

A Short Guide to Writing about Film

Third Edition

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Manuscript Form

MANUSCRIPT COPY

Although every instructor has individual expectations and requirements about the final form in which an essay should be submitted, there are general guidelines that all writers follow when putting an essay into its final form:

1. Type or print out a clean copy of your paper. Although a typed or printed copy of an essay may be difficult for some students, and although some instructors may not require it, typed or printed copy does make a difference. A cleanly typed manuscript simply looks more professional and is usually easier to read. A typed paper gives you an edge with your reader, who will see your work from the beginning as something you took seriously. Some writers find that a typed copy allows them to read and revise their work from a new perspective. When you have the time and the typing or word-processing skills, it is a real advantage to revise a typed draft.

2. Use clean 8 1/2-by-11-inch paper, typed or printed on one side, with sharp, easily readable print. If you use a word processor, the edges of the computer paper should be as clean as possible, stripped of the perforations.

3. Most instructors prefer that you put your name, date, and course number on three lines in the right-hand corner of the first page. Separate title pages are normally unnecessary, and fancy accessories (a folder cover or clear plastic binder) merely waste money and add bulk to the instructor's load of essays.

4. It is not necessary to number the first page, but be certain to number all the following pages. Usually, page numbers appear at the top of each page in the middle or the right-hand corner. Numbers centered at the bottom of the page are also acceptable.

5. Leave uniform and adequate margins on each page: an inch or an inch and a half on both sides and at the top and the bottom of the page. It is silly to think that larger margins will somehow disguise a short paper.

6. Double-space all the copy, except for long quotes, which are indented and single-spaced. (The Modern Language Association [MLA] guide says double-space even the long, indented passages, but this practice is mainly used for professional essays being submitted to journals.)

7. Center your title two inches (twelve lines) from the top of the first page. Begin your essay one inch below the title. Capitalize the first letter of each word in your title, except prepositions, articles, and conjunctions. Underline only the titles of films that appear in your title. Do not underline or use quotation marks around any other part of your title, unless that part comes from another source and requires these punctuation marks. Thus, a standard title would appear like this:

Conrad, Coppola, and Apocalypse Now

When you use a quotation from another source within your title, the quoted material appears in quotation marks:

Versions of a Heart of Darkness:

"The Horror, the Horror" of Apocalypse Now

When a title does not fit easily on one line, a second line is preferable to crowding a title within the width of a page. The second line should also be centered.

8. Indent each new paragraph five spaces from the left margin.

9. Most instructors do not expect stills to accompany your essay, nor is it an especially good idea to include a showy still that serves no greater purpose than to dress up your paper. However, when an essay is focused on a single shot or a series of shots, it may be extremely helpful to reproduce a still or series of stills in an appendix at the end of your paper. If you can obtain a pertinent still (or stills), be sure that it is reproduced and labeled clearly, that you identify its place in the film when you discuss it in your text, and that you refer explicitly to the reproduction at that point:

In Apocalypse Now, the insane theatrics of politics crystallize in the Playboy Bunny Show deep in the jungle (see Appendix 1).

10. Always make a copy of your essay to keep in case your original is lost or misplaced.

11. Staple your paper in the upper-left-hand corner.

LAST-MINUTE CORRECTIONS

Writers are prone to last-minute revisions or corrections. After your paper is in its final typed or printed form, corrections should be kept to a minimum, since too many penciled-in changes will destroy the desired effect of a cleanly typed manuscript. As you proofread your final copy, however, you will discover small errors, misspellings, and typographical mistakes, and you can correct these neatly by using proofreading symbols and markings.

When one or two words are incorrect, you can easily change them by simply crossing out the wrong words or letters and printing the necessary corrections above them:

Before 1917, Russian film culture ~~were~~^{was} mainly European

To add a word or a phrase, use a caret in the appropriate space:

Before 1917, Russian ^{film} culture was mainly European.

Transpositions of letters or words are done in this way:

Before 1917, Russian flim culture mainly was European.

To separate words that are mistakenly run together, insert a vertical line; close unnecessary gaps with a curved line connecting the letters that need to be joined:

Before 1917, Russian fil m culture was mainly European.

A final proofreading may reveal a paragraph that should be broken into two paragraphs. Use the paragraph symbol to indicate where a new paragraph should start:

Many do not even consider Russian movies before revolutionary figures like Vertov and Eisenstein. ¶ Before 1917, Russian film culture was mainly European.

