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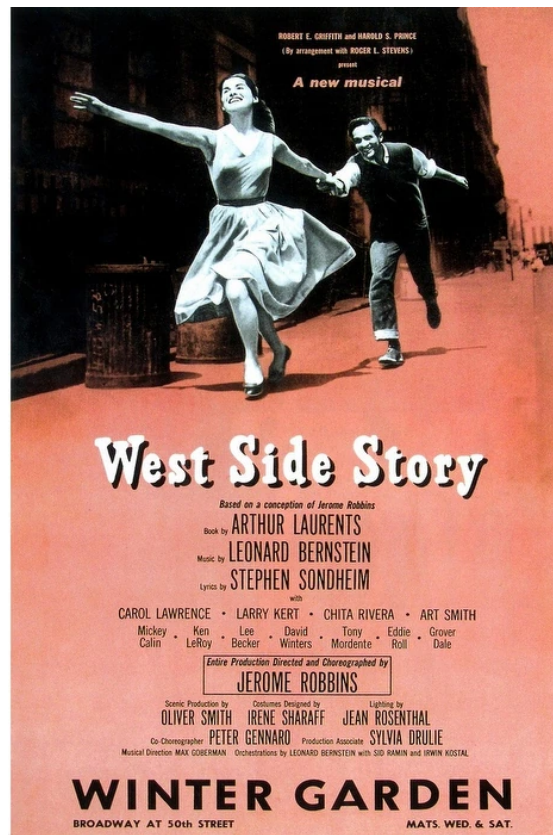
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Rhetorical Analysis of Field Artifacts

I. Non Text-Based Artifact: Original Poster for the 1957 Production of *West Side Story*



In 1957, during the Golden Age of Broadway, the musical *West Side Story* opened at the Winter Garden Theatre. This poster would be placed in windows or on streets to advertise and gain traction for the show. Due to being made over sixty years ago, there is no known **designer** credited. The **purpose** the flyer attempts to accomplish is to persuade the audience into buying a ticket to attend the musical. This **audience** was simply anyone who happened to walk by the location in which it was placed. Although targeted specifically towards theatre-enjoyers, it was

made for any bystander who may gain interest after seeing the poster. This is known because musical posters similar to these were put up across the cities in popular places with lots of foot traffic in an attempt to catch the attention of those who pass by.

The choice of **genre** of the poster is persuasion, attempting to convince people to come to see the musical. Rhetorical devices used are with the intention of advertising the show. The poster includes a lot of informative devices as well, but the motive is to aid the persuasiveness by giving the audience all the information they would need to go buy a ticket or establishing the credibility of those involved. The designer of this poster chose to utilize a mix of visual and written **modes** which employ the genre of persuasion. The main photo easily catches the audience's attention and the text gives the audience information about where they can go to see the musical if they are interested. This is done through print because in 1957 there were limited forms of **mediums** but despite that print was the most efficient choice for this poster to achieve its purpose. By printing, they were able to spread the flier to a variety of different locations and it ensured that people would at least notice it as they walked by. This technique is still used today to gain attention and promote shows.

The visual **design** of the poster has the primary colors of white, black, and pink (*West Side Story*) which contrast very well due to the different values and thus are more easily able to catch the attention of the audience by allowing for the main image to pop out against the background. Pink itself as a color represents love, one of the main themes in *West Side Story*. This is also represented by the image of Maria and Tony holding hands and running through the street (*West Side Story*). By displaying this image it shows viewers that the musical tells a love story and might pique the interest of the audience. Despite the author not being known, there is still **bias** regarding the purpose of the poster. Since the flier is meant to try and persuade the

audience to buy a ticket for the show, its design is attempting to make the musical as appealing as possible. It might be argued that the poster is misleading because although *West Side Story* is a love story, it follows as a secondary plot and the musical could be considered more of a social commentary about racial inequality and gang violence. Therefore, those who think the musical is a romantic story, as the poster makes it out to be, might be disappointed. Although, at the same time it can be argued that posters are simply meant to provide a small glimpse into the musical. Nonetheless, the poster still is biased in an attempt to gain potential interest and income as the design only portrays the musical in a positive light. As for the **design** of the written text, the two largest words are “West Side Story” and “WINTER GARDEN” (*West Side Story*) which are the title and the location respectively. Both of these are essential for the audience to know because anyone wanting to see the musical must know the name of the show and where they can buy a ticket. By making it bigger, it is noticeable even if a passerby doesn’t stop to read the fine print.

This poster also uses a variety of **rhetorical appeals** to accomplish its intent. There is a lack of **ethos** about the creator of the poster because it is not known. Although, it can be found regarding the credits of those involved in the production. By showing that creditable people participated in the development of the musical, it shows that it is well-made and worth the money to go see. For example, the choreographer Jerome Robbins is highlighted on the poster (*West Side Story*) and he was well known and reputable for his prior involvement in the choreography of *The King and I* in 1951, *Peter Pan* in 1954, and more (Vaill). Thus, people can assume given the credits and reputation of the choreographer that *West Side Story* would feature excellent dance. The designer uses **pathos** throughout the design elements of the poster previously discussed. The design shows two lovers running through the street with smiles on their faces. This appeals to the emotion of the audience as it shows a hopeful, joyful young

couple that many viewers may find themselves relating to their teen years or longing for in life. The irony falls in the fact that the poster's use of pathos is misleading, as mentioned when analyzing the biases, those who might want to watch a happy love story that is portrayed would be surprised with the actual content. The use of **logos** is not present in this poster.

