

criminal class. Independence—tenuous and hard-won—was Siegel's auteurist political hallmark: from Kevin McCarthy's panicked run away from the pod people in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* through Dirty Harry's laconic, anti-institutional vigilantism: "A man's got to know his limitations"; "You've got to ask yourself, 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do ya, punk?" And at the end of *Charley Varrick*, that independence goes up in smoke.

What killed it? To begin with, the "independence" brand had always been a smokescreen. Varrick and his crew are only crop dusters by the way. Their proper job is robbing banks. And on one particularly fateful job, they happen to rob a bank far too full of cash. Charley knows at once that the bank must be a Mafia money drop. The big score means bigger trouble, Varrick explains to his gleeful partner. Unlike the FBI, the Mafia "never stops." It takes an elegant frame-up for Varrick to dispatch the inexorable Joe Don Baker and turn the mob-connected casino owner into the prime suspect. The frame-up turns on luck, or, rather, the implausibility of luck: no one is lucky enough to rob a drop bank on the day it is awash in Mafia money; that means someone, someone inside, is responsible. There is no luck, only knowledge.

This is the paranoid position, and *Charley Varrick* revels in it: Does Charley know enough to outsmart his ruthless Mafia pursuers? He does, and in the process, Charley sheds his dumb partner and his wife. In his disappearance he becomes the independent he had always claimed to be. This is the game that Jean-Paul Sartre called "loser wins." The three chapters that follow take a longer route through Hollywood's assimilation of auteurist paranoia. Still, we will end up more or less right here, with the last of the independents—or his uniform, at least—in flames, replaced by an Armani suit.



The Literal and the Littoral

Jaws

Here, at the edge of this history of the studios' great second age, we confront again a question of possibility. Where do the allegories come from? If we can locate them in individual and collective choices, what opened that field of choice in such a way that it might gather to it the principal vectors of corporate self-understanding? What delimited the field's contours so that it might be possible to incessantly promise a second, hidden meaning to some viewers while requiring it of none? *The Core* was a typical instance of logorrhea, if an atypically canny reimagining of an "action" movie as an "acting" movie. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, Paramount/LucasFilm, 1981), two decades earlier, elevated auteurist play to the level of corporate identity. These allegories are insistent, yet their importance is always deniable, downgradable to an in-joke, reducible to a token of industrial privacy inessential to the appreciation of the surface of the plot. Where did that contemporary deniability come from?

It came from *Jaws*. Doubtless it might have come from some other source or been cobbled together from a collection of films of the early seventies. In the following chapter, I show how *The Godfather* (Coppola, Paramount, 1972) advanced crucial portions of the new industrial-aesthetic formation. But *Jaws*' particular combination of production history, distribution, narrative structure, editing, and shot composition twisted all the necessary strands of the emergent order into one of the sheets of neoclassicism.

To make the case for the film's fascination with denial, it would be simple enough to note that *Jaws* went into production beginning in the fall of 1973 and shot through the summer of 1974, coincident with the massive fallout of Watergate. The movie hit the screens just as the Church Committee had plunged into its investigations of CIA involvement in assassination plots. Domestic and international policy making had become hopelessly confounded and constitutionally contaminated. "What did the president know and when did he know it?" became the mantra of the Watergate hearings while the Senate Select Com-

mittee on Intelligence attempted to break through the wall of plausible denial to determine whether the CIA was behaving as a “rogue elephant” or whether presidents had known about the attempted assassinations. A long-standing term of art in the world of covert operations, “plausible denial” first reached the popular press in the document dump accompanying the *Pentagon Papers* in 1971. As the CIA was being repurposed as an all-purpose domestic spying agency, the conceptual apparatus of deniability was being ported into the White House’s campaign of dirty tricks, where it sounded more sophisticated than the “rat fucking” it covered for. Senator William Proxmire had introduced intelligence oversight legislation in 1973, explaining that the root of the problem lay in deniability: “In domestic affairs . . . the use of ‘plausible denial’ becomes a frightening, antidemocratic device. The President must be accountable for his actions. He should not be able to hide behind the cloak of ‘plausible denial.’”¹ Proxmire’s bill died, but the first piece of successful legislation to emerge from the Watergate-era tumult was the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, which required a presidential “finding” approving any covert operation. Plausible denial was supposed to be a thing of the past.

This Nixonian aura was essential to *Jaws*, with its initial opposition between the “rogue” shark and what screenwriter Carl Gottlieb called “the smoothly corrupt but genuinely sincere” Mayor Larry Vaughn:

Competent and gifted with an uncanny ability to portray weakness posing as strength, Murray [Hamilton] was a natural for the part. . . . [I]n *Jaws* he would be the foremost spokesman for the “rational” view, as well as the defender of the town’s economy and architect of the cover-up. Quite coincidentally, he bears a passing resemblance to Richard Nixon, and would be a natural choice to play the Boy From Whittier, should that film ever be made.²

Midway through the film, Mayor Vaughn signs the contract allowing Sheriff Brody to hire Quint to hunt the shark. A mayoral “finding” of a sort, his signature is both his admission that the shark problem is real and his acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of deferred municipal action. Yet his carefully maintained denial—as much psychological (“sincere”) as institutional (“architect of the cover-up”)—slips away satisfyingly enough to make *Jaws* decidedly *post*-Watergate: the film *wants* the mayor to do the right thing. Vaughn’s rank mercantilism and foolish attempts to manage the press do not hang over the seaborne sequences in the way that Nixon’s malfeasance loomed over the mid-seventies.

Two aspects of this reading, though, are decidedly unsatisfying. First, as an account of the shark it is rudimentary at best—surely everyone from author

Peter Benchley and Gottlieb to producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown saw more in the beast than its role in the political allegory. Second, the resolution of the mayor’s conversion narrative marks the midway point of the film, not its climax. Either our account of *Jaws*’ narrative structure requires drastic revision or this aspect of the story must be somehow nested in the larger narrative.

We might better see *Jaws*’ particular importance in the reconstitution of classical deniability by imagining a world where its temporary status as the most successful movie of all time still had the ring of novelty and not destiny. David Anthony Daly’s dissertation, *A Comparison of Exhibition and Distribution Patterns in Three Recent Feature Motion Pictures* (submitted 1978, published 1980), is one of the first scholarly attempts to make sense of “sharkmania.” He describes the lineaments of the first summer blockbuster this way: “Steven Spielberg, a twenty-seven year old Universal contract director who had made *The Sugarland Express* for Zanuck/Brown was chosen to direct.” Think, for a moment, of how unfamiliar that sentence is: that Spielberg needs explaining; that an explanation would include *The Sugarland Express*, a film nearly forgotten today; that he was a contract director in an era when virtually no one was a contract director; and that his producers chose him and not the other way around.³ By 1982 he had directed *Jaws*, *Close Encounters*, *Raiders*, and *E.T.*, along with the misstep *1941*. By the end of the eighties, he and George Lucas had eight of the top ten box-office hits of all time (unadjusted for inflation). Daly’s dissertation marks the last time Spielberg would need contextualizing; it may also be the last moment when “Spielberg” would not be the self-justifying alibi for a film’s performance, and when someone might hazard other causes for its market dominance.