QUOTATIONS

In writing about film, you will have to deal with two kinds of quotations:

1. In quoting dialogue or commentary from the film itself, normally no footnotes are necessary, and the words quoted can be integrated directly into your text.

2. In quoting from essays, books, or interviews with individuals involved in the production, you need some kind of footnote and documentation. If these quotations are short passages, they, too, can be inserted directly into your prose:

One prominent critic has described this film as
"a study in postmodern emptiness."

Whether the paper is short or long has little to do with the use of quotations, but when quotations are used, they should be punctuated properly and spread judiciously throughout the essay (never make your essay a string of quotations). The following are some general guidelines:

1. Whatever you are quoting, be accurate, and check the quoted passages when you proofread. In most cases, quotations should correspond exactly to the original in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. When you add material within the quotation, put those words in brackets. When you underline a word or phrase to emphasize it, note that it is your emphasis in parentheses after the quotation:

Many factors distinguished the American studios of the thirties, but, in the words of one historian, "The hierarchy of American studios [in the thirties] was in some crucial ways determined by the class of audience they targeted" (Venuti 122, my emphasis).

If you need or wish to omit unnecessary words within a quoted passage, signal the omission with three spaced periods, called *ellipsis points*:

In the words of one historian, "The hierarchy of American studios was . . . determined by the class of audience they targeted" (Venuti 122).

Ellipsis points are not needed at the very beginning or end of a sentence. If the ellipsis ends a sentence in the middle of a quoted passage, include three periods for the ellipsis and a fourth for the period at the end of that sentence.

2. Do not use quoted passages to make your points for you or to take up large blocks of space. Use them to support your points.

3. If you are quoting a long piece of dialogue from a movie or an exchange between two characters, this quotation is usually single-spaced and indented rather than put in quotation marks in your text:

BERNARD: First of all, not all women. And
secondly you frighten me. Sometimes you
looked at me severely, and even with a
certain hostility.

MARION: With a certain hostility? Really?

Passages longer than four lines of typescript or print should also be indented without quotation marks. When you indent to quote dialogue or long passages, triple-space before and after the quote and either single-space or double-space the passage, depending on the preference of your instructor. Most professional publications ask that these passages be double-spaced like the rest of the manuscript, but for most student research papers, a single-spaced passage looks better.

4. Introduce your quotations; never end one sentence and begin the next sentence with an unannounced quotation. Most commonly, this means acknowledging the speaker or source of the passage with a phrase such as

André Bazin comments: . . .

or

As Kracauer has argued in Theory of Film . . .

For quotations that are especially important to your argument, or that may be a bit difficult to relate to your point, a nearby phrase or sentence can rephrase the central point so that it is not missed:

The debate about the relation of the film image and
physical reality becomes an explicitly social and

metaphysical issue in the work of André Bazin. As he says, . . .

5. When integrating quotations into your own sentences, make them as succinct as possible, and adjust them to fit the grammar and syntax of your prose. At times, you may wish to use brackets in order to insert your own language into the middle of a quotation (as in number 1 above).

6. In American usage, periods and commas are placed inside the quotation marks, colons and semicolons outside. Exclamation points, question marks, and dashes are placed inside the quotation marks when they appear as part of the original passage, outside when they are part of your sentence.

7. When there is a quotation within the quote you are using, use single quotation marks for the inner quotation:

"The most provocative and problematic statement in Kra-cauer's work is 'the redemption of physical reality.'"

If this embedded quotation were part of an indented passage, it would appear with double quotation marks because the block of indented sentences is not enclosed within quotation marks.

8. Double quotation marks are used to set off the titles of shorter works such as essays, articles, short poems, and songs. Underline titles of movies, books, long poems, albums, plays, and paintings. Whether a movie is short or long, its title is underlined (or, when set in type, italicized). The title of a screenplay is underlined. The titles of television series are underlined; episodes of those series are in quotation marks.

ACKNOWLEDGING SOURCES

When writing an essay, you must maintain a clear sense of what is your own thinking and what is borrowed from others. Acknowledging and noting other perceptions and comments never diminishes the quality or strength of your paper; on the contrary, those acknowledgments strengthen and legitimize your ideas by placing them in the context of other work. Problems arise when, for one reason or another, a reader believes you are not making a clear distinction between your own perceptions

and ideas and someone else's. In those instances, the trust between a reader and a writer is broken, and at the very least, a reader will begin to doubt that the writer truly understands what he or she is saying. A suspicion of plagiarism will undermine all the hard work that has gone into a paper. Consequently, when researching and writing, you must maintain a sure distinction between sentences and words taken directly from another source, paraphrases or summaries of someone else's words, and general ideas appropriated from another source.

