

and the marriages. When the husbands are the stars, the homes are built upon a rock that endures."

- 89 The process is described in W. Robert La Vine, *In a Glamorous Fashion: The Fabulous Years of Hollywood Costume Design* (New York: Scribner's, 1980), p. 27.
- 90 Haver, p. 191.

3 Genre

These ambiguities, redundancies, and deficiencies recall those attributed by Dr Franz Kuhn to a certain Chinese encyclopedia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*. On those remote pages it is written that animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they were mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance.

Jorge Luis Borges¹

I know Billy, and he ain't exactly predictable . . .

Pat Garrett (James Coburn) in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973)

Hollywood is a generic cinema, which is not quite the same as saying that it is a cinema of genres. Audiences, producers, and critics all discuss movies in generic terms, but what they each mean by those terms may be quite different. Critics place movies into generic categories as a way of dividing up the map of Hollywood cinema into smaller, more manageable, and relatively discrete areas. Their analyses often suggest a cartographer's concern with defining the exact location of the boundary between one genre and another. Audiences and producers use generic terms much more flexibly: for example, you might describe the movie you saw last night as a comedy, a thriller, or a science fiction movie. The local video store similarly labels its offerings by type: action, horror, musical movies. Such everyday distinctions are descriptive and, above all, functional. If you avoid horror movies, it is useful to know that *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) falls into that category when choosing a video. This use of genre as a way of differentiating among movies assumes that there is a consensus about what constitutes a Western or a musical. As Andrew Tudor puts it, genre "is what we collectively believe it to be."² We know a thriller when we see one. Indeed, we know a thriller before we see one, and to some degree we also recognize that, beyond describing the obvious content of a movie, these generic categories have a broader cultural resonance. Tudor suggests that they are embedded features of our social lives, providing narrative structures and emotional landscapes that we can use to construct ourselves socially. The horror movie, for instance, allows us to experiment

with the experience of fear, and gives us a vocabulary of images with which to describe and articulate the fearful.³

Generic categories such as these – the thriller, or the “weepee” – are identified by the emotional affect they produce in their audiences. Other descriptions, such as “Western” or “science fiction,” concern themselves primarily with content.⁴ These two methods of classification may be incompatible if the objective is to produce a single, coherent system of movie genres, but for everyday purposes, they indicate the ways in which categories intersect and overlap, confirming that the distinctions we make do not have to be either precise or mutually exclusive. Genres are flexible, subject to a constant process of change and adaptation. Because different audiences will use a genre in different ways at different times, its boundaries can never be rigidly defined, and at the same time it is susceptible to extensive subdivision. *Oklahoma!* (1955), for instance, is both a Western and a musical, and to suggest that it should be excluded from either category on the grounds that it belongs in the other would be to use generic classification in a very reductive fashion. At the same time, within the relatively small category of musical Westerns we might want to distinguish between *Oklahoma!* and *Rose Marie* (1936) on the grounds that they were both different types of musical (*Rose Marie* is an operetta) and different types of Western (*Rose Marie* is set in Canada).

Rather than occupying discrete categories, therefore, most movies use categorical elements in combination. We are familiar with generic hyphenates: musical-comedy, comedy-adventure, Western-romance. In 1979, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* described *Nocturna* as “the first soft-porn-vampire-disco-rock movie,” while in 1991 *Arachnophobia* advertised itself as a “thrillomedy”: generic mutants, perhaps, but these labels do give potential viewers quite a full description of what they might expect. Audiences, too, invent their own generic categories, both by making connections and by breaking genres down into ever smaller subsets. When the British sociologist J.P. Mayer asked readers of *Picturegoer* magazine to write about their film preferences in 1946, one 24-year-old female stenographer expressed her general enjoyment of “Love and Romance” movies, and then qualified this by adding: “Boy-meets-girl romances are always refreshing to me; triangles bore me; Bette Davis’ acting I admire, but continual self-sacrifice irritates me; and the mask-like new faces with which we have recently been inundated, with the possible exceptions of Van Johnson and Lauren Bacall, bewilder me.”⁵ Stars and story-type distinguish preferences within the general category of romance. “Boy-meets-girl” and “triangle” stories might be regarded as sub-genres of romance; these classifications intersect with those expressed in preferences for particular stars or star types, and using this particular matrix of opinions, it would be possible to predict which 1947 romances would have been likely to appeal to this viewer. More analytically, a broad generic category such as the romance can be understood as a field containing a large collection of more or less familiar elements: stars, settings, plot events, motives, and so on. For both produ-

cers developing or promoting a movie and viewers determining their response to it, the individual genre movie achieves its uniqueness through the way that it combines those elements.

The specificity of a genre arises not from its possessing features exclusive to it so much as from its particular combination of features, each of which it may share with other genres. Steve Neale suggests that it is this overlap of elements between genres that makes the definition of any genre so difficult, since a genre is not simply a combination of repetition and difference, but a process of difference in repetition.⁶ Genres may appear to be bound by systems of rules, but an individual genre movie inevitably transgresses those rules in differentiating itself from other movies in the same genre. The rules of a genre are thus not so much a body of textual conventions as a set of expectations shared by audiences and producers alike. Genre movies share family resemblances with each other, and audiences recognize and anticipate these familiar features. Generic consistency allows for the shorthand of convention and stereotype, but also for the interplay between confirmed expectation and novelty. The conventions of a genre exist alongside more general conventions of realism or verisimilitude (verisimilitude implies probability or plausibility, less a direct relation to the “real” than a suggestion of what is appropriate). Sometimes generic conventions transgress these broader regimes of social or cultural verisimilitude: when a character bursts into song while walking down a street, for instance.⁷ Douglas Pye’s account of genre as a context in which meaning is created suggests ways in which audience expectations and producers’ commercial motivations form a common currency. The generic context is, he argues, “narrow enough for recognition of the genre to take place but wide enough to allow enormous individual variation.” In any individual movie, “any one or more than one element can be brought to the foreground while others may all but disappear. Plot, character, theme, can each become central . . . characters can be fully individualized, given complex or conflicting motivation, or may be presented schematically as morality play figures, embodiments of abstract good or evil.”⁸

The notion of a genre as a set of stable categories across which movies connect, or within which fluctuation occurs, is useful for both producers and critics. But it also presents critics and empirical audience researchers with the problem of how to sort the genres into mutually exclusive categories, despite the many constant features which they share, and the many ways in which categories dissolve into one another. A 1955 audience research study, for example, originally asked open-ended questions, somewhat like Mayer’s, about preferences. This produced a “fuzziness . . . in the meaning of names given the program types by the respondents.” Substituting a predetermined list of generic categories from which respondents had to select gave rise to another problem. “If we ask, ‘What type of movie do you like best?’ the answers depend upon the way the movie types are classified and upon the respondents’ understanding of the terms we are using.”⁹

When the motion picture industry has investigated its audience's generic preference it has usually done so by asking questions about "story-types." One 1942 survey by the Motion Picture Research Bureau enumerated eighteen types:

Comedies: sophisticated comedies
slapstick comedies
family life comedies
musical comedies
"just" comedies

War pictures
Mystery, horror pictures
Historicals, biographies
Fantasies
Western pictures
Gangster and G-men pictures
Serious dramas
Love stories, romantic pictures
Socially significant pictures
Adventure, action pictures
Musicals (serious)
Child star pictures
(Wild) animal pictures

The study's author, Leo Handel, remained dissatisfied with this classification because of "the overlapping of the different types. A war picture may also be a serious drama, a historical picture, and at the same time it may contain a love story. A socially significant picture may feature a child star." He also noted that "it has been found repeatedly that it is the particular story rather than the story type that determines the interest."¹⁰

The preferences his survey recorded, however, give some indication of why any individual movie was likely to contain a generic cocktail. Women expressed strong dislikes for mystery and horror pictures, gangster and G-men movies, war movies and Westerns. Their greatest enthusiasms were for love stories, which was the category most strongly disliked by men, whose strongest preference was for war movies. Hollywood's logic was to combine the two, a logic repeatedly expressed in movie advertisements that, for instance, summarized the Korean war movie *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954) as "Tomorrow, the deadliest mission . . . tonight, the greatest love!" The advertising copy for *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949), about World War II pilots, promised "a story of twelve men as their women never knew them." It might have been addressing the reservations of women who felt that war pictures lacked "human interest" because they dwelt too extensively on their scenes of fighting at the expense of providing thorough characterizations. Even more blatantly, perhaps, the poster for *Destroyer* (1943) declared "Her only rival is his ship! . . . You feel toward a ship as you do toward a woman when you marry her . . . You take her for

better or you take her for worse . . . and you don't leave her when the going gets tough!"