Looking for sources of *Jaws*’ success, Daly points to the film’s saturation marketing campaign and Universal’s brutal distribution policy. In the latter, the studio initially offered exhibitors the choice of nine weeks at a 90/10 split after the “house nut” was subtracted or 70 percent of the overall gross, along with substantial advances and high guarantees. Moreover, the contract was to be “blind bid”—that is, the exhibitors would be agreeing to Universal’s terms without having seen the film first. After running afoul of the Justice Department, Universal backtracked from the blind bid by screening *Jaws* for exhibitors across the country. Yet the studio was now confident enough in the film that it *increased* the minimum playing time to twelve weeks. Moreover, for *Jaws*, the studio extended the “cooperative local media buy” in which theaters share the cost of advertisements in local papers and on radio to include charges for an unprecedented network television campaign. Exhibitors paid in advance, paid for three months, and paid more than they ever had.

Network advertising makes sense only when a film is saturation-released, and much has been made of Universal's decision to open *Jaws* in 464 theaters. More important, though, was Chairman Lew Wasserman's decision to *reduce* the initial release from more than 900 theaters in order to force exhibitors to accept more stringent terms. (By Christmas 1975, *Jaws* would still be playing in 2,460 theaters.)⁴ If nothing else, *Jaws* would have a disciplining effect on the entire exhibition sector.

Not that the studio expected to wring its profits entirely at the exhibitors' expense. Zanuck/Brown and Universal were supreme promoters:

The promotional tie-ins licensed by Universal were staggering. In eight weeks, over a half million *Jaws* t-shirts, two million plastic tumblers, and two hundred thousand soundtrack albums were sold. *The Jaws Log*, a quickly produced paperback about the making of the film, sold over one million copies the first month. Also available were beach towels, bike bags, blankets, costume jewelry, shark costumes, hosiery, hobby kits, inflatable sharks, iron-on transfers, games, two varieties of posters, shark's tooth gold charms, shark's tooth necklaces, sleepwear, children's sweaters, women's swimwear, ties for men, and a *Jaws* water squirter.⁵

Considering this tsunami of ancillary promotion, Daly and the generations of critics who have followed have found it hard to believe that the marketing was not responsible for the film's success. Clark Ramsay, then head of distribution at Universal, gave the classic response: "You can't hype your way to success in this business. The movie has to be good. What we did was create an opportunity for *Jaws* to take off. The advertising and promotion might have been responsible for the first three-day run, but it was word-of-mouth that carried it to the top."⁶ Stanley Newman, the vice president of publishing at Universal, offered a more nuanced explanation. He would still disavow the notion that promotion *created* success, but that disavowal was less important than the chance to tout Universal's unified corporate effort. "*Jaws* was successful not because of some pre-meditated, well orchestrated advertising and media campaign, but because every part of the film was dealt with on a highly professional, top-flight level."⁷ Daly finds this "perhaps somewhat less than completely believable," but without some enveloping account that would marl distribution to content, the selling to the story, Daly and others could only assert what the studio flacks denied, that marketing and distribution had independent causal power.

Yet wherever one turned in the cultural discourse, from the popular to the academic, the industrial to the aesthetic, that question resurfaced: *Why* were audiences flocking to *Jaws*? There were two categories of explanation, an audience-centered "anxieties" account and an industry-centered huckster's account.

Critics and editorial cartoonists immediately seized upon the shark image as an allegory of everything from Reagan challenging Ford in the 1976 primaries, to a Soviet sub build-up, inflation, oil profiteering, and even "undercover 'security' operations" (the rogue shark as rogue elephant). Unofficial national therapist Dr. Joyce Brothers contended that mid-seventies social and economic anxieties were readily figured by the shark: "The shark fantasy hits where we are the most tender—our fear of dismemberment, the invasion of our bodies." Fredric Jameson, whose "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (1979) quickly followed Daly's dissertation, found the secret to the shark's appeal in its deployability. Reflecting on the myriad meanings of the shark for critics, Jameson contended that "the vocation of the symbol—the killer shark—lies less in any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together." By "folding back" any number of Brothers's social anxieties into apparently natural ones, the shark performed a "profoundly ideological" function.⁸

One astute reader of the *Jaws* phenomenon was the Universal publicity department, which quickly "absorbed and organized" the editorial cartoonists' anxieties into a full-page ad headlined "Everybody's enJAWing it!" The studio regularly capitalized on and orchestrated the burgeoning behind-the-scenes coverage in the major magazines and daily newspapers. A massive article in the *New York Times Magazine* chronicled the crafting and marketing of Benchley's book, "Sharks: . . . and Then, and Then, and Then . . . The Making of a Best-Seller."⁹ In September, the *Los Angeles Times* declared "*Jaws* Swims to Top in Ocean of Publicity."¹⁰ As screenwriter Carl Gottlieb puts it in the wrap-up to *The Jaws Log*, "By April 1975, the rumors were out around Hollywood that the picture felt good, that it seemed to be playing well for audiences. This book was commissioned, researched, and written in a very short time."¹¹ A three-month turnaround on the book, a month on the cartoonists' advertisement: Universal is working very quickly indeed. For Jameson, the shark's polysemy exemplifies a popular culture intent on naturalizing and thereby disavowing social anxieties; but for Universal, as for the classical Hollywood studios, that openness speaks to the film's marketability, an ideological use of a different order, less "profound" by Jameson's standards but just as intent on universal incorporation: Everybody's enjAWing it.

Yet if *Jaws* looks almost modern in the totality of its media exploitation, history was working very quickly as well to drastically alter the conceptual relationship between publicity and product. One can see a stark before and after, a divide between production and distribution. During the shooting of *Jaws* the production crew went to modest lengths to prevent outsiders from so much as seeing

Everybody's enJAWing it!

Never before have so many people seen one movie-in just 4 weeks.