Taking the following passage as source material, let's consider the requirements and strategies for using and acknowledging secondary sources:

The Neorealists were working for a cinema intimately connected with the experience of living: nonprofessional actors, rough technique, political point, ideas rather than entertainment—all these elements went directly counter to the Hollywood esthetic of smooth, seamless professionalism. While Neorealism as a movement lasted only until the early fifties, the effects of its esthetics are still being felt. In fact, Zavattini, Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti defined the ground rules that would operate for the next thirty years. Esthetically, Hollywood never quite recovered. (Monaco 253)

1. Direct quotation. Phrases from this passage or the entire passage may be taken as needed to make your point. You will introduce the phrases or sentences, place the precise wording within quotation marks, and add the proper references to the work (usually author's name and page number) in parentheses:

Neorealism was not simply a localized and short-lived phenomenon. As James Monaco puts it, "While Neorealism as a movement lasted only until the early fifties, the effects of its esthetics are still being felt. In fact, Zavattini, Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti defined the ground rules that would operate for the next thirty years. Esthetically, Hollywood never quite recovered" (253).

The exact form you use when citing the source for a quotation can differ (see pp. 159–161), but some acknowledgment should be made following a direct quotation.

2. Paraphrasing or summarizing information. The specific wording of a passage may be less important than the central concept, which a writer

might then wish to paraphrase or summarize. To *paraphrase* from another writer's work means to rephrase sentences so that they fit your prose better; to *summarize* usually suggests a reduction of the original passage, which nonetheless retains the core of the meaning in the new words. Unless the author writes badly, it is usually better to summarize than to paraphrase. In either case, proper credit must be given to the original source:

In How to Read a Film, James Monaco points out that Italian Neorealists were concerned with living experience and shared basic tenets about filmmaking: nonprofessional actors, an emphasis on ideas and politics, and an unglossy look quite unlike Hollywood's. Especially through the work of individuals like Zavattini, Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti, the effects of Neorealism were felt for three decades after its first appearance in the late forties, and to some extent Hollywood has never totally recovered from its aesthetic impact (253).

3. Acknowledging an idea. Sometimes a writer borrows an idea to use so generally or briefly that it is unnecessary to quote the original or even to paraphrase or summarize it. If you determine that the idea is original enough so that the source deserves mention, be certain to mention it. If you are in doubt, it is better to acknowledge a source than to risk the charge of plagiarism. In an essay on the Hollywood realism of the sixties, for instance, a writer might note in passing:

Although many consider Hollywood a fairly enclosed world, Neorealism had, as James Monaco has suggested, a definite effect on the Hollywood productions that followed it.

No more formal citation is necessary, except for the listing of Monaco's book in the works-cited section of your paper; yet general acknowledgments such as these prevent any confusion on the part of your reader and often lend authority to your own argument.

NOTE: The information or dialogue you take from a film usually does not need formal acknowledgment as long as you clearly refer to the title of

the film that the information comes from. However, when you are using a script, you should acknowledge and document that source. Finally, if you know that there is more than one version of a film circulating—as with *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976, 1987) or *M* (1931, 1951)—it is a good idea to specify which version you are using.

Common Knowledge

As you continue to read about, discuss, and write about the movies, you will realize that what you once took for an original idea or insight seems more like common knowledge. This realization is a consequence of your growing understanding of the field. Thus, at first you might be inclined to quote or cite an article that remarks that “Italian Neorealism, for all practical purposes, began in 1945 with Rossellini’s *Open City*.” But as you grow more familiar with film and film literature, you will realize that this information is standard, can be found in many sources, and does not require attribution. Using it in a later paper, you might decide that there is no need for a formal acknowledgment.

The status of information does change. When a statement first appears, it may be an original proposition; as it becomes assimilated into the critical literature, it gradually becomes common knowledge. There will be judgment calls, when you have to decide whether the information is or is not common knowledge. In the above passage by James Monaco, a well-read writer would no doubt find it unnecessary to quote or refer to Monaco if he or she noted that Neorealism used unprofessional actors, had an unpolished look, or was based on political commitment. A less-well-read writer may feel insecure without making some mention of the source where the statement was first discovered. Again, follow a simple guideline: When in doubt about whether to cite and document a source, do it.