The production industry classified its product according to "story-type" from an early stage. In 1905 the Kleine Optical Company listed its offerings under the headings of comic, mysterious, scenic, personalities, and three types of story: historical, dramatic, and narrative.¹¹ In the mid-1940s, in the process of passing all Hollywood's feature movies through the Production Code, the industry's trade association classified them into a heterogeneous matrix that divided its six major categories into 57 subdivisions. The largest single category was melodrama, which accounted for between a quarter and a third of all production. Westerns, comedies (which included musical comedies), and drama each made up about 20 percent of annual production, with the rest falling into a small crime category and a larger miscellaneous group. The subdivisions within drama and melodrama overlapped considerably: each group had action, comedy, social problem, romantic, war, musical, psychological, and murder-mystery as sub-categories. But Hollywood never prioritized genre as such. Like that of other fashion industries, Hollywood production was cyclical, always seeking to replicate its recent commercial successes.¹² For instance, what the Production Code Administration classified as the "Farce-Murder-Mystery" was a one-season wonder: although eleven were made in 1944, only two were made in the following season, and none the year after. Some cycles might last for several seasons, and perhaps come to form subsets within a larger generic grouping: Biblical and Roman epics in the early 1950s, for instance. Barbara Klinger has called these subsets "local genres": categories that "functioned as a recognized and influential means of classifying films" for a historically specific period.¹³

On occasion, critics have elevated what the production industry understood as a cycle to the status of a genre. The "gangster film," for instance, ~~was the product of a single season (1930-1) and, at least within the industry's operating definitions, comprised no more than 23 pictures; nonetheless, it has attracted critical attention as a genre, and most critical accounts have suggested that *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), and *Scarface* (1932) "forged a new generic tradition,"¹⁴ in which they constituted "a point of classical development."¹⁵ Tino Balio has argued that Hollywood production during the 1930s is more accurately described as following a number of production trends rather than working within genres in making its Class A pictures. Ranked in order of their production costs, duration, and box-office performance, these production groupings were: prestige pictures; musicals; woman's films; comedies; social problem pictures; and horror movies.¹⁶ Some of these terms correspond to critically established genres while others, including the most important category of the prestige picture, fall across or outside academically recognized genre boundaries. In much the same way, the contemporary industry divides movies aimed at the family market into "drop-off" and "non-drop-off" movies, depending on whether they expect~~

parents to watch the movie with their children or simply leave them at the theater.

For producers, then, generic distinction offers a layered system of classification, which they use in an opportunistic way that does not assume that one generic classification excludes others. These systems of classification are being constantly revised, so that there is always more than one system in operation at any one time, and inevitably contradictions in classification arise. Nevertheless, the advantages to producers of the principle of classifying movies by type are clear. Firstly, they offer a financial guarantee: generic movies are in a sense always pre-sold to their audiences because viewers possess an image and an experience of the genre before they actually engage any particular instance of it. Some genres, moreover, have predictably higher earning capacities than others. Until the 1960s, science fiction movies were expected to perform noticeably less well at the box-office than other movies with comparable stars and spectacle. An analysis of theatrical receipts during the 1970s suggested that had changed, and that science fiction now carried a generic premium higher than horror or comedy.¹⁷ Secondly, genre movies promise that their fictional events will unfold with a measure of certainty for the audience and that expected satisfactions will be provided. By offering this fore-knowledge, a generic cinema encourages that sense of pleasurable mastery and control that we have associated with entertainment. Andrew Britton describes his experience of watching *Hell Night* (1981) with an audience of teenage horror movie aficionados:

It became obvious at a very early stage that every spectator knew exactly what the film was going to do at every point, even down to the order in which it would dispose of its various characters, and the screening was accompanied by something in the nature of a running commentary in which each dramatic move was excitedly broadcast some minutes before it was actually made. The film's total predictability did not create boredom or disappointment. On the contrary, the predictability was clearly the main source of pleasure, and the only occasion for disappointment would have been a modulation of the formula, not a repetition of it.¹⁸

This audience demand for predictability meshes harmoniously with the economic advantages to the industry that come with the standardization of production. In this context, genre serves as a central component of Hollywood's aesthetic regime of regulated difference, and also regulates the act of consumption. Every teenager in the audience for *Hell Night* was consuming a known quantity, and Britton describes the ritualized aspects of the viewing experience as well as of the movie itself.¹⁹ Low-budget production emphasizes the formulaic and predictable, as an oft-told story about Bryan Foy illustrates. Foy ran B-feature production at Warner Bros. in the late 1930s and was known as the "keeper of the Bs." He is supposed to have kept a pile of about 20 scripts on his desk. Each time his unit

completed a movie, its script would go to the bottom of the pile. Over a period of about a year, it would gradually work its way back up to the top. Then it would be dusted off and given to the scriptwriter to rewrite: a crime story would become a Western, the sex of the leading characters would be changed, the location moved.²⁰ In due course, the new script would return to the bottom of the pile to be recycled in the same way. Whether or not the story is apocryphal (and Foy did once boast that he had made the same movie 11 times), it illustrates the cost-effectiveness of Hollywood's system of constructing familiar fictions that fulfilled their audiences' requirement that movies be "just like . . . but completely different" from each other. The more recent tendency to produce sequels (*Friday the 13th* reached part 8) is an even less disguised practice, since in many cases the sequels could more accurately be described as remakes. *Halloween's* director, John Carpenter, has acknowledged that "basically, sequels mean the same film." People, he claims "want to see the same movie again."²¹

Foy's activities were, however, as much concerned with providing novelty as predictability, balancing recognizable features with elements of difference and variation. In addition to being like other movies which have in the past satisfied the audience, a movie also needs to have certain features that set it apart from those movies, "angles" or "edges" around which to promote and distinguish the movie as something new. The higher the budget, the more likely that its recognizable elements will be provided by its stars, and the novelty by its plot and setting; lower-budget movies may rely more heavily on conventions of plot and genre, but the same principle of regulated difference applies.

Hollywood's mode of promotion is similarly organized around the play between likeness and novelty. One way of summarizing a movie, used by writers "pitching" a story idea to a producer as well as by reviewers, is to describe it as a hybrid of two other pictures. A juxtaposition such as "*Pretty Woman* meets *Out of Africa*" (proposed by a character in *The Player*, 1992) conjures up a field of reference recognizable in the moment, but probably not over a longer period of time. Generic conventions offer more durable frames of reference, but they also accommodate change: the variations in plot, characterization, or setting in each imitation inflect the audience's generic expectations by introducing new elements or transgressing old ones. Each new genre movie thus adds to the body of the genre, extending the repertoire of conventions understood by producers, exhibitors, and ticket-buyers at any given historical point. This means that, as Steve Neale puts it, "the elements and conventions of a genre are always in play rather than being, simply, re-played; and any generic corpus is always being expanded."²²

The boundaries of a genre dissolve not only to admit new movies, but also to incorporate the surrounding discourses of advertising, marketing, publicity, press and other media reviewing, reporting and gossip, and the "word-of-mouth" opinions of other viewers. These all contribute to the

expectations and knowledge of the audience prior to the commercially crucial moment when they purchase their tickets at the box-office. Including these discourses magnifies the problems in studying the movies, certainly, but an attention to the generic fluidity of Hollywood is vital if we are to progress from a concern with the individual text as an autonomous object toward the emphasis that a consumerist criticism must place on the relationships among movies as elements in a system of production and consumption.