<p>PLITT THEATRE PLITT'S CENTURY PLAZA #2—Century City 553-4291 Daily: 12:30 • 2:30 • 5:30 • 8:00 • 10:15 PM Late Shows Fri. & Sat. 12:15 AM</p>	<p>PACIFIC DRIVE-IN SEPULVEDA Drive-In—Van Nuys 786-8520 Shows: 8:30 & 11:15 PM ROSECRANS Drive-In—Paramount 634-4151 Shows: 8:30 & 11:15 PM VERMONT Drive-In—Gardena 323-4055 Shows: 8:30 & 11:15 PM STUDIO Drive-In—Culver City 398-8250 Shows: 8:30 & 11:15 PM VIHLELAND Drive-In—La Puente 336-7518 Shows: 8:30 & 11:15 PM</p>	<p>GENERAL SHOWING SOUTH BAY CINEMA III—Redondo Beach 370-6396 Daily: 12:30 • 2:45 • 5:00 • 7:20 • 9:40 PM AMERICAN MOVIE CHURCH FASHION SQUARE #2—La Habra 691-0633 Daily: 12:00 • 2:30 • 5:15 • 7:45 • 10:15 PM MOVIE CHURCH HOLIDAY CINEMA—Canoga Park 346-0950 Daily: 1:15 • 3:30 • 5:45 • 8:00 & 10:15 PM</p>
<p>AMERICANA CINEMA #1 & 2—Panorama City 893-6441 Daily (F1): 12:15 • 2:30 • 5:25 • 8:00 & 10:35 PM Daily (F2): 1:30 • 4:05 • 6:40 & 9:15 PM</p>	<p>WESCOPE #1—West Covina 338-5574 Daily: 12:15 • 2:30 • 4:45 • 7:15 & 9:45 PM</p>	

NO PASSES ACCEPTED FOR THIS ENGAGEMENT

Figure 2.1. “Everybody’s enJAWing it,” especially distribution. Source: *Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1975, F13. © 1975 Universal Pictures

the shark. “We all believed that an audience’s enjoyment of the picture would be severely diminished if they had read for months in advance about how the shark was just a mechanical contraption.” They particularly feared “wise guys” in the audience “thoroughly destroying the illusion for that happy majority that has willingly suspended its disbelief” by spouting off about the mechanical shark.¹² If Hollywood was about to turn over its prestige productions to genres that had been B-picture staples, if it was entering an era where it would regularly risk schlock in its drive for retro appeal, it was also making audience sophistication easier to come by. The classical hierarchy was returning: Two audiences—one sophisticated, one naïve (or believing)—only now one was potentially ruining it for the other. Detailing the travails of working with Bruce, the mechanical shark, Gottlieb explains, “The only reason this is being written now is because the book will be released a little after the movie, and many of you will have already seen what we’re talking about so the mystery won’t be destroyed for you if we tell you a little bit about how it was done.” In a footnote for the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition, he recognizes that “[t]he efforts to protect the ‘secret’ of the shark seem a quaint anachronism today, when the special and virtual effects would be featured in hours of promotional material and ‘Making of’ pseudo-documentaries.” “In 1975, nobody could have predicted the modern era of accessibility, where the details of every aspect of the entertainment industry are widely publicized.”¹³ *Jaws* pivots between these two audience-management regimes at the moment of its release; its production—technically proficient but generically nostalgic—was itself instantly nostalgized. On the one hand, the filmmakers profess a belief in secrecy and “movie magic”; on the other, they are swept up into an as-yet incompletely synergized drive to capitalize on any and all possible promotional avenues, including the behind the scenes. And bobbing in the “ocean of publicity” that surrounds the book, the film, and their reception,¹⁴ Gottlieb’s *Jaws Log* will tell the story of the limits of promotion, anchoring the film off the coast of the newly discovered world of accessibility.

Still, there was the lingering problem of the audience’s belief in “movie magic.” If secrecy was so important that disclosing the mechanical shark might have gotten Gottlieb fired in 1975 (the guard who let a reporter photograph the shark *was* fired), what competing value could have supplanted it? One answer would be to say that no value has supplanted studio secrecy, that “accessibility” is a sham, a carefully managed process of information dissemination, in which the studios and their conglomerate parents search for synergistic content that can be distributed across what Justin Wyatt has called the “enfotainment complex.” That seems true enough, yet it does not speak to the central questions of an audience’s experience; indeed, it seems to raise them more insistently.

Clark Ramsay is surely, in some way, right that promotion may be able to buy opening weekend success but that something more is required if the film is to have legs. Why are Hollywood films satisfying (when they are)? How does inside knowledge affect the willing suspension of disbelief? Does postmodern awareness spell the end of pleasure?

Let us take a step back. In the *Jaws* era there are three competing theories of the relationships between marketing, success, and quality, and each implies an answer to these questions about audiences. One, Ramsay's, assumes that marketing and success are fundamentally contingent but that success and quality are fundamentally connected. True, a weekend's worth of success might be bought, but "real" success depends on real quality. The difficulty with this view is that when confronted with a successful film, it must posit something "good" about it, lest it undermine its antecedent belief in the contingency of promotion and quality. The innocence of audiences must be preserved, lest they come to suspect that they are only tools in the promotional machine. The converse model, Daly's, assumes that marketing and success are strongly connected but that success and quality vary independently. If a weekend's success might be bought, so might a week's, a month's, and so on. That there are counterexamples—hugely, wondrously successfully promoted films that flop—is not particularly important. This view assumes that an audience in-the-know will react cynically; to know *how* the film works is to know that it is *working on you*, which is to be made aware, again, of the contingency of quality. This leaves a third view, Newman's, which takes no position on the necessary relationship between the three except to say that they are all signs of professionalism. For an audience full of these "wise guys," knowing how it is done is part of knowing that it was done *properly*. Newman's view makes room for an audience to know both *how* the film works and to judge *whether* it works, since both find shelter within a judgment of professionalism. The relentless drive to provide access to the backstory, then, functions to continuously reassure the audience, within the industry and otherwise, of the film's competence; at the same time, that drive reinforces a semiotic reading of the film. The willing suspension of disbelief passes over into a willing suspension of control: I know they know what they're doing. Here is the way Vincent Canby concluded his review in the *New York Times*: "Mr. Spielberg has so effectively spaced out the shocks that by the time we reach the spectacular final confrontation between the three men and the great white shark, we totally accept the makebelieve on its own foolishly entertaining terms."¹⁵ Competence and immanence have supplanted criticism.

A substantial part of that competence is aesthetic. According to Gottlieb, "If anything had come out of the exhaustive analysis and rewritings of the basic

story, it was that the film had a three-act structure, like a well-made play." The production would echo this narrative structure:

The first two acts were played on land and with the exception of a couple of shark attacks in which the monster would only be hinted at and never fully revealed, there was nothing to cause any production man any concern. . . . But the crucial third act, in which the three men go to sea in the fishing boat and confront the great white—well, that hadn't been done before, not "live" on location with a fourteen-ton shark mechanism and a full crew.¹⁶

The pulse-pounding narrative climax would neatly coincide with the production's greatest challenge. Yet, from the beginning, there would also be a tension between the structure and the production precisely as a result of this coincidence. The identity of the ragtag band of misfit-experts might become too individualized, too authored, perhaps even undeniable. This would warp the underlying structure:

Years ago, one of Broadway's great play doctors and original writers commented that the classical three-act structure of a well-made play could be summed up this way: In Act One, you get a guy up in a tree. In Act Two, you throw rocks at him. In Act Three, you get him down again. When I told this to Steven, he observed that making *Jaws* was a four-act structure: "In Act One, I get into a tree, and for the next three acts, people throw rocks at me." I think he was identifying a little closely with the picture.¹⁷

If Act III really were getting the men down from the tree, it seemed to go on far too long; it took almost half the film's running time. How could the structural competence of both the production and the plot be saved?