DOCUMENTING SOURCES

Documenting your sources can be a confusing business, because there are so many different formats for that documentation. The British, for instance, have traditionally used a slightly different system of punctuation and documentation, and in the United States, there have always been a variety of styles and formats to choose from when doing notes. In any given collection of essays or books, one could find an MLA style or a Chicago style, footnotes or endnotes. Although you should ask your instructor

whether she or he prefers a particular style, the following is based on the MLA system of documentation and is acceptable in almost all situations.

Two kinds of notes can figure in an essay or a book:

1. Notes that document the source from which a quoted phrase or an idea comes
2. Notes that provide a commentary on some portion of your text or on a quotation you use

Notes for Documentation

In some formats, the writer can document with either footnotes or endnotes, but in the MLA format, only with commentary notes does the writer have that option. Notes used to document a source, in the MLA format, always have a two-part structure: a reference within your text and a list of works cited that completes the documentation at the end of your essay. With notes of this kind, there is no longer a need to number your references. Instead, whenever there is explicit or implicit use of a source, use one of the following methods to acknowledge the source:

1. Cite the author's last name and the page numbers in parentheses at the end of your sentence:

A recent study has described these stunning images in Ozu's films as "pillow shots" (Burch 160-61).

2. When you use the author's last name in your sentence, use only the page number or numbers of the source in your parentheses:

Noël Burch has described these stunning images in Ozu's films as "pillow shots" (160-61).

3. When you are making a general reference to the work of an author whose name is mentioned in your sentence—rather than a specific reference—omit any parenthetical reference and document the source only in the list of works cited:

In a study of Japanese cinema for the period 1896-1933, Noël Burch examines the specific discourses of the films and argues convincingly for the distinctive excellence of the early films of Ozu, Mizoguchi, and less well-known masters.

Although this reference is brief and general, it is not complete unless the entire reference to Burch's book is given in the works-cited list.

Note that when the author's name and the page number are included, no punctuation is necessary between the two. Normally, the parentheses come at the end of the sentence and are followed by a period. Only occasionally will you wish to insert the reference at the end of a clause, where it usually would be followed by a comma:

Although one commentator has argued convincingly for a kind of "pillow shot" in Ozu's films (Burch 160-61), others have debated this designation.

When the reference is a long, indented passage, the parenthetical reference comes after the period at the end of the passage:

Less concerned with formal innovations, two other critics have praised the later Ozu films and locate their power in their various perspectives on the family structure:

In every Ozu film the whole world exists in one family. The ends of the earth are no more distant than outside the house. The people are members of a family rather than members of a society, though the family may be in disruption, as in Tokyo Story, may be nearly extinct, as in Late Spring or Tokyo Twilight, or may be a kind of family substitute, the small group in a large company, as in Early Spring.
(Anderson and Richie 359)

There will be variations on these formulas. If your essay includes references to more than one work by the same author, you must be sure to indicate the title of the appropriate work in your text:

(Burch, Theory of Film Practice 76).

Likewise, if you use authors with the same last name, be certain to give first names or initials in any reference to them. When citing a work written by more than one author, include each name; if there are more

than three authors, use the first name followed by *et al.* For books with more than one volume, place the volume number and a colon after the author's name in the parentheses:

(Roud 2: 991)

Works Cited

The list of works cited that appears at the end of your essay gives complete documentation of the works you refer to in any way. Unless your instructor requests it, do not include books or articles that you consulted but did not use. If necessary, you can always follow "Works Cited" with "Works Consulted." Each of these lists should each begin on a new page following your text or endnotes, and the pagination should continue in the same order.

The title "Works Cited" should be centered at the top of the page (without quotation marks and not underlined). The composition of this list is much like that of a traditional bibliography: last names first, alphabetical order, first line flush with the margin and turnover lines indented five spaces, double space between entries, and so on. Here, however, are a few other guidelines for the MLA format:

- When you are listing more than one work by the same author, alphabetize the works by title (ignoring initial articles such as *The*). Rather than repeat the author's name after the first entry, use three hyphens where the name would appear.
- Use shortened or abbreviated forms whenever possible: *PA* instead of *Pennsylvania*; *Little, Brown* instead of *Little, Brown and Company*.
- Do not use a comma between a journal title and a volume number: In this example, 31 represents the volume number which is separated by a period from the issue number 2:

Film Quarterly 31.2

- Do not use *p.* or *pp.* to indicate page numbers.
- For periodical articles, use a colon to separate the volume and the year of publication from the specific page numbers:

Film Quarterly 37.4 (1984): 6-18.

