

Introduction

On December 4, 2008, the CEOs of Chrysler, General Motors, and Ford Motor Company sat before the Congressional Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee to persuade the panel of senators to provide loans to an American automotive industry teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Similar bailout funds had been given to major banks only months before, prompting a debate over whether taxpayers should be responsible for propping up private corporations. The trio, just two weeks before, had been widely criticized for arriving to the first hearing in expensive private jets and for not presenting clear plans for restructuring their companies. Many saw these actions as evidence of the unchecked privilege of corporate actors in the years leading up to economic turmoil, and the vote was suspended.¹

At the second hearing (to which the CEOs each drove), a theme developed in the executives' rhetoric defending the bailouts. Rick Wagoner, CEO of GM, declared that "GM has been an important part of American culture for a hundred years, and most of that time as the world's leading automaker."² Bob Nardelli, CEO of Chrysler, reiterated this notion by pointing out that he was "here representing the one million people who depend on Chrysler for their livelihoods." Finally, though noting that Ford was still solvent, Alan Mullaly, CEO of Ford, declared that "Ford is an American company, and an American icon, we are woven into the fabric of every community that relies on our cars and our trucks." He further argued that to allow Ford (or Chrysler or GM) to fail was to jeopardize the livelihoods of the senators' constituents by damaging such an integral figure of civic life and national identity.³

These arguments would prove successful, and Congress later allocated \$75.9 billion to help keep the American automobile industry solvent. Notably, this was only one part of the Troubled Asset Relief Program's \$363.8 billion set aside for securing the financial well-being of corporations considered crucial to the health of the American economy.⁴ The reasoning behind this remarkable federal aid was that the companies were "too big to fail," that their size and

significance ensured that both economy and nation could not thrive without the continued presence of its three largest car companies.

This book asks how we arrived at this point. How did corporations take on such an integral role in American society? How were these CEOs able to position their companies as central to the economy and, in turn, the economy as the defining feature of the nation? What role have appeals to size and interconnectivity played in this perception that economic institutions have become “too big” (and what does this designation mean for our collective imaginaries of the power of the nation-state)?

In responding to these questions, I argue that the rhetorical appeals positioning the corporation at the center of national, economic, and even personal systems of meaning have been long in the making—a century for car companies, but centuries for corporations generally. In this sense, I have opened with the bailout hearings as one notable (and expensive) moment in a much longer rhetorical history in which the corporation has enjoyed considerable advantages over other actors.

Indeed, a century before these bailout hearings, there were no giant car companies—let alone three big enough to be defining figures in the national economy. At the turn of the century, Ford Motor Company was a small but developing manufacturer in Detroit, Michigan. While it began by producing vehicles for recreational racing, in 1908 the company began producing the Model T for use by the general public. By 1911, the recorded number of cars sold in the United States was just over 200,000; in 1914, Ford began use of the moving assembly line, and by 1921, this number had ballooned to nearly 1.7 million—55 percent of which were Fords.⁵ The company became so ingrained in the national economy in just under two decades that Ford’s decision to stop production for six months in 1927—in order to switch from production of the Model T to the Model A—led to a national economic downturn. By 1934, the company, along with its two largest competitors (the same pair that joined Ford at the bailout hearings), replaced steel and railroads as the defining industries in America, and cars quickly became more than just a mode of transportation. Cars were, instead, presented as an important technological symbol for understanding the ebbs and flows of American society—economically and socially. In the words of an observer of the company in 1937,

Americans cannot, however, help noticing the great impersonal corporations which dominate the American scene. And then, if they make comparisons, they find that the Ford organization is a corporation like other

corporations. To study it is to study the ways of all big enterprises. More, it is a model for corporations, a model of how to maintain a good repute and a lawless spirit at the same time.⁶

This part of Ford's story is well known; it may be one of the most well-documented and influential narratives in American economic history. Robert Jessop has argued that, for economists, the idea of "Fordism" that took shape over this period has come to represent "a particular configuration of the technical and social division of labor involved in making long runs of standardized goods" that resulted in an economy-defining "macro-economic regime" based on "a virtuous circle of growth based on mass production and mass consumption." To this day, this "virtuous circle" remains one of the most prominent narratives in economic and social imaginaries, particularly in the United States. This narrative has helped guide what kind of labor is imagined at the center of the economy (industrial workers and, especially, their managers rather than teachers, scientists, and farmers). It has been used to define what the purposes and responsibilities of corporations are. (Corporations are still imagined as the domain of producers/consumers and not entities bound to an investor class.) Finally, the story of Ford has defined many theories about what drives economic productivity (efficiency, competition, scale). For some, however, this economic narrative is mythologizing at its most insidious. John Kenneth Galbraith, for example, has argued that "the Ford myth is the first of the industrial fairy tales—not in total of course, but in considerable part. If we resolve, as we must, that the purveyors of fiction and bamboozlement not get the better of us, then we must start right there."⁷

Many have heeded Galbraith's advice. Jessop notes that Ford's story has had a profound impact on how we have come to understand the economy as a vast "mode of regulation" that consists of "an ensemble of norms, institutions, organizational forms, social networks, and patterns of conduct."⁸ In this latter framework, for cultural historians, Ford's story has been used to examine a number of similar principles: Michel Foucault's disciplinary "episteme" (McKinlay and Wilson), Thomas Kuhn's "paradigm" materialized (Lipietz, Roobeek), Max Weber's "bureaucratic" nightmare (Ray and Reed), and an ideal case for studying Joseph Schumpeter's and Karl Marx's separate accounts of "creative destruction."⁹ These theories share a perspective that reads history through the ebbs and flows of powerful systems that bring together knowledge, institutional practice, and personal systems of meaning that dominate for a period of time but are eventually replaced. From this perspective, Fordism rose

to epistemic significance because the company collected a remarkably diverse array of objects, ideas, and people and organized them into something that could be understood as a salient, economically driven society. It fell (or, perhaps, is falling) when these networks were replaced or disrupted.

For all of this attention to the emergence of corporate culture, the role rhetoric played in producing this system has largely remained a conceptual touchstone rather than a point of detailed textual analysis. However, as Martin Sklar has pointed out, throughout the twentieth century, “the growth of the corporation was not ‘organic’ . . . capitalists and like-minded political and intellectual leaders fought hard and consciously, with ‘doctrine and dogma’ and with economic, political, and legal stratagem, to establish the large corporation, in a historically short period of time, as the dominant mode of business enterprise, and to attain popular acceptance of that development.”¹⁰

Over this period of growth, Ford Motor Company produced and distributed thousands of texts—newspaper articles, pamphlets, photographs, and speeches. Most importantly, for this work at least, the company produced hundreds of motion pictures ranging from in-factory safety films to educational shorts to travelogues to full-length feature films. In fact, for a brief period of time in the late 1910s, the company boasted that it was the largest film producer in the world.¹¹ (In terms of financial investment and circulation, it probably was.)