Kristin Thompson contends that the three-act model runs into difficulty because it elides a crucial midpoint shift in the second act. Instead of three parts, the well-made screenplay has four. At the very heart of the film, the protagonist's goals reset; the "complicating" action of the first half of Act II slips into the "developing" reaction of the second half. What is more, each part in the four-part model is roughly equal; the whole is, in her term, "balanced." In this framework, which seems incontrovertible in her analysis of *Jaws*, the move to the water is not the beginning of the third act but this midpoint pivot in the second. The third act begins when the shark attacks the boat while the men are belowdecks drinking and singing. Setting sail isolates the men; the convivial drinking brings the men *together*.

Thompson goes on to note that in *Jaws* each of the three turning points is highlighted for the viewer by being disarticulated from the overwhelming

tension of the action sequences. Yet that disarticulation does not threaten the cohesiveness of the whole. Instead, clarity and causality amount to classicism; indeed, they amount to a warrant against an all-too-hasty declaration of Hollywood postclassicism: “The fact that the turning points of *Jaws* do not come at the moments of high action when the shark attacks is worth examining in light of claims that ‘post-classical’ films favor spectacle over causal logic.”¹⁸ Certainly *Jaws* turns on a collection of highly motivated moments, and in a system where, at the very least, screenwriters, actors, editors, and composers place a craft-derived premium on such motivations, we should expect nothing less.

But closer attention to the turning points reveals something more intriguing than simply their distance from the film’s action pulses. The midpoint, as already noted, involves the signing of a contract. Act I concludes with Quint’s offer to kill the shark for ten thousand dollars. That is, the *plot* of the terrestrial half of the film pivots around the poles of New Hollywood labor: independence and contracting. Even more particularly, it pivots around whether the contract will be “all in” or an option contract. Offered three thousand dollars to kill it, Quint negotiates up: “I value my neck a lot more than three thousand bucks, chief. I’ll find him for three, but I’ll catch him, and kill him, for ten. . . . For that you get the head, the tail, the whole damn thing.” If the arc of a well-made play requires a constant escalation of the threat, *Jaws* conveys that escalation through the increasing bounty on the shark.

Does the third act commence with a similar moment of contract? Thompson’s Act III begins when the men “break into song, confirming that Quint now accepts Hooper as a comrade.”¹⁹ The song certainly signifies *something*, but within the sequence belowdecks, comradeship becomes contract when Quint and Hooper compare shark-bite scars. The terrible scraping of Quint’s nails against a chalkboard that initiated his economics lesson at the end of Act I becomes the competitive display of the squaline signatures that have already made blood brothers of the hunters. Unknowingly bound by their shared past, the men are incorporated through a scene of uncanny reading. When Hooper offers up his leg for Quint to examine, the shot alternatively suggests that the leg belongs to Quint or that it is entirely detached. “Here’s to our legs!” they proclaim, recalling an earlier shot from the shark attack in the estuary. This final contract, then, is in blood, signed by the prey they are hunting.

To understand the film, one certainly need not have any sense of this drama of contract; or if one did have that sense, it would likely appear as a drama of male friendship in which the formalities of contract—however necessary—were always understood to be the tribute paid to civilization for the opportunity to temporarily escape that society in order to defend it. (This would also

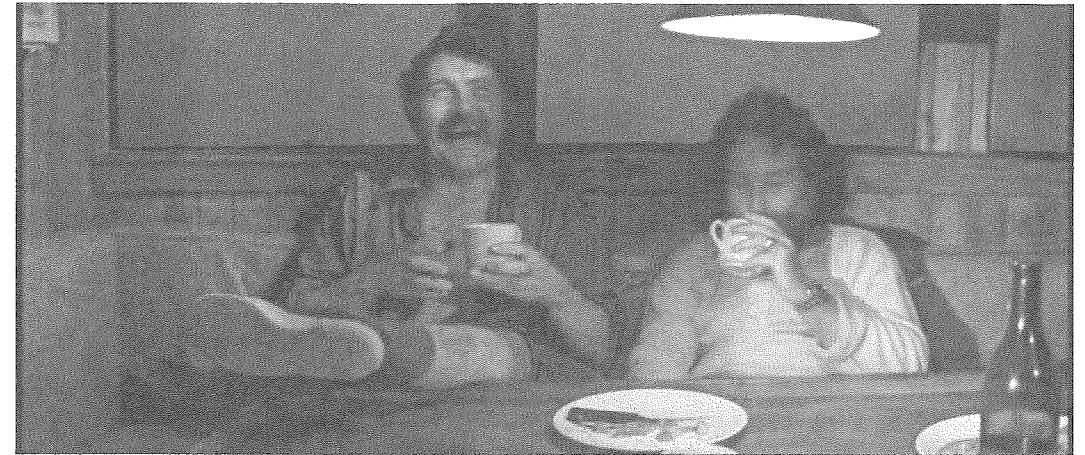


Figure 2.2. The scars of contract. *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, Universal, 1975)

explain Daly’s omission of the first half when he summarizes the film: “The film focuses on three personalities. . . . It is the battle among these three and the shark that thoroughly engages our attention.”²⁰ As the men pack to set sail, Quint recites a bit of sexist doggerel—“Here lies the body of Mary Lee, / Died at the age of a hundred and three. / For fifteen years she kept her virginity; / Not a bad record for this vicinity.” This drives away Ellen Brody, leaving the men alone. (The song they will break into belowdecks reratifies their newfound society: “Farewell and adieu, you fair Spanish ladies, / Farewell and adieu to you ladies of Spain.”)

The ocean separates them from the world of women and children, but it also gives them the chance to recover from their gender’s previous failures. The opening attack on Chrissie occurs when Tom Cassidy passes out on the beach, unable to follow her into the surf for a skinny dip. The film is naturally vague here about whether the shark attacks because Tom fails to defend her, whether the shark simply represents the fulfillment of his desires, or some of both. Tom is, rather simply, absolved, yet in this scene his guilt migrates to the aquaphobic Chief Brody, who will bear it until the film’s epilogue. In the final scene, as he swims from the wreck of the *Orca* and the seaborne carnage, Brody quips to Hooper, his (male) swimming partner, “And to think I used to hate the water”—as though that were Tom’s problem, as though the danger in the water were the water itself and not the sex it promised or threatened. The end of *Jaws* answers the beginning in all sorts of recognizably classical ways: an arena of failure becomes an arena of success, nonswimming becomes swimming, night becomes day, the female victim is avenged, and so on.