II. Text-Based Artifact: The New York Times Review of *West Side Story* by Brooks Atkinson

After *West Side Story* opened in 1957, in tradition, many reviews were written and published by theatre critics to share their opinion on the show. The **author** of this specific critique was Brooks Atkinson who was noted by Henry Bial, the professor and chair at the University of Kansas for theatre and dance, to be “the reason that the *Times* review became the gold standard by which theatre productions were judged” (Bial). The designated **audience** was readers of the *New York Times* newspaper, where the review was published. Although, specifically those who would seek to read his section would be more likely a frequent theatre-goer who wants to hear about the quality of a production. The **purpose** of this review was for Atkinson to give an honest opinion on the production of *West Side Story*, discussing the quality of the musical. There was **bias** with Atkinson since he wrote about his thoughts and judgment- so there was an aspect of personal beliefs, but that is the nature of any review. Although, this can also be beneficial to the audience who might be using the critique to determine whether or not they were going to see the show. Thus, since Atkinson has no requirement to portray the show in a positive light- when he does, it is genuine and means that he truly did enjoy the show.

The **genre** of this review is informative because Atkinson is informing the audience about his personal opinions regarding the show. It can be seen to be persuasive as it could convince

readers to buy a ticket to see the show, although; it is the informative aspects that help promote the persuasiveness of the review. Being published in the *New York Times*, it utilizes a written **mode** and a printed **medium**. The newspaper would be published and spread out around the population to read. Due to the popularity of the *Times* and it being a common way to gain information, many people would purchase the paper and thus the review was widely spread around through this medium.

Atkinson uses **rhetorical appeals** in his review. There is a lack of **ethos** regarding his credibility as he does not spend time introducing himself. Although, he does use the appeal by explicitly mentioning the writer, choreographer, lighting designer, and actors by name. Atkinson states that *West Side Story* is “one of those occasions when theatre people, engrossed in an original project, are all in top form” (Atkinson). This establishes the credibility of the creative team of the musical, as he states explicitly that they are experts in their line of work. Atkinson utilizes **pathos** as he describes the musical. As a writer, Atkinson is able to find the perfect words to illustrate his feelings about *West Side Story*. For example, one sentence in his review reads: “‘West Side Story’ is an incandescent piece of work that finds odd bits of beauty amid the rubbish of the streets” (Atkinson). This appeals to the emotions of the audience as it paints a picture of being able to find love and value in a dirty urbanizing street of New York. This is more effective at tugging at the heartstrings of the reader if they have experienced or witnessed gang violence and hatred on the streets. This is constant throughout the review. The use of **logos** is present as Atkinson references Romeo and Juliet in comparison to *West Side Story*, utilizing it as a way to make a logical connection and analogy between the classic Shakespeare play and the new musical. Atkinson points out the similarities between the two rival groups and the characters who represent roles in the original play such as “Chita Rivera [as the role of Anita which is] a

part equivalent to the nurse in the Shakespeare play” (Atkinson). The purpose of using this logic to create a literal analogy is to inform readers that the play is a recreation of Romeo and Juliet and create references between the two in the review that the audience can recognize without having seen *West Side Story*.

III. Comparisons

Both the poster and the review show a depiction of the new musical *West Side Story*. However, the poster was created before the musical opened and served the purpose to advertise the show, while also informing about the location and the creative team. In contrast, the review written by Atkinson was published in response to seeing the musical and served the purpose to inform readers about his professional opinion of the show, which also could be persuasive as he depicted the musical in a good light. Although, unlike the poster, it was not required that Atkinson portray *West Side Story* positively- it was not his main purpose to persuade the audience to buy tickets. That is why the poster holds bias regarding its purpose to influence while Atkinson’s bias is found in the fact that the review is portraying his personal opinions.

Although the main genres and intention of the two artifacts are different, they both use the medium of being printed and scattered around. Although, the poster relies heavily on visual modes more than written text and many of the persuasive elements are found in the perceptible design. Although the review relied exclusively on written text and due to being published in the *New York Times* Atkinson did not have free choice of design and had to stick to formatting of the newspaper.

In their use of rhetorical appeals, both the authors/designer review and the poster do not utilize ethos to establish their credibility but rather the reputation of those involved in the

production of *West Side Story*. For example, both artifacts explicitly reference Jerome Robbins as the director and choreographer and his well-known status allows for ethos to build the credibility of the dance and direction in *West Side Story* under his supervision. This is repeated for many other influence names that are showcased in both artifacts. Similarly, they both use pathos to provide a rhetorical appeal towards the emotion of the viewers. However, in the poster this is only found in the design of the poster and none of the written text. As for the review, pathos is only seen with Atkinson's use of words. Lastly, out of the two artifacts, only Atkinson's review uses the rhetorical appeal of logos.

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