In 1963, William Clay Ford presented the U.S. National Archives with nearly 300 hours of this film content.¹² Though only a fraction of the total output of films produced by the company, the films arrived at the National Archives as right around one and a half million feet of celluloid film spanning four decades of production and a number of cohesive rhetorical projects deployed by the company. With a few exceptions, the archive is composed of three kinds of motion-picture texts: complete and publicly circulated films, complete and internally circulated films, and hours of stock footage. After an appraiser labeled the films “priceless” but suggested around \$200,000 for restoration, Ford donated the films and \$200,400. Archivists sorted the materials into 2,425 entries in what is officially named the “Collection FC: Ford Motor Company Collection, ca. 1903–ca. 1954.”¹³

These films represent a period of intense ideological inculcation that branched out in all directions, at once aligning social institutions (schools, community centers, homes), conceptions of labor and capital, the nature of commodities, roads, national parks, ideas about the home and community, senses of the global, senses of citizenship, the rise of movie stars, and even internal plumbing. Nothing seemed to escape the cameras at Ford as it brought all of

these features under an expansive visual rubric. The connection of these many entities on-screen worked to expand a Fordist way of seeing in an increasingly wide sphere of influence spreading outward from Detroit, Michigan, to the American Midwest, to the whole of the United States, and to a number of global settings. In this sense, Fordism, for all of its material and economic might, was also a visual phenomenon—a mass configuration of new images and objects organized around a shifting conception of corporate capitalism.

Examining, through these films, the rise of Ford Motor Company from a small producer of hobbyist machinery to the face of corporate hegemony, this book presents a “rhetorical study of historical events” spanning the four decades captured in the archive. This was a particularly important period that witnessed vastly accelerated mass production, economic depression, war, and global reconstruction.¹⁴ In the face of these events, Ford produced or sponsored films narrating and re-narrating a version of society in which corporate and industrial life was central. In examining these films, I argue that economies are powerful rhetorical constructs built to a large degree by large corporate institutions and produced as controlling narratives “incorporated” to their core.

Ford’s films are also an opportunity to study the expanding rhetorical practices that developed during the first half of the twentieth century. Ford’s story raises questions about the relationship between rhetoric and changing ideas about the aesthetic, new economic imaginaries, new configurations of space, new understandings of the sublime, and new structures of power as these relationships shifted in the face of changing media technologies and the rise of mass culture. In this sense, this book also serves as a “history of rhetorical events” that seeks to understand rhetoric in the early twentieth century, particularly as it was impacted by the motion picture.¹⁵

In exploring this history, this book pairs film, critical, and rhetorical theory to ask a number of questions about rhetoric and film: how does a concept like *mise-en-scène*, applied to read Ford’s films, help unpack the impact of these films on debates over education in the Progressive Era? What effect did the cinematic technique of montage have on conceptions of the economy in the 1920s? How did the mobility of cameras and the motion in motion pictures help create “economized” spaces out of a national landscape in the interwar period? How did the spectacle of film, when paired with elaborate World’s Fairs, work to combat doubts about mass culture after the Great Depression? Finally, how did depictions of Ford factories and workers around the world, as they were shown to the company’s growing managerial class, impact the shape

of post–World War II globalization by generating a corporate “world picture” filtered through the “managerial gaze”? What can we learn from these questions about the expanding nature of economic rhetoric at the time? What of corporations as rhetorical actors? Of rhetoric itself? In answering this second set of questions, Ford’s films make it possible to study what I call “incorporational rhetoric.”

Incorporational Rhetoric

As a broad theoretical framework, incorporational rhetoric is an approach to analyzing the large, distributed configurations of materials, texts, and ideas brought together by immense corporations like Ford. As Michael Warner has argued, “Our lives are minutely administered and recorded, to a degree unprecedented in history; we navigate a world of corporate agents that do not respond or act as people do.”¹⁶ There are many reasons, then, to approach corporate rhetoric as unique enough to warrant a bracketed, named iteration of rhetorical practice. Incorporational rhetoric is the work of a massive, distributed system of actors and producers; it is often executed simultaneously across a number of coordinated media; and it can sustain a consistent and cumulative presence for decades. But perhaps the most significant difference is that incorporational rhetoric’s baseline rationalities lie in two concepts essential to economic reason: connection and coordination. Such an uncommon case, then, leads to an uncommon place to find a theory of rhetorical criticism: the intellectual legacy of Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony.

Notably, Gramsci’s theories of political economy were positioned as a direct response to Ford Motor Company’s rise. Throughout the early 1930s, from a cell in the Turi prison in southern Italy, Gramsci reflected on a pair of phenomena marking the changing relationship between, in the terms of Karl Marx, *societas rerum* (the society of things) and *societas hominem* (the society of men).¹⁷ Gramsci called these new social relations “Americanism” and “Fordism,” and they represented the organizational structures that developed from two institutions—one a nation, the other a corporation. When the nation and the corporation worked in concert, he suggested, they were able to produce “the biggest collective effort to date to create, with unprecedented speed, and with a

consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and of man."¹⁸

Highlighting both the textual and polysemic nature of how these institutions “compose,” Gramsci argued that Ford’s process of “making men” and “composing demographics” consisted of “a skillful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeed[ed] in making the whole life of the nation revolve around production.”¹⁹ Naming this process, Gramsci coined the term “hegemony,” but rather than treating hegemony as an end product (i.e., simply pointing to Fordist hegemony), Gramsci presented the concept as an analytical tool for understanding the societal movement toward economic reason. As a method, Gramsci suggested the pairing of “historiography” and “the concept of hegemony” to create readings of social development that could identify the ideologies of capitalism and thereby “combat economism.”²⁰

Through these methods, Gramsci calls for a reading of history in which the ideological structures of economic power must be understood through the textual and, conversely, texts’ meanings must be read through the material workings of immense institutions, state and company alike. In short, he points his readers’ attention to the potential of rhetorical criticism when applied to totalizing arguments and massive rhetorical actors. (Notably, he also positions a wide array of concepts including wages and social benefits as textual in nature.)

Gramsci’s approach argues that the rhetorical work of corporations is unique in that it goes beyond persuasion. Rather, corporate rhetoric relies on a network of “skillful combinations” that draws together humans, material objects, and ideas to create systems of meaning that appear to be closed, circular, and definitive. For incorporational rhetoric, success is a new perceived “reality” composed of a new kind of reason, new identities, and new spaces. Incorporational rhetoric thus produces entire systems of economic reason and action that appear natural and are ubiquitous.