Genre Criticism

Criticism has understood genre in Hollywood quite differently from the industry itself, ignoring most of the industry's own categories and introducing alternatives of its own. In much the same way that auteur criticism found itself drawn to "rebel" directors such as Orson Welles, an ideologically oriented genre criticism has found itself involved in what Barbara Klinger has called "the critical identification of a series of 'rebel' texts within the Hollywood empire," distinguishing certain categories of movies such as film noir, fifties melodrama, and seventies horror movies as "progressive" or "subversive."²³ But as Klinger argues, to pursue "radical" or "progressive" categories of Hollywood production is to hunt for a chimera, since the politics of a genre are by no means immutably fixed. Some Westerns, for instance, are more racist than others, but few avoid the subject of racism altogether, any more than they avoid at least some gunplay.

Genre criticism also shares with auteurism a concern to delineate Hollywood cinema by defining sub-sets within the whole, but the map of Hollywood that it seeks to draw is concerned less with identifying individual creativity than with examining the kind of world in which the horror movie or the Western or the musical could make sense.²⁴ James Twitchell has suggested that genre criticism's concern with broader cultural and historical meanings requires an approach more akin to ethnology, one in which stories are analyzed "as if no one individual telling really mattered," since the search is for what is stable and repeated in them. In such an analysis, considerations of authorship or originality are, he maintains, "quite beside the point," since the critic's main concern is with trying to understand why some images and narratives "have been crucial enough to pass along."²⁵ In practice, however, many critics have used genre as a starting point for a discussion of authorship in Hollywood: perhaps the most frequent instances are critical essays examining John Ford's contribution to the Western.²⁶

Twitchell's comments describe an underlying tendency in genre criticism to see the persistence of some genres as evidence that they represent a modern equivalent of folklore or mythology, stories in which contempo-

rary social conflicts and contradictions can be explored. Writing about horror movies, Carol Clover has suggested that the swapping of themes and motifs between movies, their use of archetypal characters and situations in sequels, remakes, and imitations, are like oral narrative. In both there is "no original, no real or right text, but only variants; a world in which, therefore, the meaning of the individual example lies outside itself."²⁷ Robert Warshaw makes a similar point about the therapeutic function of the Western's ritualized forms, which "preserve for us the pleasures of a complete and self-contained drama . . . in a time when other, more consciously serious art forms are increasingly complex, uncertain, and ill-defined."²⁸ These perceptions explain why genre criticism has drawn so heavily on what we can broadly term "structuralist" methods of analysis, and has argued that the recurrent structures of a genre distill social rather than individual meanings. In *Sixguns and Society*, for instance, Will Wright identifies the common plot patterns in a group of Westerns, and then suggests that each of the variant plots has a "mythical" significance, encapsulating a set of "concepts and attitudes implicit in the structure of American institutions." Like other structuralist approaches, Wright's analytical scheme borrows from the analysis of myth in "primitive" cultures by the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, and in part from the formalist analysis of a group of Russian fairy tales.²⁹

Generic distinction is of most value when it can be used to distinguish between types of object that share fundamental similarities. We do not, for instance, need a system of generic distinctions to establish the difference between a refrigerator and a camel.³⁰ The means to distinguish between types of object become more important as the objects concerned become more like each other — a camel and a dromedary, perhaps. Douglas Pye notes that the use of genre terms like "Western" or "thriller" focuses attention on the first part of what is in fact "a double-barrelled name, with the second term suppressed." That second term, "film" or "movie," identifies a larger generic category, the Hollywood movie, of which they are variations. Pye's point is that notwithstanding the differences between these genres, they share larger similarities, which is precisely why we need the tools of generic analysis to distinguish between them.³¹ This gives rise to the recurring paradox of generic analysis: the attention that is paid to defining the boundaries of a genre, despite the fact that generic classification of essentially similar objects can seldom be exclusive. Not only do genres contain sub-genres, but the mechanism of generic criticism supplies different sets of criteria for making distinctions, and these sets tend to be overlapping rather than mutually exclusive. But in looking for the consistencies by which to establish stable and discrete systems of classification, genre criticism seeks to establish patterns of repetition between movies, and regards these as of more importance than differences of surface detail. Thomas Sobchack, for instance, argues that just because "the various genres have changed or gone through cycles of popularity does

not alter the fact that the basic underlying coordinates of a genre are maintained time after time. . . . Any particular film of any definable group is only recognizable as part of that group if it is, in fact, an imitation of that which came before."³² This critical definition of genre also distinguishes between movies that fall into specific genres and "non-genre films,"³³ in contrast to the industry's view that all of its output fell within one category or another.

Genre criticism usually identifies up to eight genres in Hollywood feature film production. The Western, the comedy, the musical, and the war movie are four uncontested categories. Different critics will then argue the relative independent merits of at least one of the thriller, the crime or gangster movie, and list the horror movie and science fiction as either one or two additional genres. Each of these genres is usually seen as stable enough to possess a history of its own, existing outside the flow of industry history. The history of a genre is commonly described as an evolution from growth to maturity to decay, or a development from the experimental to the classical to the elaborated to the self-referential, "from straightforward storytelling to self-conscious formalism."³⁴ As both Alan Williams and Tag Gallagher have suggested in relation to the Western, which is the genre that is usually accorded the greatest stability and the most longevity, such critically imposed accounts lack an awareness of the historical specificity of the genres they describe, and do not take sufficiently into account either the range of variation within any given grouping at a particular moment, or the sensitivity of contemporary audiences to generic nuance.³⁵

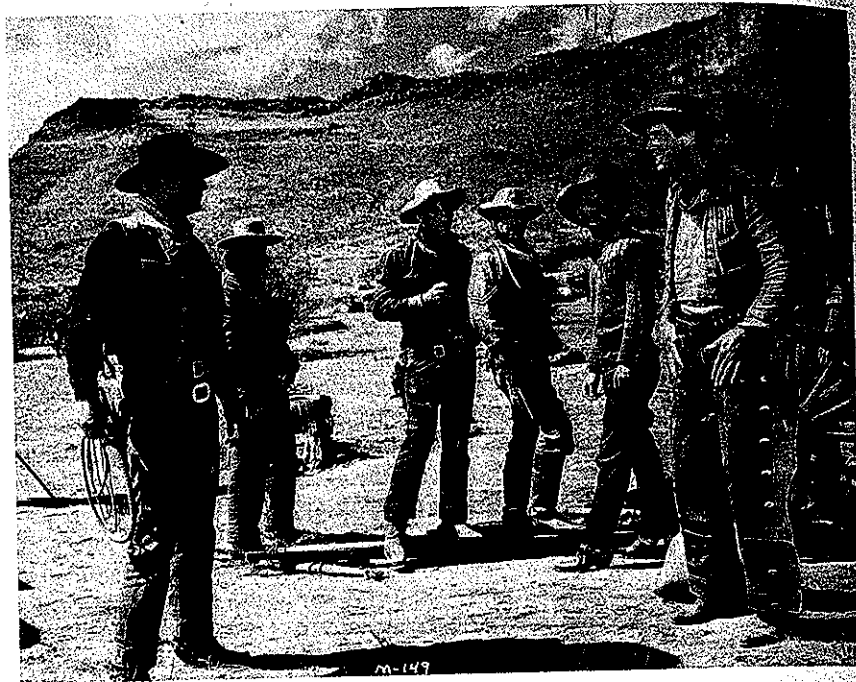
These generic histories, however, do not so much provide an accurate chronological account as delineate a body of work, a canon of texts, to be compared with each other, and when it does that genre criticism practices a form of discrimination similar to that we associated with auteurism in chapter 1. The imposition of an internal historical structure in which movies as texts influence each other actually eliminates the need to consider external questions of industry, economics, and audience in favor of a search for recurrent textual structures, whether narrative, thematic, or visual. Perhaps the clearest instance of strain between critical and industrial notions of genre concerns the group of movies produced in the decade after World War II which are usually called film noir. The term was first used by French film critics to identify "a new mood of cynicism, pessimism and darkness that had crept into American cinema"³⁶ in the postwar period. Film noir was entirely a critical classification, rather than an industry or an audience definition, something which does not invalidate it as a category, but clearly does privilege the critical recognition of common textual features (such as lighting or the characterization of the female lead) over other contexts and assumptions. The movies now usually identified as film noir probably occupied more than a dozen different categories in the Production Code Administration's classification of 57 types.