The initiating attack not only defined the parameters within which the film’s classical narration would play out; it was crucial to both the movie’s marketing

and its style. The one-sheet, the image around which the entire campaign would revolve, yoked the attack *in* the film to the attack *of* the film. That image derived from the book jacket, where, stylized and out of scale, an enormous shark rose toward a lone female swimmer. Doubleday had tried several times to come up with the right cover. The hardcover jacket featured a blunt-snouted shark with a crescent mouth, “a penis with teeth” Doubleday editor Tom Congdon called it, although there were no visible teeth. Still, the penile profile was no accident; it had replaced an initial mockup that the sales force had rejected. That first cover had shown “a peaceful unsuspecting town through the bleached jaws of a shark.” Yet when that version was shown to the Doubleday sales managers, “there was considerable resistance. . . . It made them think of Freud’s classic dream of castration, the *vagina dentata*.”²¹ For the paperback, the penile hardcover was thoroughly revised: the lighting was brought up and color brought in, the swimmer came into sharper focus, the waterline was emphasized, the snout was sharpened, and the ragged jaws gaped; in short, the *dentata* returned.

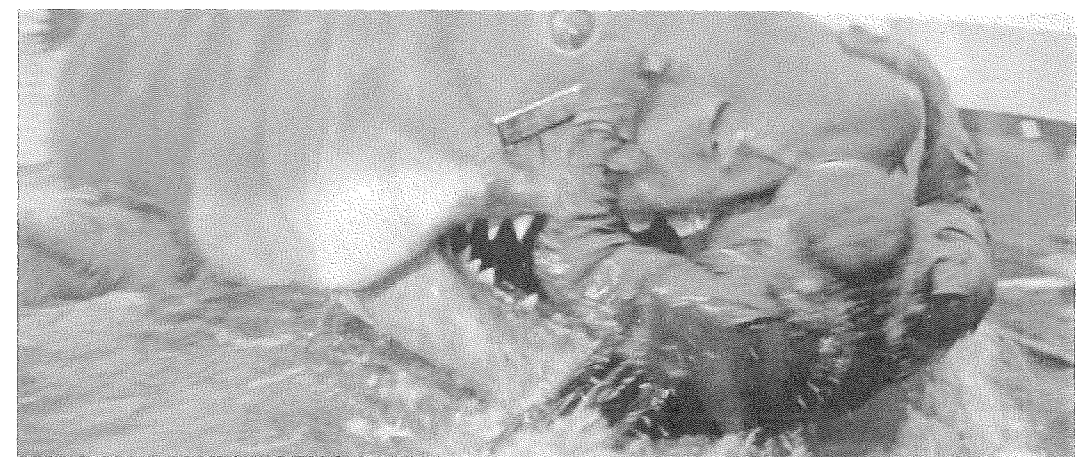
The paperback cover was designed in coordination with the marketing for the film. Both centered on this image, yet no comparable long shot of shark and female victim appeared in the film itself. Instead, *Jaws* offered us repeated, lingering access to the shark’s point of view. If the book-jacket image does not itself appear in the film, and certainly not in the attack on Chrissie, what does appear, particularly in Act III, are displaced renderings of its menace, a displacement that finally runs to ground when Brody shoots the (we might as well call it penile) air tank in the shark’s mouth, causing both to explode: “Smile you son of a bitch.” The film frames itself in versions of its own logo.

Inside that logo, we find ancillary self-promotion and something very like market analysis. Like the product autoplacements that will litter Hollywood neoclassicism, the video game for *Jaws* gets its close-up within the film (de-branded, to be sure, but this is only a mark of the film’s position at the gateway to the era). The market research included both Mayor Vaughn’s claim to Brody that “it’s all psychological. You yell barracuda, everybody says, ‘Huh? What?’ You yell shark, we’ve got a panic on our hands on the Fourth of July,” and Quint’s analysis of the choice facing the town council: “[Y]ou’ve gotta make up your minds. If you want to stay alive, then ante up. If you want to play it cheap, be on welfare the whole winter.” While the production of *Jaws* dragged expensively into the Martha’s Vineyard summer, the marketing of *Jaws* depended on being able to remake the summers to come as the high season for popcorn movies. These competing stories of production and distribution appeared as a stark choice within the film, but it would also be a choice between alternative ways of reckoning with the logo. Either option made the shark a symbol of itself.

Deep into the second act, Quint tells the story of the sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*. “So, eleven hundred men went in the water; 316 men come out and the sharks took the rest, June the 29th, 1945. Anyway, we delivered the bomb.” Brody and Hooper listen with an awe they borrow from Spielberg himself, who will go on to spin a collection of less and more successful films on the same theme (1941, *Always*, *Saving Private Ryan*). Quint’s tale does many things. It provides a backstory to the discourse of plausible denial and secret governance—the men weren’t rescued because their mission to deliver the bomb was a secret that could not be acknowledged; it installs what we might anachronistically call the greatest generation gap; and it humanizes (the proper word, as we will see, is tenderizes) Quint before his death. But in its account of a fate worse than drowning, the story brings greater precision to the threat the shark-as-vagina-dentata poses. “On Thursday morning, Chief, I bumped into a friend of mine, Herbie Robinson from Cleveland. Baseball player. Boatswain’s mate. I thought he was asleep. I reached over to wake him up. Bobbed up, down in the water just like a kinda top. Upended. Well, he’d been bitten in half below the waist.” Hooper had said as much early in Act II when he noted into his tape recorder that Chrissie’s “torso has been severed mid-thorax.” And, indeed, this is how Quint will go: bitten in half at the waist, not, as he had promised at the end of Act I: “This shark, swallow you whole. No shakin’, no tenderizin’, down you go.” “Here’s to our legs” indeed.