- Use lowercase abbreviations to identify the roles of named writers (such as *ed.* for "editor" or *trans.* for "translator"). When these designations follow a period, capitalize the abbreviations.

The following are some examples of typical entries in "Works Cited":

- A book with one author:

Everson, William K. American Silent Film. New York: Oxford UP, 1978.

- Two or more books by the same author:

Andrew, J. Dudley. Concepts in Film Theory. New York: Oxford UP, 1984.

---. The Major Film Theories. New York: Oxford UP, 1976.

- A book by two or more authors:

Talbot, David, and Barbara Zheutlin. Creative Differences: Profiles of Hollywood Dissidents. Boston: South End Press, 1978.

- An edited book:

Corrigan, Timothy, ed. The Films of Werner Herzog: Between Mirage and History. New York and London: Methuen, 1986.

- A book with an author and an editor:

Burch, Noël. To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema. Ed. Annette Michelson. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1981.

- A work in an anthology:

Johnston, Claire. "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema." Movies and Methods. Vol. 1. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1976. 208-17.

- A book that has been translated:

Burch, Noël. Theory of Film Practice. Trans. Helen R. Lane. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.

- A book with more than one volume:
Agee, James. Agee on Film. 2 vols. New York:
Grosset & Dunlap, 1958.
- An article in a journal with continuous pagination:
Brustein, Robert. "Film Chronicles: Reflections
on Horror Movies." Partisan Review 25 (1958):
291.
- An article in a journal that pages each issue separately:
Petro, Patrice. "Mass Culture and the Feminine:
The 'Place' of Television in Film Studies."
Cinema Journal 25.3 (1986): 5-21.

It is unnecessary in the *Partisan Review* citation to indicate an issue number since, with continuous pagination, the volume number alone will suffice; in the *Cinema Journal* citation, the issue number appears after the decimal point following the volume number. In the example that follows, both volume and issue numbers are omitted:

- Reviews and articles from weekly or daily periodicals or newspapers:
Sarris, Andrew. "Stranded in Soho's Mean Streets."
The Village Voice 17 Sept.1985: 54.
- Interviews:
Kurosawa, Akira. Interview. "Making Films for All
the People." With Kyoko Hirano. Cineaste
14.4 (1986): 23-25.
- An article from an online source:
Sragow, Michael. "An Art Wedded to Truth."
Atlantic Monthly Oct. 1994: 21 pars.
Online. Internet. 12 Aug. 1997. Available
<http://arts.ucsc.edu/rayFASC/sragow.html>.

Notes Supplying Additional Commentary

A writer may wish to insert endnotes or footnotes not to document a passage but to explain or comment on it further. Unless it appears as a footnote at the bottom of the appropriate page, this type of note should appear on a separate page, numbered consecutively and placed between the end of your

text and the works-cited page. The heading of the page, centered at the top, should be "Notes" or "Endnotes." The notes should begin five spaces in from the left margin. Numbers corresponding to the numbers in your text should be elevated half a line. When the note runs more than one line long, subsequent lines should begin flush with the margin. Double-space these notes, begin them with a capital letter, and end them with a period.

In general, there are two kinds of endnotes or footnotes: (a) one that supplies additional commentary on a point or remark in your text and (b) one that refers readers to additional sources:

Before 1917, Russian film culture was mainly European.¹

(a)

¹Although this statement is accepted by most film historians, recent scholarship suggests that there were other, more indigenous, film cultures beginning to appear in Russia well before 1917.

(b)

¹For details and debate about early Russian film culture, see Leyda (3-90) and Taylor (1-20).

Notice that the references and page numbers in the second note are cited in the standard fashion. Those references must then be fully documented in the list of works cited:

Leyda, Jay. Kino. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.

Taylor, Richard. The Politics of Soviet Cinema 1917-1929. New York: Cambridge UP, 1979.