Genre Recognition

Even where a critically established genre boundary more or less coincides with industrial parameters, as is the case with the Western, genre criticism reconstructs a slightly different history from that generated by other modes of research. Most accounts of the Western regard Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903 as constituting its birth. Recent historical research, however, suggests that such an identification came only several years later, and that contemporary audiences recognized *The Great Train Robbery* as a melodramatic example of one or more of the "chase film," the "railway genre," and the "crime film." The Western had emerged by 1910, its great appeal to American producers lying in its being an identifiably American product that could not be successfully imitated by their European competitors. This both strengthened their hold on their home market and improved their sales abroad. Not until the Italian film industry began producing "spaghetti Westerns" in the 1960s were European audiences, let alone American ones, prepared to accept foreign substitutes for the real American product.³⁷

Discussions of genre recognition are commonly conducted around the Western, because the Western provides a clearer or more convincing demonstration of the case than most others. Almost every frame of a Western movie identifies it as such by the objects within it, whether these generic signifiers be setting, characters, costumes, or accoutrements. The image shown on p. 118, for instance, is dense with the Western's iconography or system of recurring visual motifs. These provide a shorthand system enabling a knowledgeable viewer to glean a great deal of information about the characters and the situation simply from the way the characters are dressed, the kind of clothes they wear, and so on, and this level of meaning provides such viewers with another means of gaining pleasure from the movie. An iconographic approach to genre allows us to establish quite precisely what we might expect to find in a Western. Along with the recognition of recurrent plot situations, the presence of familiar objects repeatedly confirms what kind of movie we are watching, and reinforces our expectations of how the story will develop.³⁸ This system of visual recognition works very well for the Western, which is atypically easy to identify. As part of the attempt to come to terms with visual discourse in cinema, early genre criticism concentrated on genres marked by their iconographic richness.

Along with their iconography, Westerns are equally easily identified by the actors who appear regularly in them (not just John Wayne or Henry Fonda, but also character actors in smaller roles, such as Slim Pickens, Andy Devine, or Jack Elam), and by their recurrent situations: gunfights, saloon brawls, the final scene in which the hero bids farewell to the woman he is leaving behind. While the representational conventions of these familiar icons and situations have changed over time, so that a silent Western



John Wayne asserts his authority in *Red River* (1948). The audience's knowledge of Western iconography tells us a great deal about what is happening in scenes like this. United Artists (courtesy Kobal)

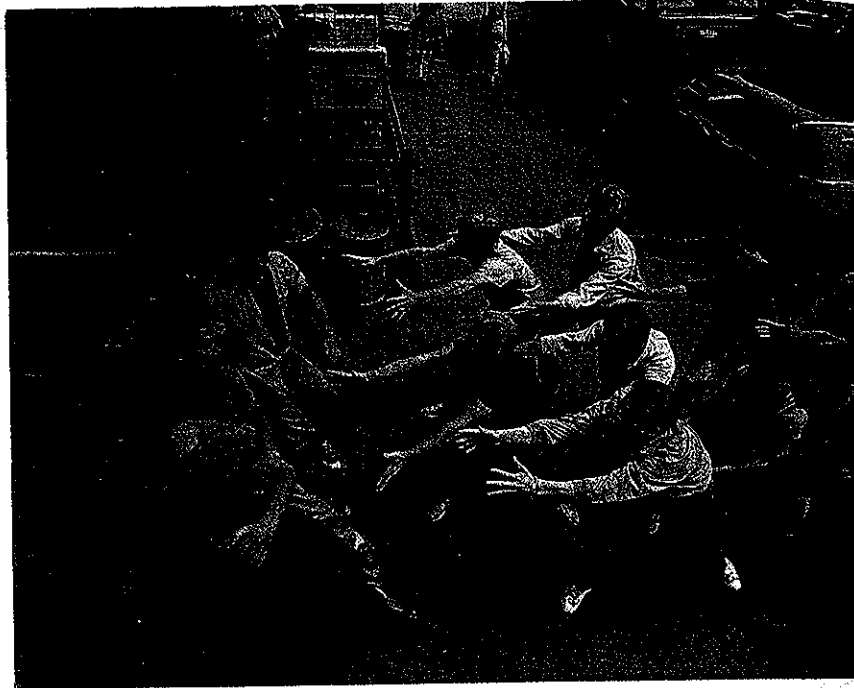
such as *The Iron Horse* (1924) looks very different from *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), the situations, iconography, and characterizations recur with sufficient consistency to override historical distinctions and establish the Western as a consistent, transhistorical phenomenon.

The Western is not, of course, the only genre to possess such features. In looking at the crime film, for instance, we could identify an iconography and produce a list of recurring situations. We might, however, find more ambiguities at the visual level. For example, we can be sure that the image opposite, of Edward G. Robinson and Humphrey Bogart about to shoot it out, must come from the climax of the movie, in which the hero confronts the principal villain. But we are unlikely to know, simply from the iconography, which of them is the hero and which the villain. Such ambiguities are an inherent part of both the recurrent plots and thematics of the crime film: this image comes from a 1936 Warner Bros. movie, *Bullets or Ballots*, in which Robinson plays a cop masquerading as a racketeer. The movie's advertising made use of Robinson's persona as a gangster, while its thematic concern, like those of many crime films, examined the relationship between law, justice, and morality.



Edward G. Robinson confronts Humphrey Bogart in *Bullets or Ballots* (1936). The lighting tells us that this is the city at night, but which of the two actors is the villain? Aquarius Picture Library

It would be more difficult to come up with a consistent iconographic scheme for the horror movie or for the musical. On the other hand, just as the lighting in the image from *Bullets or Ballots* informs us that this is a crime movie because its play with shadow and strong areas of black and white tells us that this is an image of the city at night, so we recognize the image on p. 120 as unmistakably coming from a musical because only in a musical could all these people have any convincing reason for adopting the same pose at the same time. We can recognize gestures, and speak of there being gestural codes, although it is more difficult to attach precise meanings to them than to the iconographic elements we have discussed in relation to the Western. But in Westerns, too, we find hierarchies of gestural coding: the gunfighter's narrowed eyes, the hero's purposeful stride, or the familiar choreography of the saloon brawl feature in different movies to broadly the same effect, while other gestures, such as John Wayne's walk out of frame at the end of *The Searchers* (1956), are filled with meaning by the movie, and are specific to the movie rather than being implicit within the genre. To compound the problem, not all genres have systems of gestural coding that are exclusive to them, any more than they necessarily have specific lighting or iconographic codes.



West Side Story (1961). Only in a musical could all these people gesture in the same way at the same time. Mirisch-7/United Artists. (courtesy Kobal)

Nonetheless, most genre critics argue that movies within a genre will share recurrent situations and consistent narrative patterns. For example, in a recent study of "the stalker film," a late-1970s sub-genre of the horror movie, Vera Dika outlines a specific sequence of plot functions that identifies them as a group. Their plots have "a two-part temporal structure," the first part of which presents a past event, structured as follows:

The members of a young community are guilty of a wrongful action.
The killer sees an injury, fault, or death.
The killer experiences a loss.
The killer kills the guilty members of the young community.

The second section of the movie, set in the present, also comprises a sequence of narrative events, ordered according to a strict pattern:

An event commemorates the past action.
The killer's destructive impulse is reactivated.
A seer warns the young community.
The young community takes no heed.
The killer stalks the young community.
The killer kills members of the young community.
The heroine sees the murders.
The heroine sees the killer.
The heroine does battle with the killer.
The heroine subdues the killer.
The heroine survives but is not free.³⁹

Audiences recognize genres through plot structures like these, as well as through advertising, iconography, and gestural codes. Often such indicators overlap; in the practice of a genre-based criticism this is almost bound to be the case.