Shark teeth halve men, just as the bleached jaws divide the film, echoing the original, discarded book-jacket design. That division is routinely coded as a castrative distillation of a feminine threat. And that division ramifies throughout all registers of the film, from production and narrative to character and editing. The biggest shock in the film—the sudden appearance of Ben Gardner’s head—

Figure 2.3. At the waistline. *Jaws* (Spielberg, Universal, 1975)

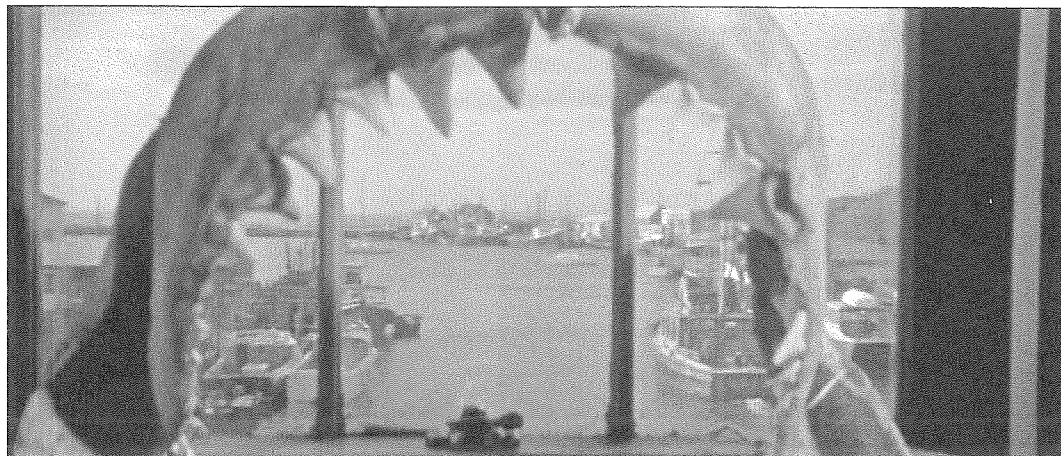


was the last piece to be filmed. It was shot, appropriately enough, in a swimming pool that belonged to editor Verna Fields. Fields, who spent the production on location, assembling footage on her then-state-of-the-art KEM table, would win an Academy Award for her work. Better than anyone had hoped, she hid the balky mechanical shark and matched the wildly varying sky conditions. Her nickname could not have been more appropriate: Mother Cutter.

Jameson is correct that the natural or psychological grounding of the shark's symbolic power is an alibi for its polysemy, but that polysemy was also a privileged site for the reconceptualization of an audience. *Jaws* worked not because audiences were all scared of the same thing but rather because audiences could reproject that underlying fear as they saw fit, reinforcing and constituting the logorrheic flow.

Ultimately, *Jaws* turns not on the particular *meaning* of its imagery but on its *control*. The first half of the film was positioned on the littoral, a dividing line that posed a particular cinematographic problem: How can one focus on both land and water simultaneously? Spielberg and cinematographer Bill Butler drew on a particularly seventies piece of technology, the diopter, a lens that offers two independent focal lengths and allows the viewer to focus on both an importuning resident in Wellesian close-up and the wading bathers in a long shot. But that technology was static—it did not zoom—and therefore did not convey the sudden profundity of depth. For that latter effect, Spielberg and Butler used a *Vertigo* zoom (tracking out while zooming in) on Brody as he sat on the beach. These allusive directorial quotes suggest an auteurist frame of reference for *Jaws* for those in the know, but they do not require any such reference since they not only refer but they *work*, particularly on the viewer's sensorium.

Figure 2.4. The jaws that divide the film as the *Orca* sets sail. *Jaws* (Spielberg, Universal, 1975)



In *Jaws*, the meeting of land and water at the littoral is not a vertical plane. There are projections (docks) and inlets (the estuary) that confound that border. Fundamentally, though, the encounter of sea and sand is a form of laminar superimposition; it is the lapping of water on the shore, of waves chasing up the beach and draining away. The opening attacks occur off these beaches, each time preceded by a low-angle shark's point-of-view shot and the ominous bass of the *Jaws* theme. The low angle on Chrissie is matched to a high angle on her—a displacement that only heightens the tension—before we are jerked back to the surface of the sea, neither below nor above her. This perspective is the heart of the film. As Spielberg explained,

Bill Butler . . . reconfigured the water box so it was easy to get the focus, so that you could get your hand in there to pull focus. And still have the water lapping the lens. I really wanted this movie to be just at water level, the way we are when we're treading water. We don't see water three feet off the water; we see water like *this*. I wanted to get the camera down to where the human point of view is most accustomed to be when you're swimming, and that's why I shot at least 25% of the movie from that water box.²²

The water box takes the layering of water on land and puts it on the lens, slicing our point of view just as the waterline divides the surface of the open sea from its depths. As Antonia Quirke phrases it, "This is *Jaws*' defining image—the shark's eye division of the world into above and below."²³

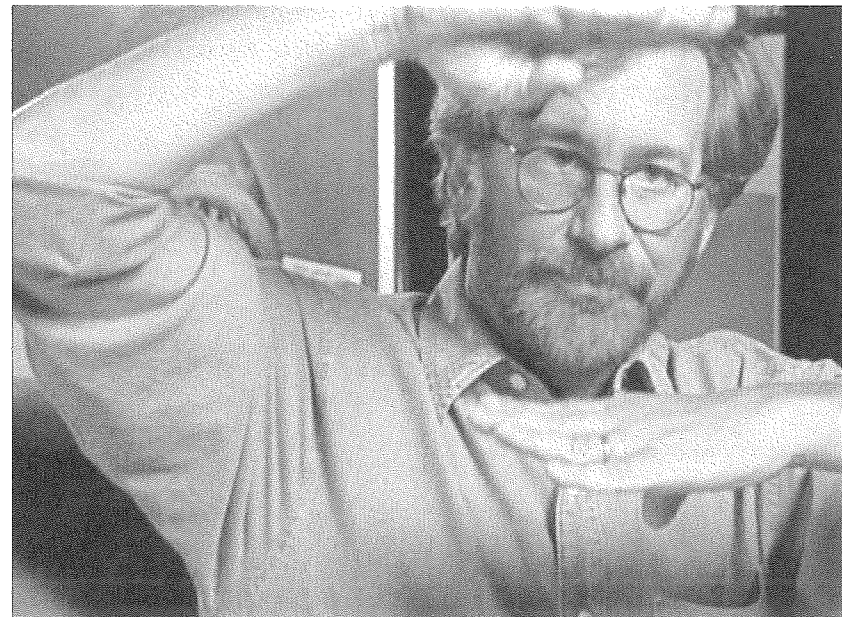


Figure 2.5. Like *this*: the experience of the meniscus. *The Making of Jaws* (*Jaws* DVD supplement, 2005)