COMMON CONVENTIONS OF USAGE

We are all prone to common errors that may require special attention when we are composing and revising. Some students, for instance, continually confuse *its* and *it's* (the first is a possessive pronoun, like *ours* or *his*; the second is a contraction for *it is*). Others have difficulty with subject-verb agreement, and must regularly review and look out for this kind of mistake. Commas,

dashes, and hyphens can all become crutches for a writer who is unsure of how they are used to divide or balance sentences and words. These are not trivial concerns in writing, whatever the subject, and every writer must become aware of chronic problems with usage, which can be corrected. The following are a sample of the most typical errors in writing about film.

Names

Always verify the spelling of the names of filmmakers, movie personnel, characters, and actors. Names may have difficult foreign spellings, and care must be taken to get them right. Some of the names may be accented or hyphenated, and when common usage indicates that initials are used for a first name (such as D. W. Griffith), that usage should be adhered to. In most instances, titles like *Mr.*, *Miss*, or *Ms.* are dropped, and once a full name is introduced in an essay, subsequent references usually use only the last name. Never use simply a first name to feign a casual stance toward a character or actor.

Titles

Full titles of books or films, capitalized and underlined, should be given when they are first referred to, but after that a writer can use a common abbreviation: *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974) becomes just *Duddy Kravitz*. It is a good idea to check these titles, since the shortened form frequently becomes the traditional usage (as with Kubrick's *2001*), when the full title offers important information (*2001: A Space Odyssey*).

Whether to use the original foreign-language title or its English translation depends, to some extent, on your instructor. For film courses in foreign language departments, the original titles will probably be expected; in other courses, the English title will probably suffice. With some titles (such as *Viridiana* [1961] or *Ballet Mécanique* [1924]), the original is used in English also. In some instances, the English title has nothing to do with the original foreign title: Wim Wenders's film *Im Lauf der Zeit* (1976) is literally translated as *In the Course of Time*, but the title of the film as released for American distribution is *Kings of the Road*. The best strategy is to use both titles when you first refer to the movie: *Im Lauf der Zeit* (*Kings of the Road*). Then, throughout the rest of the essay, use one version consistently.

Checking these titles can not only result in a more accurate and pro-

fessional paper but sometimes, as in the last example, suggest central themes that are lost in the translation. Indeed, with some movies, the history of a title change may be the beginning of the essay itself:

Ivan Passer's Cutter's Way (1981) went through several title changes before it achieved its modest success, and the history of those changes is, at the very least, an interesting example of American distribution games.

Foreign Words and Quotation Marks

Perhaps because of its international mobility and scope, film has attracted a large number of terms and expressions from other languages, especially French. Terms like *montage*, *cinéma vérité*, and *mise-en-scène* have become a standard part of the film vocabulary in English and can be found in many recent English dictionaries. They accordingly do not necessarily need to be underlined or placed in quotation marks. In instances where less familiar terms are borrowed from a foreign language (such as the Japanese *benshi*, which refers to the person who narrated silent movies in that country), these words should be underlined to indicate italics.

If you are quoting dialogue or commentary in a foreign language, do not underline it. If there is any doubt about whether your reader or readers know that language, you should append a translation in parentheses or in a footnote.

Sexist Language

When you are referring to a person or persons whose gender is unspecified, it can be offensive to use a masculine pronoun ("Watching this movie, a modern spectator sees his world from a very different angle"). It is preferable to double or split those pronouns ("his or her," "s/he"). But because this wording is awkward, it may be better yet to solve the problem by using the plural ("Watching this movie, modern spectators see their world from a very different angle") or by eliminating the possessive ("Watching this movie, a modern spectator sees the world from a very different angle"). When a gender difference involves nouns, a writer may use words that are not gender-specific: instead of *man* or *mankind*, use *person*, *individual*, or *people*.

Spelling

Misspelling a director's name or the title of a film under discussion is a good way to undermine your paper from the beginning, since it implies a careless attitude toward the whole project. The spelling of certain words is traditionally a problem for many writers, for example, *parallel*, *separate*, *subtly*, *symmetry*, and *prominent*. All of us have our own list of problem words that demand watching. Unhappily, there are no easy or formulaic solutions for those who have difficulty with spelling, except perhaps being alert and attentive to it: a good writer always has a dictionary nearby and uses it. Even if you use a "spell-check" program with your word processor, double-check the spelling when you've printed out your hard copy.

LAST WORDS

My hope is that reading this book will become a guide and a preparation. In those moments of inevitable frustration, recall the words of Racine: "My tragedy is finished. All that is left to do is to write it."