Rick Altman has distinguished between what he calls the "semantic" approach to genre – a cataloguing of common traits, characters, attitudes, locations, sets, or shots – and a "syntactic" approach that defines a genre in terms of the structural relationships between those elements that carry its thematic or social meaning.⁴⁰ Just as the semantic approach has been most often applied to the iconography of the Western, the structure of the Western has frequently been the subject of syntactic analysis. In John Cawelti's analysis, for instance, the Western takes place on the frontier between savagery and civilization, where the hero confronts his uncivilized double.⁴¹ Another instance of the fruitful application of a structural approach to what Altman calls "the genre's fundamental syntax" is Jim Kitses' highly suggestive tabulation of "the shifting ideological play" between what he identifies as the genre's central opposition between civilization and the wilderness.

<i>The wilderness</i>	<i>Civilization</i>
The individual	The community
freedom	restriction
honor	institutions
self-knowledge	illusion
integrity	compromise
self-interest	social responsibility
solipsism	democracy
nature	culture
purity	corruption
experience	knowledge
empiricism	legalism
pragmatism	idealism
brutalization	refinement
savagery	humanity

The west	The east
America	Europe
the frontier	America
equality	class
agrarianism	industrialism
tradition	change
the past	the future ⁴²

Westerns contrast the west with the east, nature with culture, the individual with the community, but in describing these oppositions, the positive term in each of Kites' pairings is sometimes in the wilderness and sometimes in civilization. This tabulation indicates that comparable situations and characters – semantic units, in Altman's terms – can be inflected with a wide variety of thematic significances, depending upon which of these oppositions is given most weight. Kites' table clearly and concisely illustrates the potential thematic and ideological richness of a genre form.

A criticism that combines the various semantic and syntactic approaches to genre study that we have discussed can also look for the persistence of particular features in a genre, making it possible to trace fluctuations in their occurrence over time. This provides a means by which genre movies can be interpreted as rich sources of historical evidence. Film noir, for instance, could be examined as a fluctuation in the more persistent genre of the crime film, and its specific characteristics could be related to the historical circumstances of the period 1945–55. Similarly, an account of the Western might look at the ways in which the revisions of its conventions address the changing historical needs of its audience. Taking American history as its subject matter, the Western provides an opportunity to trace the changing construction of that history by the present. In its discussion of men taming a wilderness and transforming it into a garden, the Western has taken to itself a central aspect of American mythology: the civilizing spirit of American individualism. It has also become an arena in which Americans examine the relationship between individuals and society, and the tension between individual and community priorities. Along with iconographic conventions, the emphases within that ideological tension have shifted over time. Brian Henderson, for instance, has suggested that

The emotional impact of *The Searchers* can hardly come from the issue of the kinship status and marriageability of an Indian in white society in 1956. . . . It becomes explicable only if we substitute black for red and read a film about red–white relations in 1868–1873 as a film about black–white relations in 1956.⁴³

Henderson's is a common critical strategy, in part designed to elevate the text's status by way of demonstrating its cultural significance. By such a process critics can legitimize their own activity, finding ways to demonstrate that the texts they study are, when viewed from the "right" perspec-

tive, far more important than the familiar and predictable objects they might on the surface appear.

Genres, then, can be thought of as fields inhabited by thematic, iconographic, narrative, and political propensities, as instances and instruments of Hollywood's system of regulated difference. Their emphasis shifts over time, and from individual movie to movie. They are also subject to a range of industrial, aesthetic, cultural, and technical factors. At any time, an individual movie may be seen as crystallizing the forms and meanings of the genre as a whole – *My Darling Clementine* (1946), for instance, is sometimes cast in this role for the Western – but historical shifts in ideological and stylistic fashion make it difficult to speak for long about any single movie as definitive of its genre. One way of appreciating Hollywood's complex reflection of, and influence on, American culture is by looking at how such everyday phenomena as the family, romance, heroism, femininity, or childhood have been represented in different genres at different times. Generic features make it possible for us to account for the connections we make between one movie and another, not so much in terms of their similarities, or their resemblance to the imaginary composite which "typifies" a particular category, but in terms of the differences between them, and the extent to which they play with existing conventions.

The Empire of Genres: *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*

The Westerner could not fulfill himself if the moment did not finally come when he can shoot his enemy down. But because that moment is so thoroughly the expression of his being, it must be kept pure. . . . The Westerner is the last gentleman, and the movies which over and over again tell his story are probably the last art form in which the concept of honor retains its strength. . . . Really, it is not violence at all which is the "point" of the Western movie, but a certain image of man, a style, which expresses itself most clearly in violence. Watch a child with his toy guns and you will see: what most interests him is not (as we so much fear) the fantasy of hurting others, but to work out how a man might look when he shoots or is shot. A hero is one who looks like a hero.

Robert Warshaw⁴⁴

Much that has been written about the Western film has been written . . . by men who cherish the fantasies embodied in these films and who, therefore, resent any effort at dispelling those fantasies.

Jon Tuska⁴⁵

The Western exhibits a number of different kinds of what Andrew Tudor has called "genre imperialism." One recent survey of the genre suggests that between 1926 and 1967, Westerns comprised a quarter of all

Hollywood's output, and on the basis of that statistic claims that it is not only the largest but also the most significant of Hollywood's genres.⁴⁶ Critic Robert Ray has argued that the genre is in a sense even larger than that, because "many of Classic Hollywood's genre movies" are best understood as "thinly camouflaged Westerns," concerned with the conflict between individualism and community. For Ray, the ability to reconcile this irreconcilable opposition makes the Western the thematic paradigm for Hollywood's commitment to "the avoidance of choice."⁴⁷ Douglas Pye argues for the centrality of the Western to genre analysis in similar terms. He suggests that its thematic richness comes from "the peculiar impurity of its inheritance," by which the archetypal imagery of romantic narrative could be blended with American history.⁴⁸ The genre imperialism exhibited here is similar to that of critics such as Will Wright, who see the persistence of genre, and of the Western in particular, as evidence that its formulae operate as particularly effective agencies for the circulation of cultural as well as purely cinematic meaning.

Central to the operation of any genre movie, including the Western, is the cumulative expectation and knowledge of the audience. Over time, this frame of reference grows ever more dense and extensive, although we should bear in mind that viewers forget as well as remember, and that the whole field of generic knowledge is unlikely to be available to any given audience, even of aficionados.⁴⁹ Loss of knowledge is particularly important in this case as Hollywood's production of Westerns declined precipitously after 1970, with barely a handful being made during the 1980s. Hollywood's apparent abandonment of what had been its most common genre raised questions about the critical arguments that claimed that the Western was central to the expression of an American mythology. Had the mythology changed, so that the Western was no longer relevant? Or had the mythology migrated elsewhere, to other genres, and if so, had it changed its meaning in the process? Or had Hollywood somehow stopped articulating American mythology? Whatever set of circumstances had brought about the change, it shows that even so self-generating and transhistorical a genre as the Western is subject to historical forces.

Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid is a Western made at the end of the line of continuous production in 1973, directed by one of the genre's last celebrated auteurs, Sam Peckinpah. As a retelling of one of the genre's most oft-told tales, it is a particularly good example of the ways in which a generic movie can set in play a complex dynamic of confirmation and revision of audience expectations. Its own case is given an added complexity by the fact that two quite distinct versions of the movie exist: one initially released by MGM in 1973 and a somewhat longer version, released for the first time in 1989, which was claimed to be much closer to the director's preferred final cut. Although auteurist criticism would certainly regard the latter as more "original," the existence of multiple versions can instead be taken as evidence of conflicting intentions among producers. In any case, multiple variants of movies have always been part of

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Hollywood's production logic and the idea of an "original" is in significant contradiction to the norms of American film industry practice.⁵⁰

The case of *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* is, therefore, only unusual in the amount of attention paid to the variations, a situation that came about because of the claims made for Peckinpah as an author whose "work" had been vandalized by the studio.⁵¹ One critic went so far as to suggest that the "arbitrary and piecemeal" recut was ordered because the head of the studio, James T. Aubrey, "hated Peckinpah, and was bent on sabotaging his work."⁵² A more probable motivation is that the studio executives thought Peckinpah's cut too long and uncommercial; their one addition was to elongate the scene of Sheriff Baker's (Slim Pickens) death, so that Bob Dylan's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" could be played over it. Although this scene has been described as being "as moving as anything in Peckinpah's work,"⁵³ its presence in the movie owes more to the commercial considerations of emphasizing Dylan's contribution to the movie as an additional appeal to the audience. Because Peckinpah's argument with MGM was conducted so publicly, at least part of the audience at the time of the movie's release was aware of the major differences between the version they saw and Peckinpah's "original." The most important of these differences was the omission, in the MGM version, of a framing device, set in 1909, in which Garrett is murdered by the same people who employed him as sheriff to hunt down Billy. The presence or absence of this frame, which establishes the events of the movie as a flashback, clearly does affect how the movie is interpreted. But how it affects the interpretation of the release version for a viewer who knew that such a sequence was "originally" part of the movie is a different matter. This is an entirely cinematic equivalent of the more frequent situation when a viewer watches a Hollywood adaptation of a novel shorn of its more explicit elements to meet censorship requirements.