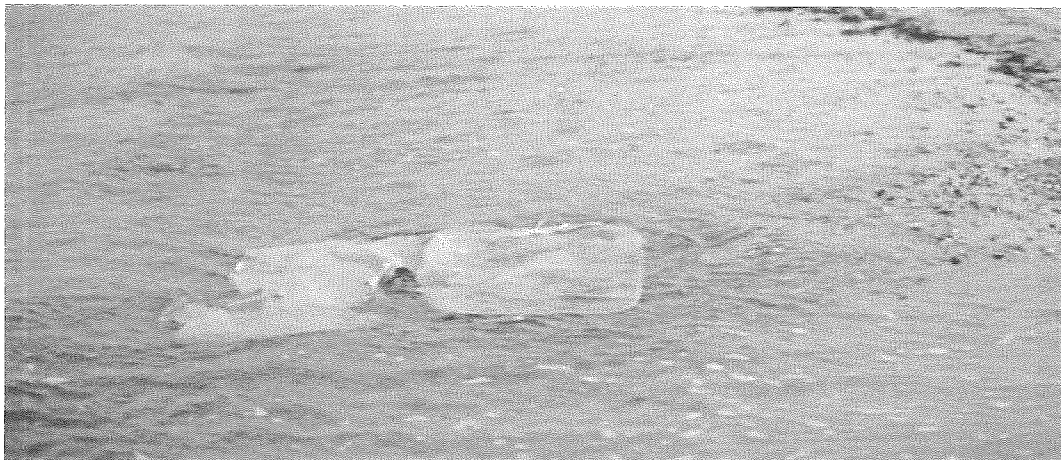


Figure 2.6. The shark's-eye view. *Jaws* (Spielberg, Universal, 1975)

Jaws goes further by twice staging our reaction to that self-division, to the terrible uncertainty over the relationship between what we see and what lies beneath. In the second attack, Alex Kintner dies far offshore, suddenly, in a fountain of blood. In place of a body bisected by the waterline, we are prepared for his death by lingering shots of the canary-yellow, ultraplastic raft holding him just out of the sea, perhaps just out of harm's way. When his lonely, deflated raft washes up on shore, the waterline has been sentimentalized. We miss the boy, but we see the plane.

In the third attack, a recreational sailor will die carrying Brody's son Sean to safety in the estuary. The paternal sacrifice implies that the threat has increased—the shark is now “within” the island—and personalized in a way that leaves Brody no choice but to act. The police chief, who had taken Tom's guilt upon himself, is now guilty of failing to protect his sons. The boys seem to have

Figure 2.7. The laminar littoral. *Jaws* (Spielberg, Universal, 1975)



done nothing wrong—they are swimming where they have been told to—yet we know them to be guilty of swimming around with a fake fin. That transgression nearly kills them when they emerge from the water at gunpoint—and nearly kills them again when the shark attacks. Yet their guilt also belongs to the filmmakers, boys playing with a fake fin in order to instill fear and panic. Spielberg, Gottlieb, Zanuck, and the rest were convinced that they could not reveal the shark without spoiling the effect, yet they could not resist this extravagant allegory of their own technical mastery, their own control over what is manifest and what is latent.

What do we know of the depths of the water from its surface? When we see a fin, does it belong to a shark or a boy? What meaning does it offer us? What meaning do we offer it back? *Jaws*' classicism lies in its ability to control the moments of allegorical obtrusion, to establish the balance between the literal and the allegorical and then to violate that balance, systematically, in the service of a further illustration of control. Something is present; something is intimated. That fin and hundreds of other instances form a collective allegory of Hollywood's capacity to move back and forth between the literal and the allegorical, an allegory waiting to be read as the industry's history of itself. Thus is the field of neoclassical deniability opened. The vehicle of this allegory of allegory, the meniscus, the slightest of betweens, is the movie screen; the tenor is the production process.

in the thirties. Still, the principle—that studios qua studios do not deserve particular attention or accounting—holds across virtually all scales of analysis.

25. Richard Maltby, *The Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 15, 16.

26. *Ibid.*, xiii–xiv.

27. Again, see Caldwell, *Production Culture*.

28. Other critics have considered the period “neoclassical” on different grounds. For an early use, see Peter Krämer’s discussion of Michael Pye and Linda Myles’s *Movie Brats* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), where he summarized their argument thus: “[F]ollowing three decades of aesthetic and economic crisis and flux, the late 1970s saw a return to the stability, popularity, and high standards of the studio era. In this neo-classical Hollywood, auteurs had taken over the executive role of the moguls” (“Post-classical Hollywood,” in Hill and Church Gibson, *American Cinema and Hollywood*, 62–83, quote on 78). Warren Buckland puts the birth of neoclassicism at the same point, but, again, for other reasons: “The year 1975 witnessed the phasing out of the New Hollywood in favor of the blockbuster era, a politically conservative, neoclassical style of filmmaking” (*Directed by Stephen Spielberg: The Poetics of the Contemporary Blockbuster* [New York: Continuum, 2006], 11).

29. Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, “Framing Classical Space,” *Art Journal* (Spring 1988): 37–41, 37–38.

30. The proscenium, curtain, lighting shifts, and other elements of legitimate stagecraft are present, of course; I am only making a relative claim. For more on the lengths to which classical-era exhibitors went to experientialize moviegoing as a stage set (and thereby avoid the trompe l’oeil effect), see Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

31. Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 63.

32. Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 107.

33. Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 61.

34. *Ibid.*, 65.

35. The notion here is that Stanley Cavell’s *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) is not merely a collection of readings of films but a chronicle of a decisive episode in the history of the subject.

36. Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 73–121.

37. Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (New York: Hill & Wang), 2003.

38. Robert Sklar, “Empire to the West: *Red River*,” in *Howard Hawks: American Artist*, ed. Jim Hillier and Peter Wollen (London: BFI, 1996), 152–61.

39. Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 65.

40. Peter Krämer, *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (London: Wallflower, 2003).

41. Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 220.

42. Maltby credits Vasey with the introduction of the notion of deniability, and (in e-mail) she could not confirm that it was a conscious allusion; indeed, the term seemed

only a stopgap to her: “I suppose it was an oblique reference since the phrase was already in circulation, but if I had been able to come up with something that was more neatly descriptive of that kind of public self-absolution I would have used it.” Furthermore, she suggested that Lea Jacobs was the originator of the notion (or at least the first to publish). Jacobs does not use the bureaucratized “deniability,” though. For her, “denial” retains more of its psychoanalytic valence: “[T]he film sets up an interpretation in one scene that it denies in a later one. In negotiations with producers, the Production Code Administration insisted upon revisions which effectively insured this kind of open-ended treatment of potentially offensive sexual material” (Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film* [Berkeley: University California Press, 1997], 112). In any case, Jacobs’s more usual term is “ambiguity”: “Even if such an interpretation makes sense in the context of the plot, a contrary reading always remains possible. This use of ambiguity, in which the spectator is not forced to make an inference about the omitted action, is typical of the later phase of censorship” (118). I will retain the more historically apposite term.

43. Noël Carroll, “The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond),” in *Interpreting the Moving Image*, by Noël Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 244–45. The first quotation, from 244–45, is cited in part in Krämer, “Post-classical Hollywood,” 79; the second appears on 258.

44. Lebensztejn, “Framing Classical Space,” 40.

45. Susan Christopherson and Michael Storper, “The Effects of Flexible Specialization on Industrial Politics and the Labor Market: The Motion Picture Industry,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 42:3 (Apr. 1989): 331–47, quote on 340.