This rhetoric, once applied, positions its user beyond the reach of traditional rhetoric. One needn’t be persuaded of an idea; rather, one is simply positioned to see no other alternative (a concept that, notably, Margaret Thatcher would deploy decades later to describe the market economy and that would be at the heart of the “too big to fail” designation). In calling this process incorporational rhetoric, rather than hegemonic rhetoric, I follow a handful of scholars who

have continued this work to describe an active and more readily observable process of producing hegemony.

Taking up Gramsci's framework, Raymond Williams has elaborated on the concept of incorporation as the process through which hegemony takes shape. Williams explains that "hegemony," as a critical term, "goes beyond ideology" in that it names "the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values," whereas "ideology" is more simply "a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs."²¹ Hegemony, then, "is always a more or less adequate organization and interconnection of otherwise separated and even disparate meanings, values, and practices, which it specifically incorporates in a significant culture and an effective social order."²² Analyzing this "process of incorporation," Williams theorizes that true power takes shape when "the processes of education; the processes of much wider social training within institutions like the family; the practical definitions and organizations of work; the selective tradition at an intellectual and theoretical level . . . are involved in a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture."²³

Alan Trachtenberg continued this line of reasoning by arguing that the concept of incorporation "gives a name to visible signs of change and to less than visible causes and agencies of change."²⁴ He uses incorporation as "both a descriptive and an explanatory term . . . braiding together of several stories into a single narrative of change." Writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, he notes the coordination between the "colonization of the West, standardization of time, accelerated mechanization of the means of production and the circulation of goods, the rise of metropolis, of department stores, railroad terminals, and tall office buildings."²⁵ More than this, his work reveals that these material configurations led to a collection of "less tangible outcomes," such as "new class formations and antagonisms, extreme polarization of the propertied and the property-less, a changing middle group increasingly comprised of managers, office workers, and professionals—and not least, altered meanings of keywords such as *land*, *work*, *city*, *civic*, and *incorporation* itself."²⁶

In many ways, Williams's and Trachtenberg's works are groundbreaking for the study of incorporational rhetoric, though they largely provide broad readings of cultural trends. David R. Shumway's review of Trachtenberg's book *The Incorporation of America Today* highlights some of the generative places to expand the study of incorporation, however. For Shumway, Trachtenberg's work provides important broad strokes on the history of social change but maintains "a deep want to maintain Emersonian individuality at the center of cultural studies where a corporate-driven society denies any such desire" as well

as “a lack of emphasis on ‘monied corporations’ as the source of a massive new kind of political and social domination that remains with us to this day.”²⁷

Rhetoric, I argue, is particularly useful for addressing Shumway’s concerns for two reasons. First, rhetorical theory has a long history of naming specific textual effects that produce ideas, connection, and coordination that can explain the nature of a “corporate-driven society.” Concepts like metonymy, synecdoche, and chiasmus all rely on connecting parts and wholes conceptually. Aesthetic rhetoric has a number of terms that describe the bringing together of ideas through style: mimesis, consonance, emulation, and analogy. Rhetorical studies of the sublime have inquired into the ways that ideas like amplitude and megethos can work to bring together wide configurations of people and ideas. In his work on identification, Kenneth Burke considered a variety of ideas that led to “consubstantiation”—the making of one from many—and this has led to the study of how texts create publics and counterpublics. In more recent scholarship, scholars of new materialism and ecological rhetorics examine how texts can serve as an entry point for studying networks of social and rhetorical action that are complex and dynamic. Applied to the work of Ford Motor Company, these concepts illuminate the active work of one “monied corporation” in the active, historical making of corporate culture.

Second, pairing rhetorical criticism with existing theories about incorporation presses rhetoric to move beyond approaching texts as a readable set of general appeals that can be identified, ordered, and applied from classical texts or traditions or as the work of producing mere ornamentation. Rather, incorporational rhetoric considers how rhetoric has been used to shift notions of what is “available”—both materially and recognized as appropriate—in a given period. For some, attending to these systemic networks surrounding persuasion serves as a wholesale reconceptualization of rhetoric itself. Ernesto Laclau has recently argued that we might understand rhetoric as a process for creating “the ideological effect *strictu sensu*; the belief that there is a particular social arrangement that can bring about the closure and transparency of the community.” He explains that this process is necessary for understanding not only why a text is persuasive to its audience but also how rhetoric is “inherent to . . . ‘hegemony.’”²⁸ Michael Kaplan, extending Laclau’s project, argues that this kind of rhetoric studies the “contingent, discursive, and fundamentally topological process that brings objective reality into existence by imposing on an array of heterogeneous elements the semblance of a structure within which they acquire identity/meaning.”²⁹

In this frame, what gets studied as the rhetorical is the result of networks or systems of meaning either guided by powerfully supported actors (philosopher-tutors

like Aristotle looking to the agora, theologians like Thomas Aquinas looking to examine and communicate the will of God, college professors like Kenneth Burke looking to understand the place of motive in deliberative democracy, or corporations looking to produce economized subjects) or understood through accounts of distributed action (rhetoric as it exists in the ever-fluid relationship among texts, meaning, mores, and the material context of cultures, particularly within specific historical periods). The former defines rhetoric's hegemonic nature—its propagation of structures of power—and the latter its dynamic fluidity—how individual actors work within and against these ideological structures to achieve more personal, and sometimes collective, goals. In this book, I study Ford's films in this former hegemonic framework for rhetorical action, working to account for how rhetoric was used to align society with the needs of corporate capitalism. When the three CEOs argued that their companies were instrumental to the lives of so many, they drew attention to the success that corporations have achieved in becoming such a "social arrangement" that has brought "objective reality into existence."

As a field tied intimately to texts, however, rhetoric is also useful for its commitment to textual histories. Most rhetorical appeals were developed in relation to a text or set of texts, and for every text there is a history that is integral to understanding how that text responds to the rhetorical challenges of its particular moment. As Gramsci's notes were being smuggled out of a prison hospital in southern Italy, for example, Ford's films had been in circulation for nearly two decades. As he wrote, then, thousands of Americans were sitting in theaters, churches, and YMCAs taking in images of Yellowstone National Park, assembly lines in Detroit, and a World's Fair in Chicago produced by Ford whose direct purpose was to enact the very structures of power being theorized. It is to these questions of circulation and accumulation that I turn next.