Like most Westerns, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* is easily identifiable in terms of its setting and subject-matter. With what could hardly be a less oblique title, it establishes itself as a retelling of a familiar episode from Western history, the pursuit and killing of William Bonney by Pat Garrett. Expectations raised by the title are confirmed in the image track: a moving camera rapidly establishes the familiar Western iconography of landscape, architecture, costumes, and props, giving us some sense of certainty as to how the story will unfold. At the same time, we are alerted to stylistic emphases that give new inflections to these familiar forms. The most forceful of these are the shots of the live chickens being used by Billy and his fellow outlaws for target practice. We see their destruction in extreme close-up, and this encounter with a "realism" in the presentation of violence is likely to influence our attitudes to the rest of the movie. As the audience of "Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*" (as the movie was advertised), we may be aware of the director's reputation for the explicit representation of violence, often justified as a revision of Western conventions in the name of an enhanced realism. The use of setting and

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costume, too, indicates that the movie is making claims to historical verisimilitude: this is, it implies, the "true" story of Billy the Kid. The title, "Old Fort Sumner, New Mexico, 1881," locates the story with a geographical and period precision that is typical of its revisionism.⁵⁴ Both the expansiveness and timelessness of the "mythic" West will be replaced with an increasing sense of "historical" claustrophobia; here both time and space are running out. Mythical struggles give way to crudely political and economic ones. In his first encounter with Billy, Garrett announces in very simple terms the motivation of the action that will follow: "the electorate want you gone, Billy." Their subsequent exchange summarizes the shifting values that they represent and that will be contested through the story. "How does it feel," asks Billy, to have "sold out" to the Santa Fe Ring? "It feels like times have changed," Garrett replies. "Times maybe, but not me," is Billy's response.

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So enduring is this opposition that some critics have suggested that it explains the persistence of the genre itself, because it answers a specifically American cultural anxiety about the need to preserve both sets of ideals, and stages the dramatic conflict between them at the historical moment when America was formed as a modern nation. In Classical Westerns like *Stagecoach* (1939) and *My Darling Clementine*, the official hero and the outlaw hero overcome their differences in a larger battle to protect civilization from a greater savagery. *ny* In revisionist Westerns that greater savagery threat no longer exists, and the value systems of sheriff and outlaw are placed in what seems to the characters as an inevitable opposition in which one must give way to the other. So in *Stagecoach*, the sheriff (George Bancroft) acquiesces in the outlaw's escape from "the blessings of civilization"; outlaw hero Doc Holliday (Victor Mature) is redeemed by his death at the end of *My Darling Clementine*. By contrast, in a revisionist Western such as *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962, and, like *Stagecoach* and *My Darling Clementine*, directed by John Ford) the death of the individualist hero (John Wayne) is greeted with melancholy regret and a strongly nostalgic awareness of the price paid for the democratic populism (perfectly embodied by James Stewart) that replaces him. In *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, the values of the West will be replaced only by something more meager as civilization is associated not with community, but with the corruption and corporate self-interest of the Santa Fe Ring who hire Garrett. We should, however, be wary of suggesting too firmly that the generic evolution of the Western has seen "the blessings of civilization" subjected to increasingly hostile scrutiny. Tag Gallagher has pointed out how tenuous and selective such evolutionary arguments tend to be, and in counterpoint has suggested that because of changes in the conventions of representation across American culture as a whole, "the films of the sixties

had to work harder, had to be more strident and dissonant, in order to try to express the same notions as earlier films." In support of his argument that Western heroes changed less in the 1960s than other critics have suggested, he offers an unconventional interpretation of Henry Fonda's performance as Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine* that might also describe James Coburn's performance as Garrett:

charm hides a self-righteous prig, and a marshal's badge and noble sentiments hide a "near-psychotic lust for violent revenge" even from Earp himself, but this upstanding Wyatt is all the more ambivalently complex a character for the sublimation of his hypocrisy and violence. . . . Wyatt clearly loves lording it over people without using his gun . . . there is no recognition in the film of Wyatt as "hero of the community": Ford cuts directly from the battle's last death to Wyatt's solitary farewell to Clementine outside of town. Nor is there any "reward" of a wedding.⁵⁶

How convincing Gallagher's analysis would have been if the later movies did not exist to demonstrate the possibility of such interpretations is a moot point. For the moment, we might simply settle on the recognition that critics and audiences as well as filmmakers are capable of revisionist interpretations of the Classical.

For André Bazin, the Western had dramatized an epic and very public battle between "the forces of evil" and the "knights of the true cause." He saw the genre addressing basic human realities through the mythologization of a particular phase of American history.⁵⁷ The Western is an epic that works determinedly toward its final chapter; its antagonists will eventually meet to dramatize this trial of strength through the spectacle of a shootout in the main street. The morality play character of the shootout exemplifies perhaps best of all what Robert Warshow saw as the moral "openness" of the Western, "giving to the figure of the Westerner an apparent moral clarity which corresponds to the clarity of his physical image against his bare landscape."⁵⁸ But with moral terms more relative and positions more compromised, the Western universe depicted in Peckinpah's movie operates on an altogether cloudier and more domestic level; the bulk of the movie is presented as a private drama between former friends. Garrett is obsessively unwilling even to discuss the rights and wrongs of his actions, let alone to seek their ratification through their display in the public spectacle of the shootout. As the shared value-system of a Western "code" disintegrates, the traditional roles of sheriff and outlaw become confused and compromised.

Garrett is no longer the archetypal independent hero described by Warshow, reluctantly acting on behalf of the community to preserve its fragile civilization from the forces seeking to destroy it. He is rather the paid employee of a corporate interest group, hired for a dangerous job and expendable. From the outside he retains something of the character attributed to the Westerner as "last gentleman" by Warshow, and certainly

displays the moral ambiguity which darkens his image and saves him from absurdity," but is no longer able to "defend the purity of his own image." He is a long way from the godlike figures wielding near-magical powers inherited by the Classical Western from American folklore and romantic narrative. Garrett no longer possesses the conviction of earlier lawmen, for all his maintenance of their physical decorum. Nor does he enjoy the support of the community itself. His silences, so long a trait of the Western sheriff, now bespeak not a moral status so much as the impossibility of his claiming any authority for what he does. As he arrives at a fuller understanding of the contradictions in which he is caught, stranded between a past he has rejected and a future he can be no part of, Garrett becomes increasingly introspective. These contradictions are not resolved with the death of Billy. When Garrett rides out of Fort Sumner, a small child runs into the frame to throw stones at him. The action ironically echoes the ending of *Shane* (1953), in which Joey (Brandon de Wilde) runs after the hero he idolizes (Alan Ladd), calling for him to come back.

Billy (Kris Kristofferson) is also a revised character, no longer embodying the primitivism and savagery that must be overcome by the force of law. Instead, the outlaw now represents the positive values that "lawful" society is itself destroying. It is the landowner Chisum's men who kill and torture for pleasure, and the character whose behavior comes closest to the psychopathic is not any of the outlaws but rather Ollinger (R.G.