46. *Ibid.*, 345. Christopherson and Storper’s thesis has not been uncontroversial. Chief among the critics were Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, who felt the flexible specialization thesis was fatally blind to the power dynamics of image markets around the globe and the persistence of the dominant players in the Hollywood system (“Hollywood for the 21st Century: Global Competition for Critical Mass in Image Markets,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 16:1 [1992]: 1–22). Storper’s response was similarly pointed. “Aksoy and Robins’ argument completely misses this central dynamic. The big studios, in spite of their enormous market power, are compelled to live with this situation (at least until a new kind of production process is invented permitting greater differentiation with reintegration of production). All the majors lament their impotence faced with such rising costs, and much of the benefit from these rising costs is going precisely to the independent producers who make films under contract to the majors” (“Flexible Specialization in Hollywood: A Response to Aksoy and Robins,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 17:4 [1993]: 479–84, quote on 481). Whether one sees oligopolistic endurance as a mark of power (Aksoy and Robins) or powerlessness (Storper) matters less to me than the effects of that situation on the players involved.

47. Gomery, “Hollywood as Industry,” 19.

48. Jerome Christensen, “Post-War Warners: *Batman* and *JFK*; *You’ve Got Mail*,” in *America’s Corporate Art*, 280–313.

Chapter 2

1. “Curbs on CIA Actions Urged,” *Los Angeles Times* (hereafter *LAT*), June 5, 1973, A8.
2. Carl Gottlieb, *The Jaws Log* (New York: Newmarket, 2001), 61–62.

3. David Anthony Daly, *A Comparison of Exhibition and Distribution Patterns in Three Recent Feature Motion Pictures* (New York: Arno, 1980), 109–10.
4. *Ibid.*, 126.
5. *Ibid.*, 137–38.
6. John Getze, “*Jaws* Swims to Top in Ocean of Publicity: Huge Film Promotion Began before Book was Published,” *LAT*, Sept. 28, 1975, G1–2, quote on G1; Daly, *Comparison*, 130.
7. Daly, *Comparison*, 137.
8. Fredric Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture,” *Social Text* 1 (1979): 130–48, quote on 142.
9. Ted Morgan, “Sharks: . . . and Then, and Then, and Then . . . : The Making of a Best Seller,” *New York Times Magazine*, Apr. 21, 1974, 10–11, 85–91, 95–96.
10. Getze, “*Jaws* Swims to Top.”
11. Gottlieb, *The Jaws Log*, 186.
12. *Ibid.*, 90.
13. *Ibid.*, 89, 204–5, 204.
14. Getze, “*Jaws* Swims to Top,” G1.
15. Vincent Canby, “Entrapped by *Jaws* of Fear,” *New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*), June 21, 1975, 19.
16. Gottlieb, *The Jaws Log*, 52.
17. *Ibid.*, 142.
18. Thompson, *Storytelling*, 35.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Daly, *Comparison*, 109.
21. Morgan, “Sharks,” 90, 88.
22. DVD making-of featurette.
23. Antonia Quirke’s marvelous entry in the BFI Modern Classics series pulls together many of the same formal and thematic elements that I do here. What I am calling the management of control, she sees as an “aggressive purposelessness.” Quirke, *Jaws* (London: BFI, 2002), 69.

Chapter 3

1. For a summary, see Wyatt, *High Concept*. The quotation from Spielberg is on 13. The original is from J. Hoberman, “1975–1985: Ten Years That Shook the World,” *American Film* (June 1985): 36.
2. Charles Sanders Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” in *The Essential Peirce*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 1:124–41, quote on 132.
3. Wyatt, *High Concept*, 15, 65.
4. Thompson, *Storytelling*, 3; Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 26, 188–89.
5. Wyatt, *High Concept*, 106–7.
6. Cited in *ibid.*, 26.
7. *Ibid.*, 61.
8. Kevin Heffernan, *Ghoul, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953–1968* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 183.

9. *Ibid.*, 190.
10. Robert Evans, *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 121.
11. To be more specific, they were typical of the Bill Bernbach–led revolution at the beginning of the decade. By the late sixties, design styles in consumer goods had radically changed. Yet film advertising was, more or less, the last to know. See Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
12. Heffernan, *Ghoul, Gimmicks*, 61, 190.
13. Philip O. Dougherty, “Advertising: Creative Young Man at Y & R,” *NYT*, Mar. 17, 1968, F17.
14. John Dempsey, “One-Sheet Wonder,” *Variety*, July 21, 1997, 4.
15. Quoted in the anonymous profile of Frankfurt for the Art Directors Club Hall of Fame (1983), <http://adcglobal.org/hall-of-fame/steve-frankfurt/>, accessed June 4, 2014.
16. “*Rosemary’s Baby*: A Retrospective,” *Rosemary’s Baby* DVD feature.
17. Evans, *The Kid*, 173.
18. Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 722.
19. Evans, *The Kid*, 172.
20. This is a transcript of “The Film That Saved Paramount” from *The Kid Stays in the Picture* DVD extra features. Much of this material appears in slightly different form in the book version. I have opted for the film version even when it is less grammatical.
21. Peter Bart, “I Like It. I Want It. Let’s Sew It Up,” *NYT*, Aug. 7, 1966, 95.
22. David N. Eldridge, “‘Dear Owen’: The CIA, Luigi Luraschi and Hollywood, 1953,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 20:2 (2000): 149–96.
23. Bernard F. Dick, *Engulfed: The Death of Paramount Pictures and the Birth of Corporate Hollywood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 128–32.
24. Stephen Farber, “‘The Conformist’: Freud vs. Marx?,” *NYT*, Apr. 11, 1971, D15.
25. *Italian Job* DVD commentary.
26. Scott Eyman, *Ernst Lubitsch: Laughter in Paradise* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 227.
27. Ethan Mordden, *The Hollywood Studios: Their Unique Styles during the Golden Age of Movies* (New York: Fireside, 1988), 23.
28. *Italian Job* DVD commentary.
29. Evans, *The Kid*, 226.
30. The shift in Michael’s motives came relatively late to the process. In the screenplay’s second draft (a draft that still retained the complex flashback structure in the early scenes), Michael delivers an impassioned speech on the endlessness of the personal as justification for killing Sollozzo and McCluskey: “It’s all personal Sonny, every piece of dirt a man has to eat every day of his life is personal. You know where I learned that from? The Don. My old man. The Godfather. If a bolt of lightning hit a friend of his he would consider it personal. He took my enlisting in the Marines personal. He takes everything personal. That’s what makes him great” (quoted in Jon Lewis, *The Godfather* [London: BFI, 2010], 79–80). This version is strikingly close to the novel.
31. *Ibid.*, 19.