastiche; signifying is undercut by images that do not line up in a coherent chain; the text is flattened out, creating a two-dimensional effect and the refusal of a clear position for the spectator within the filmic world. (63)

The viewer quite often experiences decenteredness, confusion, and remains fixated on one specific image or image-series. Most likely the viewer feels unsatisfied and eager for a conclusion. The avant-garde qualities Kaplan uses to identify postmodern texts to help identify and locate the postmodern teaser trailer in a context not in isolation, but one that has been explored and recognized with legitimacy.

The teaser trailer does not provide any information that would lead to the unraveling of the mystery inherent in the film. Postmodern teaser trailers, like traditional movie trailers, are unresolved. The presented action, or lack thereof, elicits very few focused expectations of what to expect in the actual film. Describing movie previews, Lisa Kernan argues that "because they are anticipatory texts, they need no resolution" (8). The traditional movie trailer and the postmodern teaser trailer share a lack of resolution, but differ to a degree. Although it can be argued that some traditional movie previews "give away" the plot and even the ending, most trailers do follow the "cliffhanger" ending in order to draw viewers to the film. The postmodern teaser trailer, though, takes this logic to the extreme. It is even more difficult to assume or project the ending of a film presented through a postmodern teaser trailer than a traditional theatrical trailer. Not

only does the teaser trailer fail to resolve the issues presented or reveal the ending of the film, it also *cannot* resolve anything due to its postmodern nature.

Teaser trailers are postmodern, Hutcheon argues, because the "tensions [will] be more deliberately left unresolved, its contradictions more deliberately manifest" (42). Postmodernity in the teaser trailer demands a lack of resolution, the focus relying more on the process – the happening – as opposed to the finished product. Without the resolution, the teaser trailer remains more or less a static image that refuses definition or explanation. Even more so than the traditional movie trailer, the teaser does not even hint at what the film will address (problems, issues, and dilemmas) therefore arming the viewer with very little to assume about the film itself other than the potential genre.

Sometimes it seems as if trailer companies do not trust the postmodern teaser trailer structure to properly sell their product. The full theatrical trailer for *Face/Off* combines *both* the teaser trailer and what Kernan describes as the theatrical movie trailer but this combination is portrayed in a unique fashion. The postmodern teaser trailer comprises the first 50 seconds of the trailer while the rest of the trailer finishes in what is recognized as the "regular" trailer rhetoric (i.e. montage, music, action, star subtitles). In the beginning of the trailer, Sean Archer (John Travolta) sits on a chair in the middle of a dark room. The camera starts with a close-up of his face and continues to circle his body in a clockwise direction. The camera, as it reaches the front side of Archer's body and face, quickly fades to black and then cuts to show us Castor Troy's face (Nicolas Cage). The circling takes almost all the 50 seconds comprising the first half of the entire trailer. As the camera settles on Castor Troy's face, he says, "I must become him." The entire time the revolution occurs around Sean Archer's body, he appears to be talking to

someone (but apparently no one in the room). "I've been chasing this guy ever since I'd joined the force. He has no conscience and he shows no remorse. He's a mastermind behind numerous bombings and political assassinations. He has a felony list a mile long, murder, arson, kidnapping, terrorism, you name it. He's the most dangerous and brilliant criminal mind I've ever known. For years, I've been watching him, tracking him, studying his every move. I know his every mannerism, facial tic, gesture. I know him better than he knows himself. And now after all this time, I've finally figured out a way to trap him."

While this trailer adheres to a spoken dialogue taking the place of the traditional voice-over narration, it visually and conceptually deals with all of the issues of the postmodern trailer. The dialogue spoken by Archer does not appear in the film; the dialogue and this particular scene were filmed *specifically* for the trailer without the central focus on a traditional montage effect (as the second half of the trailer shows). Even though there his dialogue narrates the trailer, it does not have the same effect as visual montage because it allows the viewer to create meaning between the images. The dialogue complicates comprehension because it doesn't explain the image presented on screen (one man and his purpose) or allow the viewer to make connections. Archer's lengthy and vague explanation of the identity of the unnamed person rambles on so long that it grows banal and uninteresting. The dialogue grounds the viewer with the premise when all it really does is bore the viewer. At the end of the first half of the trailer the viewer remains no better off after listening to Archer whine on and on about his problem than before, thus leaving the situation unresolved and static.