Billy (Kris Kristofferson) and Garrett (James Coburn) play poker, watched by Ollinger (R.G. Armstrong), in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973). Aquarius Picture Library

Armstrong), the fundamentalist sheriff given custody of Billy in Lincoln. However, the movie avoids any sentimentalization of the outlaw as a doomed figure. Billy may be an anachronism, but he is scarcely a victim. He demonstrates a reluctance in the use of violence that certainly matches that of the traditional Western hero, but he can also act violently, and outside the "code," when circumstances require it, shooting Alamoosa Bill (Jack Elam) before the count in their duel is complete. A number of formal aspects of the movie echo these shifts in value and characterization. Barbed wire fences cut suggestively across a number of Classical Western compositions. The land is presented less as a symbolic scene for the realization of heroic potential than as a property value from which Billy, like everyone else, is to be excluded. As the land is closed, the protagonists are forced more than is usual into domestic spaces, where detail is emphasized at the expense of physical action. Outlaws wear spectacles, trading posts stock "fine quality tomatoes" in "airtight," colors are muted. Spaces are deprived of their mythic functions: any space can now become the scene of the violence once confined to the prairie and the main street. Tracked not to the summit of a mountain, but to a domestic interior, Billy is finally shot dead in the kitchen of an aging cowboy.

If the movie dissents from the Western's tendency to endorse the role of capitalism in the settlement of the West, its revision of the genre's conventional representation of women appears much less radical. Traditionally, the genre gives women little significant presence or responsibility. Where they do figure in the Western it is usually to signify value systems that the hero is to endorse or ultimately refuse (the school marm, the saloon girl). As director Budd Boetticher notoriously observed: "What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance."⁵⁹ Western men can be redeemed by eastern women, but western women are seldom offered the same opportunity. Doc Holliday's (Victor Mature) descent in *My Darling Clementine* is evidenced by his involvement with Chihuahua (Linda Darnell), whose quasi-Mexican name and overt profession as a saloon entertainer ensure that their relationship is doomed, and that she, like him, will meet her conventionally inevitable end. Traces of those roles are evident in *Pat Garrett*. In stark contrast to "baroque" 1950s Westerns such as *Johnny Guitar* (1954), which have been reappropriated by feminist criticism because they place women in narratively decisive roles, none of the central characters in *Pat Garrett* is a woman, or does anything for women or because of women. Sheriff Baker's wife (Katy Jurado) briefly occupies a traditional male role, taking part in a gun battle, but even as objects of display the movie's female characters are peripheral. The movie's credits include a reference to Aurora Clavell in the role of Garrett's wife, but she makes no appearance in the movie.⁶⁰ The spectacle of the brothel scene is considerably elaborated in "Peckinpah's" version, with Garrett attended to by five women. The

scene's one plot point, however, in which Garrett beats up one of the prostitutes to find out where Billy is, is missing from this version. That information is provided by Poe (John Beck), the agent of the Ring who attaches himself to Garrett, and who kills him 28 years later.⁶¹

The movie's representation of masculinity perhaps suggests a more determined reconstruction of the genre, and there are rewards for a criticism sensitive to the ways in which homoerotic elements inform the movie. Relationships between men occupy the center of a story that revolves, as Terence Butler has put it, around "the enforcement of law versus the fraternal loyalty of male friendship." It is the male rather than the female body that is displayed and celebrated. Billy luxuriates in his already mythical status, and his body is repeatedly frozen in static postures in the image. Garrett, by contrast, is consistently framed in motion. Depicted from the outset as a fastidious dresser, he grows increasingly obsessed with his own image, aware that he will enter myth as Billy's executioner. Their shared narcissism revises Robert Warshaw's observation that it is not violence which is the "point" of the Western so much as "a certain image of man, a style, which expresses itself most clearly in violence." Warshaw's Westerner lives in a world of restrained violence: "There is little cruelty in Western movies and little sentimentality; our eyes are not focussed on the sufferings of the defeated but on the deportment of the hero."⁶² Here violence is both less restrained and less orderly in its occurrence. The tidy rituals of the shootout are replaced by a series of haphazard ambushes, the outcomes of which are resolved not by skill but by sheer firepower. Lawmen and outlaws carry rifles or shotguns, not sixshooters. With the significant exception of the killing of Billy himself, most deaths are bloody. Peckinpah shows bodies cut to pieces in hails of rifle shot, or peppered by shotguns loaded with coins. Only the final gunplay reiterates the traditional stylization of the Western death, but the movie concludes not with a gunfight but with an execution, or, as some commentators have seen it, with the "crucifixion" that resolves the majority of Peckinpah's Westerns. The brutalization of the body that accompanies the death of male characters throughout much of Peckinpah's work is conspicuously absent in the treatment of the death of Billy, something for which Terence Butler offers a final (and controversial) explanation: "The sexual imagery of Billy's killing underlines his female dependence on Garrett in his friendship towards him. . . . Garrett seeks to hide from himself the manner in which an oppressive patriarchy has defiled him. Billy, on the other hand, finally openly assumes a female role and thus acknowledges the working of that tyranny."⁶³

Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid is a complex object, both commercially and aesthetically. Our perception of its complexities depends on our awareness of the conventions that are being displaced or revised. As a revisionist Western, the movie is particularly self-conscious about the self-referentiality that is an implicit part of genre cinema, and therefore of Hollywood. This self-consciousness is most noticeable in the performances

of Coburn and Kristofferson. Their dialogue, their delivery, and even the way they move convey a foreknowledge both of what will happen in the plot, and of the narrative tradition that has predestined those events. Pat, Billy, and the audience all understand the inevitability of Billy's death; little in the way of suspense is therefore sought or achieved. The wider structures of the movie also incline toward such self-consciousness. Garrett rather than Billy stands at the center of the story, concentrating our interest on the figure who will make Billy a myth by finally destroying him as a man. Peckinpah's movie thus emerges not simply as an attempt to demythologize the genre or move it toward a greater realism, but also as an attempt to revise mythology in the light of contemporary circumstances. As such it offers a particularly bleak account of American experience in the 1970s.

As the quotations from Robert Warshaw suggest, the genre's conventional narrative is essentially one of ideological self-confidence. Defeat in Vietnam, the erosion of faith in domestic politics after Watergate, the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, and the long-term decline of the American economy all questioned the self-confidence at the core of the expansionist ideology represented in the Classical Western. The revisionism of *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* is an instance of the questioning of that self-confidence, but its self-consciousness also indicates the extent to which it, and other similar movies made in the same period, exposed the conventions by which the genre had operated. This excessive self-consciousness also contributed to the subsequent decline of the Western, as it became impossible to conceal the genre's conventions or render them transparent again. Criticism may well have played a part here, too. A writer, director, or producer working in the 1980s would have had to be extraordinarily cine-illiterate not to know that the Western is where Hollywood discusses American history and stages conflicts between alternative versions of heroism. The few Westerns made between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s all displayed an extreme generic self-consciousness, an awareness of their status within a generic tradition that some critics and some of its practitioners have chosen to elevate to the status of art.

At the same time, with so few Westerns made, audiences have lost a familiarity with their generic conventions. Movies can make fewer assumptions about their viewers' competence in the genre, and thus find themselves handicapped both by their self-consciousness and by the need to elaborate the genre's first principles for a new audience. It is perhaps hardly surprising that the few Westerns made in the 1980s were all very long movies - *Heaven's Gate* (1980) ran for 219 minutes in its original version. It is also an indication of the extent to which the Western has ceased to function fluently as a vehicle for American culture to tell itself the stories it needs to hear. Instead, the genre has acquired sufficient cultural respectability for Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992) to become the first Western to win the Oscar for Best Picture since *Cimarron* in 1931. Contemporary Westerns are one-sided, serious affairs. Their heroes are outlaws on

their way to defeat at the hands of a villainous corporate power. Instead of mythologizing individualism as a civilizing force through images of white men transforming a wilderness into a garden, in *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1991) civilization's malaise is registered through a celebration of the "natural" nobility of its savage opposite, the Indian. The play (in both senses) has gone out of the genre, and migrated, in the main, to science fiction and horror movies. But the argument that *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) and *Aliens* (1986) are disguised Westerns is perhaps rooted too much in nostalgia for the apparently lost certainties of the Western's particular account of melodramatic male action. More importantly, representing the central opposition in the Western's narrative between civilization and savagery in traditional generic terms has become near-impossible given contemporary evaluations of the relation between nature and culture: the Indian as murdering, raping, ignoble savage is no longer a marketable commodity. Thus the Western's conventional thematics are severely restricted. Narratives dealing with civilization's conflict with the savage Other have migrated to other generic fields, where women can be given more to do, and where, since the alien Other is purely a creature of the imagination, no one will complain about cultural distortion, or argue that aliens are peaceful hunter-gatherers, leading a sustainable existence in a stable eco-system. In space, no one can hear you scream about misrepresentation.⁶⁴

Genre and Gender

Although mass media can scarcely be characterized as in any sense less self-conscious or analytic than criticism and theory about them, the fact that the discourse *within* horror cinema and the discourse *about* it diverge on some crucial points would seem to suggest that the folks who make horror movies and the folks who write about them are, if not hearing different drummers, then reading different passages of Freud.