The Rise of Corporate Film

Ford Motor Company opened its Motion Picture Laboratory, one of the earliest and largest in-house corporate film departments of its kind, on the whim of the company's founder. Seemingly persuaded of the public potential of motion pictures (likely by his friend Thomas Edison), at some point in April 1914, Henry Ford walked into his advertising department and put Ambrose B. Jewett

in charge of producing public films for the company.³⁰ Film was particularly well suited to Ford's needs for a few reasons. First, as Ford began investing heavily in the technology, many were touting the potential for film to have a revolutionary impact on educating the public. As Orgeron et al. have noted, Ford's rapid rise came in a period rich with "faith in educational reform and the betterment of society," and this optimism "was perfectly matched with the educational capabilities of the motion picture."³¹ Second, film was particularly amenable to replicating Fordist reason because, as Elspeth Brown has argued, "film decomposes and recombines movement into standardized, individual units (the film frames, the shot)." For this reason, she argues, film was an ideal tool "for espousing industrial ideology," which was predicated on the combination of many moving parts.³² Finally, film was capable of mass distribution rivaling newspapers and radio. The medium not only could depict hundreds of concepts in a related fashion, it also could present these related items around the country through coordinated distribution processes.

Using this medium, the company was able to expand its rhetorical influence to include texts on innumerable subjects being depicted to millions of moviegoers around the world. While it would be a stretch to argue that without film there would be no Fordism, the emergence of the medium certainly played an important role in the economic shape of the world, an idea Lee Grieveson has recently studied in depth as he positions Ford's films as integral texts in a larger movement of films that "explicated and extolled the advantages of the new technologies, economic practices, and infrastructural and circulatory networks of the second-stage industrial revolution and the ascendant corporate and monopoly stage of capitalism."³³ Ford's films worked across decades and faced many, often interrelated rhetorical challenges, the first of which was to answer why the public shouldn't be deeply skeptical of films being produced by a company designed to build and sell cars.

Soon after Henry Ford's appearance in the advertising department, the newly formed Ford Motor Company Motion Picture Laboratory began distributing *The Ford Animated Weekly*, a series committed to projecting seemingly innocuous narratives of Americana (e.g., baseball games, visits to American cities, celebrities motoring about) as extensions of an emerging Fordist way of life. In many ways, *The Ford Animated Weekly* was indiscernible from other newsreels of the time, offering up simple depictions of day-to-day life in America. The fragments of this series that made it into the National Archives depict football games at the University of Michigan, parades on Detroit streets, and

sightseeing trips to cities around the country. Ford's earliest motion pictures appeared in the lives of many Americans as simply one more innovation from the company that had already provided the moving assembly line, the five-dollar-a-day profit-sharing plan, the Ford English School, and an in-house Industrial Sociology Department (all introduced in or around 1914).

In this sense, the earliest films were experienced as a process of gradual immersion—a seemingly hands-off depiction of the world to the public and a bit of good fun. For the company, however, the newsreels' purpose was more pointed. The *Ford Times*, one of the company's many newspapers, suggested that these early films "are used as one of the important mediums to disseminate the Ford idea [in manufacture and social and industrial welfare] in a very big and broad way. And incidentally they instruct and entertain by putting the public in touch with world events."³⁴ While Ford's films were openly ideological texts for the company, seeking first to inculcate and only "incidentally" to entertain, entertain they did.

Remarkably, at a time when there were considerable concerns over the ramifications of most commercial films and in spite of the internal goal of disseminating the "Ford Idea," Ford's films were praised for their ability to resist overtly commercialized material. In one account of the films early in their distribution, film critic Gladys Bollman wrote that "[t]he best of industrials contain little or no specific advertising matter. The *Ford Weekly*, for instance, contains no reference to the Ford Car except in the title 'Produced by Ford Motor Company.' It is one of the best one-reel picture shows now on the market, and was welcomed . . . at almost all theaters."³⁵

Rapidly capturing the attention of roughly one in ten moviegoers with its weekly offerings, Ford's Motion Picture Laboratory would go on to develop a remarkably diverse collection of films: full-length feature films, travelogues, educational films, sales and marketing materials, war propaganda, safety instruction films, and films explaining the nature of production practices. Ford's films were also part of a far more expansive set of texts within the company—built environments (factories, roads, mines) captured by the films, coordinated media efforts to promote and frame their reception, and competing narratives produced by other organizations.

Helping to set the tone for corporate communication at the time, other prominent industrial organizations took up the practice of having utility films produced and circulated as well. Examples of these series include training films by Western Union, *The Chevrolet Leader News*, *The Goodyear Newsreel*,

and a series produced by the Jam Handy marketing firm for General Motors. Collectively, then, private corporations were producing and distributing hours of cinematic material dedicated to keeping the public informed about news, innovations, and economic “realities.”³⁶

By the early 1920s, Ford’s motion pictures were integral elements of a number of public exhibitions; they traveled as offerings screened by civic entities and played in YMCAs nationwide. The films also were distributed to dealerships to help with promotional series, were used to teach safety to workers in theaters built within Ford’s factories, and served as feature presentations in mainstream theaters across the country.³⁷ Through this extensive distribution scheme, over the first six years of the Laboratory’s work (1914 to 1920), Ford’s films were reportedly shown in more than 4,000 venues to five million people, or “roughly one-seventh of the nation’s weekly movie-going audience”; translated into eleven different languages; and shown internationally.³⁸ In the early months of 1920, a story ran in newspapers around the country declaring that Ford Motor Company’s films enjoyed the “world’s largest circulation,” an argument that remains to this day a part of the films’ narrative. At the apex of their relative circulation in 1920, *Film World and A-V News* reported that the *Ford Animated Weekly* was being “shown in 2,000 theaters to 4 million U.S. visitors weekly,” while the *Ford Educational Weekly* was being shown regularly “in 7,000 theaters across the country and reached between 10 and 12 million viewers.”³⁹

The first ten years of film production might be considered a long honeymoon period for Fordism. John Kenneth Galbraith called this the company’s “ecstatic” phase, explaining that “Ford’s view of Ford was widely accepted at face value.”⁴⁰ The work taking place at the company was heralded around the world. The combination of this wide circulation and framing the films as yet another Fordist innovation would help the company spread a vast aesthetic framework that would further normalize machinery and production while also positioning them as powerful extended analogies for understanding knowledge, economies, and the idea of a well-lived modern life. More than this, the very presence of these films argued that one could “see” the Fordist economy—allowing for the company to convince its many viewers to accept the wholesale shifts in economic relations taking place at the time.