In addition, the "high-concept" notion of the transformation from Sean Archer into Castor Troy at the end of the first half mimics the transformation that occurs throughout the trailer. The second half of the trailer acts as a visual montage and exploration of the actual plot of the film and introduces the characters in action which is the definition of the traditional movie trailer. The first half of the trailer represents one type of promotion while the second half is completely different, like black and white, like Sean Archer and Castor Troy. The transformation of structure in the *Face/Off* movie trailer acts as an explicit mistrust of the postmodern teaser trailer as a legitimate form. By following up the first half of the trailer with a "traditional" trailer, Hollywood and viewers are essentially rejecting the postmodern teaser trailer as such.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Lyotard concludes *The Postmodern Condition* with his response to the whole (totality), the urge for oneness, and the urge for nostalgia, "let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences" (82). The teaser trailer is a direct response to the traditional movie trailer and its obsession with narrative and active persuasion. It emerged because of the need for a rejection of the established, a refusal of origins. The postmodern teaser trailer exists primarily because the traditional, modern movie trailer showcases tired, old and boring persuasive techniques. The traditional movie trailer is expected and inviting in its comfortable narrative persuasiveness, while the teaser trailer is unexpected and jarring, a jolt of "the off" in a world of "the on." In response to the existing structure of movie trailers, the teaser trailer flips the genre on its side, creating a new and fresh text that questions the status quo. It wages a rhetorical and visual war on totality and presentability. It accentuates the lack of narrative and highlights the radically altered visual appeals. The teaser trailer shakes the viewer awake with its perverted sensibilities.

Teaser trailers do what they rhetorically imply: tease. But even the tease implied in teaser trailer becomes irrelevant when understood that the only purpose that teaser

trailers serve is self-awareness and stirring up the viewer. They incite in viewers a response something like "What!?" This typical response leaves viewers more interested about the trailer or film it represents in addition to being curious about the experience they just had. The postmodern trailer generally exemplifies an unresolved, non-persuasive, and unexplained text. Postmodern trailers fail to suspend disbelief of the diegesis; instead, postmodern trailers express their own internal logic typically not related to the film or its explicit narrative. Thus, they cannot be explicitly defined as advertisements or persuasive texts, although they are marketed as such. They are persuasive through their lack of active persuasion.

The teaser trailer creates a strong visceral reaction in viewers because of its opposition to traditional movie trailers. Teaser trailers speak through anti-argument, self-reflexivity, and are not finely tuned, aren't concerned with the edit and typically represent "high concept" ideas. Teaser trailers rarely use actual footage from the film, creating a new and unique appeal to the film it represents. Also, they are relatively short and remain unresolved. Lastly, teaser trailers cannot give away any plot information about the film because it actively refuses to provide any visual, narrative or aural cues to the narrative content.

The teaser trailer actively opposes the traditional trailer's appeal in nearly every way, shape and form. Because of its radically altered form, it would be safe to assume that the appeal of the trailer itself differs from the traditional trailer. Whether viewers like traditional trailers more than teaser trailers (or vice versa) is inconsequential, it is hard to ignore that the teaser trailer appeals to viewers because of its vagueness and brevity. One cannot ignore that the teaser trailer's lack of active persuasion creates a very persuasive

text. The postmodern teaser trailer has the power to impress and entice viewers by allowing them the freedom to experience a feeling or mood and create their own meaning. As a text of omission, the self-evident lack in the postmodern teaser trailer persuades more strongly than the traditional trailer.

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Scope and Method of Study: Theoretical Argument and Definition of the Teaser Trailer

Findings and Conclusions:

The postmodern teaser trailer tends to follow certain rules of logic, but is not limited to the following characteristics:

　　　1) postmodern teaser trailers persuade through non-persuasion (i.e. the "not-trailer") and no explicit argument exists;

　　　2) postmodern teaser trailers are aggressively self-reflexive. The camera actively participates in the trailer compared to a removed existence (entirely unnoticed) in theatrical trailers;

　　　3) postmodern teaser trailers also exercise "high concept" techniques, are not finely tuned and are not concerned with "the edit." While traditional movie trailers splice together original footage from the film (i.e. montage) and are highly glossed texts of persuasion, the teaser trailer avoids montage at all costs;

　　　4) postmodern teaser trailers rarely use actual footage from the film itself while traditional movie trailers use many, if not all, scenes from the movie edited together to make a fresh, alternative narrative compared to the original film. Instead, the teaser trailer creates new images, striking and meaningless, to represent the film in an abstract and intangible way;

　　　5) postmodern teaser trailers are short (20-50 seconds) and do not exhibit a traditional film narrative structure while basic movie trailers typically follow a traditional film three-act structure and are longer (two to three minutes);

　　　6) by definition, postmodern teaser trailers cannot give away any plot information or implied meaning of the film. Due to its lack of "montage of attractions" nature, teaser trailers lack a brief synopsis of the plot and the characters, especially any information leading to the conclusion of the film;

　　　7) postmodern teaser trailers remain unresolved. The presented action, or lack thereof, does not illicit any expectations of what to expect in the actual film as most traditional trailers in some way lead the viewer through the first two plot points and create some expectations of what's to come in the film.

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