If the first decade of Ford’s films highlights the ability for the medium to introduce and then embed industrial capitalism into much of society, the next fifteen years was a period of rhetorical work dedicated to defending this system—Galbraith would call these the “doubtful” years.⁴¹ Two events make

clear the need for such defense. In 1924, Henry Ford disrupted the work of Ford Motor Company, the institutional rhetor, by sponsoring an abhorrent series of anti-Semitic articles published in the *Dearborn Independent* between April 1924 and May 1925.⁴²

The powerful executive, national icon, and figure perceived as an industrial savant was quickly forgiven and distanced from the articles, which in many ways indicates the power economism already held in the United States. Economic ideology insulated the idea of Fordism from the prejudices contained both in its infrastructure and in the ideas of its figurehead, and the public was unwilling to condemn a man and a company already so integral to its own prosperity. In this sense, the “Jewish campaign” is just one more example that, particularly in America, perception of economic acumen cures all sorts of ills, but we don’t need deep rhetorical analysis to understand this point. What the stain of the events did do was remove the perception that both the company and man were pure champions of the everyman and cast considerable doubts on the other media the company was producing. In his oral history of the company, E. G. Liebold, Henry Ford’s longtime personal secretary (and a figure also closely associated with the anti-Semitic publications), explained the fallout by saying “they had men all around the world, I think, who were taking motion pictures . . . As soon as the Jewish campaign came on . . . sources immediately banned the Ford films, and we discontinued that.”⁴³

Company records suggest, however, that while Ford’s films would never reach the same proportion of public exposure after this, the medium still maintained significant circulation and continued to play a variety of important roles throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The Ford Film Laboratory still produced a number of films in the late 1920s, but the archive contains far fewer films from this period when compared to the first half of the decade. When that economic buffer collapsed with the onset of the Great Depression, however, Ford would not so easily avoid criticism.

Ford fared particularly poorly during the Great Depression. Murmurs nationally suggested that the company’s Security Department, run by Harry Bennett, was running amok and that Henry Ford had lost touch. The pair consistently clashed with unions, and tensions escalated throughout the 1930s, culminating in the Battle of the Overpass in 1937, wherein Ford “security” forces violently suppressed a crowd marching on its factory. The episode virtually erased any goodwill the company had built up over the previous two decades.

As Douglas Brinkley has described the situation, “Ford Motor Company of the mid-1930s is typically regarded as a dark, almost gothic place, with a shadowy administration, activities shrouded in mystery, and a roster of dubious characters running rampant on the premises.”⁴⁴ Making matters worse, the company could not simply tout its economic acumen as a defense for the righteousness of its actions or its superiority over unions. The company was faring poorly financially, General Motors had outpaced Ford for some time, and Chrysler had overtaken Ford in overall production in 1933. Watching Ford’s films, however, one would never know any of this. Due to this economic pressure, rising distrust in Ford’s management, and the rise of “soundies,” the company shut down its in-house film laboratory in 1932 and turned instead to outside agencies to create and distribute visual materials on its behalf (with the exception of a set of films produced by the company for the Department of the Interior). Script approval, however, remained with the company.⁴⁵

Where Ford’s earliest in-house films had worked to attune the public to industrial life, the company’s contracted films in the 1930s worked to quell concerns over capitalism after the Great Depression and used a new set of rhetorical frameworks to do so. These films are predominantly longer and more complex than the short, serially released films that appear earlier in the archive. Three genres of film were prominent in this period: travelogues, World’s Fair films, and a set of Hollywood-like feature films. Collectively, these films would circulate as a growing series distributed by Ford’s dealers to a wide variety of local institutions throughout the 1930s.⁴⁶ The purpose of these films is hard to miss. They make up a collection of films designed to distract and dazzle. This change from education to entertainment was a response to a set of competing visual projects deeply critical of Fordism and sweeping shifts in legislation—particularly the New Deal—attempting to jump-start a damaged economy by sheer force of scale and will. This was an era of grand industrial and infrastructural spectacle (attempting to compensate for economic depression), and its visual culture offered up similarly scaled texts.

As I interpret them, the films produced in this period worked to deflect the initial damage wrought by the Great Depression and gradually nurture the public’s faith in the mass industrial organization—and capitalism more generally. Over time, these appeals worked to bring the public back to corporate actors as important figures not just in economic relations nationally but in their personal and political lives as well. Company reports show that nearly ten million people viewed this collection of films in 1940, and nearly six million

attended screenings of these films at various branch locations around the country in just three months (January to March) of 1941.⁴⁷

As a result of this rhetorical work to keep faith in industrial capitalism in the 1930s, the nation was primed to embrace arguments that World War II was an industrial war and eventually a victory for the productive economic power of the United States. During the war, many corporate actors created films that played on the theme of the “Arsenal of Democracy,” which argued that the United States’ production practices were the defining feature of a free, capitalist world. This theme would carry throughout the war as corporate actors consistently used wartime production as a pretense for arguing that the United States’ true power lay in its productive powers and that these powers were made possible by two features: visionary and efficient managers and prideful but pliant workers.

In the 1950s, industrial films flourished. A *New York Times* article from 1954 quotes J. R. Bingham, president of Associated Films, Inc. (a distributor), declaring that “[t]he growth of the sponsored film field has been tremendous since the end of World War II . . . our roster of film-using organizations . . . has grown from 36,000 non-theatrical exhibitors in 1946 to more than 90,000 today.”⁴⁸ Industrial capitalism was back in the limelight as the driving feature of global reconstruction. Ford continued to be an important part of this rise. A 1955 company memo suggests that Ford was working hard to reach the same circulation as its chief competitor GM, which was enjoying a yearly film circulation of seventy million viewers, and by 1961, just two years before the collection was donated to the National Archives, Ford Motor Company captured an annual film audience of sixty million.⁴⁹

While chapters of this book take up these periods of rhetorical development individually, when they are taken collectively, part of the rhetorical force of Ford’s films came from the sheer quantity of films produced and circulated as well as the consistency with which they were screened for the public over a long period of time. Attending to this force becomes particularly important when addressing institutions with deep pockets and wide reach that can create a sustained presence in the public sphere for years. With such considerable circulation, these films developed into a shared experience for many Americans—in both the act of attending a screening and the acquisition of knowledge held therein. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, millions took in Ford-sponsored or Ford-produced films. To accept the cumulative narratives presented in these films meant identifying oneself as an active member of a

larger public that was responsible for the upkeep of a society built around immense economic institutions.

Rhetoric has used a number of ideas to understand this kind of sustained and distributed rhetorical process. First, Ford's films make clear the importance of attending to circulation in understanding rhetorical force.⁵⁰ Working to define and direct the public amid these various challenges, Ford built a vast distribution system for its films throughout the twentieth century and surrounded this system with a number of supplementary messages framing the value of the films. Ford, in this sense, had far more control over who would see its films and in what context than most. Because of this control, the company was able to treat distribution as part of the rhetorical process—making where, when, and how the films were seen an extension of the meanings being proffered.

Second, these films point to the potential of studying channels that develop via what Michael Warner has called a “concatenation of texts over time.”⁵¹ These channels lead to a number of rhetorical advantages not necessarily recognized when studying single events and texts. For these individuals, the company kept a powerful industrial aesthetic in circulation for decades; narratives about roads that were crucial for decisions made in 1930 began in 1914; eventual suburbanization in 1945 depended on films explaining decentralization in 1930; and postwar globalization relied on forty years of films, photographs, and narratives that presented the world as a site for economic development. More than any of these individual threads, however, this history highlights that children who watched Ford's educational films in the 1910s took to the roads in the 1920s, bought homes in the 1930s, and provided an immediate pool of middle managers readily prepared to take up the mantle of global superpower via the military-industrial might of the nation. Corporations suggest that we might better consider generational time frames for understanding rhetorical practice.

Finally, in addition to offering insights into the temporal elements of sustained arguments on a single topic, the sheer volume of texts produced by the company creates what Christa Olson has termed “agglutination,” a term that recognizes the “cumulative force” accrued by serial texts. Many of Ford's rhetorical projects required rhetorical tasks dependent on size and networked action.⁵² Building roads or industrializing the national landscape required enormous coordination between communities and economic sectors. Sometimes the company simply relied on the argument that bigger is better; at other times it relied on the production of sizable publics attuned to witnessing its economic

developments. The sheer quantity and geographical spread of the films make important contributions to these projects.

In sum, these films—their circulation, their concatenation, their agglutination—all highlight the impact of a massive corporate filmmaker on visual culture in the earliest, foundational years of cinema’s rise. Ford’s films had an important role to play in shaping what Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson have called “the middle period of American film history,” which took place within what Orgeron et al. have called the “cinematic century”—a period marked by the rise of mass publics and considerable shifts in ideas about the visual.⁵³ Jonathan Beller, however, takes these features a step further, arguing that as a result of this proliferation of film production and circulation, “machine-mediated perception now is inextricable from . . . psychological, economic, visceral, and ideological dispensations. Spectatorship, as the fusion and development of the cultural, industrial, economic and psychological, quickly gained a handhold on human fate and then became decisive.” For this reason, he concludes that “[n]ow, visibility reigns and social theory needs to become film theory.”⁵⁴ Beller’s point, as I read it, is that Ford’s films contributed to sweeping shifts that would challenge spoken and written argument as the defining constructs for making meaning in the period. Indeed, the motion picture provided a wide variety of affordances that have been integral to the rhetoric used by the company over this period. Film’s ability to overlay images, sounds, motion, and pacing helped the company to present industrial life as a unified, understandable, and often attractive whole. In Ford’s films, specifically, this whole was presented as a vision of “the economy”—a knowable system worthy of allegiance and a system in which the corporation is the defining entity.

Film Rhetoric

Rhetoric and film have a considerable shared history, and a number of frameworks have been developed to unpack the rhetorical nature of cinema. As David Blakesley has argued, however, the study of film is strengthened when scholars approach films using “competing perspectives.” Some of these perspectives have included approaching film as a collection of texts that can be drawn on to produce more complex meanings (Plantinga); rhetoric as a lens in an Aristotelian

sense—the application of classic terms about persuasion to film (Bordwell); and the application of a Burkean frame (which examines how films produce identifications) to film criticism (Blakesly). My hope is that this book continues this interdisciplinary work in two ways.

First, it contributes to the growing literature on industrial and sponsored films. In spite of their considerable circulation, consistent use across decades, and role in larger cultural shifts, films like Ford's have been a footnote in historical accounts of capitalism, in studies of rhetoric, and in analyses of film. Reversing this oversight in film studies, Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau have argued that industrial and utility films of this kind have served as a set of important “interfaces between discourses and forms of social and industrial organization” in which “what is at stake . . . is the complex interrelationship of visibility, power, organization and specifically how film as a medium creates the preconditions for forms of knowledge and social practice.”⁵⁵ For this reason, Hediger and Vonderau argue that “films made by and for the purposes of industrial and social organizations constitute the next big chunk of uncharted territory in cinema studies”—they also, I argue, offer important challenges to rhetorical studies of the economy.⁵⁶

During this period, film allowed the company to treat images as it did resources—as objects to be captured, manipulated, aligned with other images, and ultimately disseminated as a produced way of seeing the world but also to accumulate and distribute a particular model of publicity—a steadily growing and largely complacent collective of witnesses to industry's rise. These various genres of film had an impact on many important debates: how to educate the public, how to understand the nature of the economy, how to interpret both the Great Depression and World War II, and how to expand globally. Studies of visual culture in this era are incomplete without some attention to the visual work of corporations, but, conversely, I contend that rhetoric is an important framework for approaching films of this nature.

Second, I see the idea of “incorporational rhetoric” as a useful “perspective” for approaching this kind of film. Debra Hawhee and Paul Messaris have recently suggested that visual rhetoricians have been excellent at providing “broader theoretical conclusions about the power of images” but have been much less successful in exploring “what makes images *special*, in comparison with words and other means of communication.”⁵⁷ A brief overview of theories about film suggests that motion pictures are “special” rhetorical objects for their ability to connect and combine different objects with greater speed and complexity than written texts, speeches, and photographs.

Filtering film scholarship through the “perspective” of incorporational rhetoric reveals that when film scholars have written about film, they have done so using language that depends less on ideas of persuasion or identification and more on the concept at the heart of the incorporational—“skillful combination.” *Mise-en-scène* has been described as the bringing together of many elements of film production to produce discrete “shots.” Montage describes the incorporation of these “shots” into sequences. Deleuze’s theory of movement-images describes how these sequences produce particular configurations of space—cohesive mental maps that often organize the world beyond the film. Spectatorship moves beyond the film itself to describe how these collected cinematic features encourage identification within viewers (singular) and between audiences/publics (plural). Finally, gaze theory considers how vision itself can be used to produce homogeneity out of complexity. As general observations, these features of making many textual features condense into one cohesive narrative are interesting in their own right. However, when applied to the case of a corporation, whose central goal was to rope together as much of society as possible under the confines of its ideological positions (that is, to produce hegemony), these features become undeniably rhetorical.



On Corporate Archives

A final word on the method and scope of this work: if rhetoric is an analytical framework used to “read” a society through the texts it produces, then the discipline itself has archival properties as it collects and organizes a wide collection of texts and then draws from them a series of observable effects. However, these readings are always partial, and while historically rhetoricians have been less inclined to explain why particular texts have been selected as the corpus for developing theories of rhetoric, contemporary rhetoricians point to the importance of attending to the study of textuality itself—that is, supplementing close reading with accounts of where and how the studied texts, and the analytical approaches used to understand them, became available.

In the case of archival work like this, Lynée Gaillet has argued that “[h]istorians of rhetorical practice examine archives in an effort to seek nuanced, complicated tales—ones moored to their own times and cultural exigencies.”⁵⁸ Indeed, I entered my archival work seeking to understand the nature of corporate rhetoric, and this

guided many choices about where and how to look at these materials. However, in seeking these tales, rhetoricians have also argued that researchers must recognize that, as Cara Finnegan has put it, “archives—even seemingly transparent image archives—function as terministic screens, simultaneously revealing and concealing ‘facts,’ at once enabling and constraining interpretation.”⁵⁹

The material in this book largely drew from the content of two archives that have been particularly important to the production of an economized account of Ford’s history and also illustrate the difficulty of historical work with such powerful corporate rhetoricians. These sites are very much material places that I read as contributing to a third, abstract archive—a mental depository that holds the collective of events and artifacts as they have been organized into the social structure called, variably, Fordism or “managerial” capitalism. As a stored collection, Ford’s films already work to, in Charles Bazerman’s terms, “draw together heterogeneous pieces from heterogeneous circumstances” and give them the appearance of a unified narrative, which I have, in turn, used to generate a seemingly unified rhetorical history.⁶⁰

The first archive is an outpost of U.S. National Archives located in College Park, Maryland. While the archive itself looks like a relatively innocuous suburban depot (with an above-average food court, if you ever get the chance to visit), inside sits what Jacques Derrida has called the *archontic*—a location that contains not just the laws of a society but its history and identity; a site where a cultural imaginary is made. Derrida suggests in *Archive Fever* that texts, when archived, become powerful by “existing in this uncommon place, this place of election where law and singularity intersect in *privilege*” and help to valorize particular understandings of the culture doing the archiving.⁶¹

In these terms, the presence of Ford’s films in the National Archives is itself one form of enunciation declaring that the corporation holds a place in the *archos* of American history.⁶² The very possibility of the present work is, in this sense, just one more arrow in the spacious rhetorical quiver proffered by corporate and economic actors. The ability to first store the films in a private archive and then gain access, through extraordinary financial means, to the historical depository of a nation positions the film archive itself as simply one branch in a grand rhetorical apparatus available to corporate actors.

In seeking to contextualize these films and to unearth this development, I turned to a second archive. This one appears to be far less common, though no less important, to cultural constructions of the past. It lies just outside the gates of Greenfield Village, an Americana-themed amusement park and historical

reenactment site adjacent to Ford Motor Company's manufacturing site in Dearborn, Michigan. (Greenfield Village is another story that has fallen to the cutting-room floor of this text.) I entered the small work area to the marches of John Philip Sousa, having walked past a statue of Henry Ford and picked my way through school field trips and tourists. I bought a mug in the gift shop on my way out.

The company's public archives, as these anecdotes suggest, are much more clearly a site designed to use history rhetorically—to engage in the economization of national memory. If the films' presence in the National Archives positions Ford's story as a narrative of national importance, the work of the Ford archive highlights another of Derrida's points: an archive can function both "as accumulation" and as the "*capitalization* of memory on some substrate and in an exterior place."⁶³

The entire Greenfield Village complex serves as a material history of the American economy, and the archives adjacent to it tell the documentary history of this tale. In collecting, storing, and ordering a century of advertising materials, internal correspondence, and general miscellany, Ford's archive retains an important documentary history of Ford Motor Company. Functioning in conjunction with the Benson Ford Research Center, these films function as more than just a set of texts designed to entertain and inform and as one integral node in a much more expansive economic treatise documented by the company: a treatise distributed across decades and genres. As I read them, these are just two of many institutions—corporate, academic, and national—that have saved and circulated millions of texts integral to the proliferation of economized narratives of history. In short, they are just one more act of incorporation.

All of this is to say that while I position the Ford Motor Company collection as a rare opportunity to analyze a corporate actor at work in the production of symbolic material as it accrues over time, it would be a mistake to view these films as striations stacked on top of one another to reveal a transparent set of economic narrations from the first half of the twentieth century. Rather, Ford's film archive is itself a rhetorical act—it, like all archives, suggests connections, materializes particular forms of history, and exists within material structures that produce many extra-textual messages.

Perhaps the most obvious way that this archive has functioned as a rhetorical entity is, as Cara Finnegan has pointed out, the erasures that come about when official history is written only using recognized or sponsored archives. Housed in the National Archives, these films present a curated history, an anesthetized historical account of the stories Ford hoped to tell. To accept this archive as it is is to hear its sponsored voices; to see these films is to also see the power dynamics that

stamp out the voices and bodies, the frameworks and rhetorics that did not have the kind of institutional support required to create and sustain expositions, films, and archives to keep their memory alive. I am afraid I contribute more often than I would like to this process. At the same time, this will make up one of the running themes in this book: meaning-making practices often work through omission.

There are, in this sense, many stories not told in the archive: stories of Ford's complicated racial relations, Henry Ford's anti-Semitism, or Harry Bennett and the violent suppression of union members, for example. These issues, unsurprisingly, appear only tangentially in the company's films: the negative narratives featuring bankers and financiers or Bolsheviks appear as thinly veiled codings of Henry Ford's anti-Semitism, a handful of unedited clips of manager strikes, and the sporadic mention of "calamity howlers" and labor troublemakers.

The film collection's unbalanced historicity is particularly clear when looking at proportion across the archive. For example, there are two entries in the collection involving labor strikes (an integral part of the era of Fordism), yet there are more than ten entries related to "threshing" (a less integral part). As a rhetorical history in situ, however, these omissions and inclusions tell a compelling story about the construction of history itself. In the ethos of a corporation being constructed by Ford Motor Company, what happened to grain harvesting was revolutionary; what happened with the strikes was ancillary.

The chapters that follow, then, represent threads that I observed across the archives' contents. Some of these were organized formally by Ford (as in the case of the official series of educational or management training films); others, however, cut across the archive itself (as in the case of Ford's "rhetorical economy" or space films). My goal, then, follows Jeremy Packer's argument that "thinking about the archive via the apparatus means thinking outside questions of signification and spectatorship, of the adequacy, effectiveness, and fidelity of meanings and messages. Rather, it is to address communications and media as mechanisms for linking things together, as articulations in networks, as the glue and the infrastructure of apparatuses."⁶⁴

In this sense, these sites contribute to a very different kind of archive in American history. Existing somewhere between historiography and foundational myth, the history of market-mediated capitalism oriented around increasingly large corporate entities guided by visionary figureheads has been buttressed by an expansive depository of stories, commonplaces, data points, and acts of economic proselytizing. Each of these archives might be further understood as examples of what Derrida has explored as an "eco-nomic archive"

that “keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion, that is to say in making the law (*nomos*) or in making people respect the law.”⁶⁵ For Ford’s films, this “law” amounts to a collective argument over the importance of economic reason and the industrial corporation.

In this sense, even as a partial account of historical events, there is much to learn about the rhetorical shape (and shaping) of the contemporary, economized world through these texts. This abstracted understanding of an “archive” is one way Michel Foucault used the term when describing his methodological framework of “archaeology.” Archeological research is a critical approach to understanding regimes of truth; an archive, he explains, is “the set (*l’ensemble*) of discourses actually pronounced” in a given epistemological period.⁶⁶ For Foucault, then, archeological methods function to “show how certain things—state and society, sovereign and subjects, etcetera—were actually able to be formed, and the status of which should obviously be questioned.”⁶⁷ In turn, this means treating the objects in an archive—material or abstract—“not only as events having occurred, but as ‘things,’ with their own economies, scarcities, and (later in his thought) strategies that continue to function, transformed through history and providing the possibility of appearing for other discourses.”⁶⁸

Throughout this work, I argue that Ford’s films present small glimpses into the historical project of reconfiguring a nation (and eventually many nations) into an economic entity guided by industrial corporations. In this sense, this work contributes to an ongoing conversation in rhetorical studies concerned with understanding how economies have been presented to the public as a set of frameworks that are central to understanding the world. The chapters that follow, then, examine what I see as a particularly important episode in a long and complex history, a history that economic rhetoricians seek to unearth (to follow Foucault’s metaphor) in order to observe how a society built on economic reason and organized around corporate power was “actually able to be formed.”

Chapter Overview

A number of threads run through this text with the goal of addressing a wide disciplinary audience. For those coming to this text looking for film history, the book might be approached as a work that sorts the “industrial film” into five

genres (education films, “rhetorical economy” films, spatial films, World’s Fair films, and management training films). These films, in turn, provide an opportunity to revisit a handful of important historical debates. Chapter 1 examines debates over American public education in the Progressive Era; chapter 2, a national debate over the nature and direction of the interwar economy; chapter 3, a struggle over conceptions of the national landscape; chapter 4, a struggle over the nature of the public in the wake of the Great Depression; and chapter 5, questions over how to develop post–World War II globalization. Notably, each of these debates was seemingly won by corporate interests (that is, at each of these points, an important part of social life was incorporated into industrial capitalism).

For those approaching this book as a work analyzing film rhetoric, within these historical contexts each chapter presents a different pairing of film theory and rhetorical theory. Chapter 1 combines studies of *mise-en-scène* with rhetorical studies of “similitude.” Chapter 2 combines montage theory with rhetorical analysis concerned with “topics” or *topoi*. Chapter 3 combines ideas of cinematic mobility with theories of spatial rhetoric. Chapter 4 considers a shared approach to spectatorship in film and rhetorical studies grounded in the idea of affect. Chapter 5 aligns these various approaches with the idea of producing a “gaze.”

Putting these together with greater detail, chapter 1 examines Ford’s educational films as they circulated between 1918 and 1927 using two analytical frameworks: similitude and *mise-en-scène*. By producing a uniform industrial aesthetic and applying it to a wide variety of ideas, by emulating the structure of arguments being made by educational theorists like John Dewey, and by collapsing distinctions between schools and factories, the company successfully mapped what has been called the “corporate image of society” onto public education—the effects of which are still in effect today.

The second chapter examines the idea of montage rhetoric, particularly as it was integral to the company’s ability to produce what I explore as a “rhetorical economy” by addressing and connecting a number of economic *topoi* on-screen. Using a 1921 film titled *As Dreams Come True*, I argue that economies are rhetorical constructs predicated on aligning ideas of imagined futures, labor, value, and capital while also embedding these concepts in terms drawn from the everyday lives of their intended audience.

The third chapter takes up the idea that the motion picture (as its name more or less gives away) is a particularly powerful medium for making spatial

arguments. The movement of cameras, the selection and positioning of landscapes, and the interplay of these spaces and perspectives to create setting are all done to enhance the film's rhetorical power. In Ford's films, I argue, the company used this mobility to generate a sense of "interstitiality" that remapped the United States as an economic space. This process of producing the interstitial involved breaking down traditional boundaries (between the local and the national, between industry and agriculture, and between the natural world and consumption) and replacing them with an immense interconnected system of economically based spatial dynamics—marketplaces, decentralization, and spaces of middle-class consumption. Through this extensive network of films, then, Americans were led to reconceive their relationship to one another, their neighborhoods, and their relationships with the natural world.

In the fourth chapter, I turn to theories of spectatorship to better understand a set of World's Fair films that accompanied massive events conducted by corporate actors throughout the 1930s. Responding to critiques of corporate capitalism, corporate actors complexly reconfigured the core of the economy to become about witnessing and consuming the development of the economy itself rather than viewing it as purely a system of production. An important step in this process was to (re)produce a public that could happily witness the comings and goings of mass production—mediated capitalism on-screen. Applying a series of concepts drawn from rhetorical registers that account for audience-making practices—*theoros*, *megethos*, *amplitude*, and *hyperbole*—I argue that Ford's World's Fair films animate a number of critical theories describing the effects of this kind of economic sublimation (Walter Benjamin's "phantasmagoria," Guy Debord's "Society of Spectacle").

Finally, the fifth chapter draws on the line of critical analyses of film working outward from "gaze" theory to understand the powerful rhetorical construct generated during and after World War II to produce a neocolonial way of seeing in which the white male Western executive exerted tremendous power over the development of global economic and social development. *Women on the Warpath* enacts, at once, Althusserian hailing and the application of the managerial gaze. *Around the World with Ford Motor Company*, on the other hand, operationalizes this managerial gaze to train an internal set of middle managers to enact particular forms of global capitalism.

When taken collectively, these chapters display a growing network of corporate influence that used a wide variety of rhetorical and cinematic techniques to incorporate a larger and larger network of ideas, people, and objects. It is this network upon which the modern corporate structure and economy are based.