Carol J. Clover⁶⁵

Given that the Hollywood genre about which most criticism has been written has little place for women, it is not surprising that genre criticism can hardly be described as gender neutral. Looking at the list of critically recognized genres reveals an extreme gender imbalance that perhaps reflects the simple fact that most genre critics have been men. Implicit in the preferences of much genre criticism is a valorization of patriarchal and masculine concerns, by which certain genres have been accorded an increased cultural status through a recognition of their larger thematic concerns, while the status of other genres in this critical hierarchy is demonstrated by their hardly being named or described.

In the generic mapping of Hollywood, the quantitatively overwhelming omission is that of romance, which features as the principal or secondary

plot in 90 percent of Hollywood's output. Meanwhile, missing from our list on p. 116 is that category often identified as "melodrama," which in contemporary critical discourse usually refers to stories of family trauma, pathos, and heightened emotionalism. From the mid-1970s the term was often used as an alternative generic label for "the woman's film." The designation of a category of Hollywood movies for women was a more or less deliberate attempt to redress the gender imbalance within the genre categories then receiving critical attention. The two terms have since become fixed in their meaning. Melodrama has become synonymous with a group of movies preoccupied with the domestic, the sentimental, and heightened emotions: women's films, "weepies," soap operas, family and maternal melodramas. In much the same way as early genre criticism of the Western identified John Ford's *Stagecoach* as "the ideal example of the maturity of a style brought to classic perfection,"⁶⁶ the "ideal type" of melodrama was represented by a group of movies directed by Douglas Sirk in the 1950s, such as *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), in which wealthy widow Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) scandalizes the New England town of Stoningham by having an affair with her gardener, Ron Kirby (Rock Hudson). Along with this linkage has gone a critical assumption that the group of movies identified were regarded as "Hollywood's lowliest form, the woman's weepie."⁶⁷

However, as Christine Gledhill has pointed out, this dismissive and pejorative use both of melodrama and of the "woman's film" reflected the preferences of a predominantly male group of critics, rather than the practices of the industry. Jackie Byars suggests that in a way very similar to the creation of film noir as a category, "a genre was born . . . the theoretical genre of 'melodrama' was now formed in the mold of a group of Hollywood family melodramas produced by a few talented directors obsessed with stylistic manipulation."⁶⁸ Byars goes on to observe that constructing melodrama in these terms "obscured the existence of other melodramatic genres, the melodramatic aspects of other genres like the Western, the historical variations within individual melodramatic genres, and the relationships between kinds of melodramatic genres." As she suggests, "melodrama" would more helpfully describe one of Hollywood's fundamental aesthetic strategies, the defining features of which would include a presentation of sensational events, a moral didacticism, and a determined attempt to provoke a sequence of emotional responses in the audience.

Melodrama was a term of product classification used within the industry, and its trade meaning seems to have been almost diametrically opposite to that to which criticism has put it. "Ask the next person you meet casually how he defines a melodramatic story," wrote a critic in 1906, "and he will probably tell you that it is a hodge-podge of extravagant adventures, full of blood and thunder, clashing swords and hair's-breadth escapes."⁶⁹ From then until at least 1960, the trade's understanding of "melodrama" continued to embrace this generic sense, deriving from the

tradition of spectacular stage melodrama, full of "trap doors, bridges to be blown up, walls to be scaled, instruments of torture for the persecuted heroines," and the like.⁷⁰ The trade press, for instance, described *White Heat* (1950), *Body and Soul* (1947), and *Psycho* (1960) as melodramas, not *Stella Dallas* (1937), *Back Street* (1931 and 1941), or *Imitation of Life* (1934 and 1959). As far as the industry was concerned, James Cagney, not Joan Crawford, made melodramas, and directors of action movies and thrillers such as Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, Raoul Walsh, and Samuel Fuller were identified in the trade press as masters of melodrama.⁷¹ In the 1940s the industry labeled about a third of its product as melodrama, and it clearly expected these pictures to appeal predominantly to the men in the audience.⁷²

Within the trade's usage, "melodrama" was certainly not an elevated term. The "woman's film," on the other hand, had a relatively prestigious status in Classical Hollywood. Most woman's films, which would be identified as "melodramas" by the conventions of recent criticism, were placed by the industry in its other general category, of "drama." As an industry term, "woman's film" embraced a range of sub-groupings that included romantic dramas, "fallen women" films, Cinderella romances, and working-girl movies.⁷³ Given that Classical Hollywood assumed that the majority of its audience was female, it is hardly surprising that these "dramas" were generally of higher budget and status than the "melodramas" designed with a more masculine appeal.⁷⁴ Far from being a despised or denigrated production category, the "woman's film" was one of Hollywood's "quality" products.

This discrepancy between the language of the trade and that used by critics demonstrates with particular poignancy the difficulties in establishing an appropriate generic terminology. Although it would be possible to argue that much genre criticism, like much auteur criticism, has avoided Hollywood's history rather than explained it, that criticism has nevertheless provided many important insights into Hollywood as a cultural institution. The critical classification of melodrama also provides a useful example of the way in which, since the 1960s, critical assumptions have had a bearing on how post-Classical Hollywood has understood itself. The term has largely dropped out of currency within the trade, which has come to accept the derogatory overtones that critics incorrectly argued that it always possessed. When "melodrama" is used now to describe a movie like *The Prince of Tides* (1991), it implies something similar to its now established critical meaning, equating it with the woman's film.⁷⁵

That point is at the center of our second reason for considering the case of melodrama. Because criticism has constructed histories for Hollywood – generic and authorial histories, for instance – that are in important respects different from Hollywood's economic history, it is at times necessary to consider these histories in tandem. It is not a simple matter of saying that one is right and the other wrong; histories are seldom that absolute. Feminist criticism of the 1970s and 1980s not surprisingly recognized

Classical Hollywood cinema's endorsement of patriarchal values. But one of the strategies it developed to both analyze and resist that endorsement, the creation of the "woman's film" as a genre, addressed the endorsement of patriarchal values in existing criticism at least as much as it addressed that endorsement in the practices of Hollywood itself. It both contributed to and hindered the analysis of Hollywood's representation of women. The valuable work done as part of that strategy cannot be ignored, but the discrepancies between the history produced by that strategy and other histories of Hollywood must be noted. In his essay, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," Andreas Huyssen explores the extent to which popular culture has been accorded pejorative feminine characteristics as a means of discrediting it from critical attention. From the turn of the century, Huyssen argues, political, psychological, and aesthetic discourses have "consistently and obsessively" gendered "mass culture and the masses as feminine, while high culture, whether traditional or modern, clearly remains the privileged realm of male activities." The gender imbalance of genre analysis represents an attempt on the part of critics, almost exclusively white and male, to identify some aspects of popular culture as part of that "real, authentic culture" which the aesthetics of Modernism have seen as "the prerogative of men."⁷⁶ In this respect, critical practice has differed significantly from Hollywood's own bluntly commercial project. For however it may have represented women, Hollywood did not exclude them either from its movies or from the audience it sought to attract.

Recognizing these historical circumstances may allow criticism to explore the contradictions of Hollywood genres and its generic hybrids, rather than attempt to resolve those contradictions in the defence of an individual movie's internal coherence. When, in the early 1970s, critics first made the case for studying the domestic melodramas directed by Douglas Sirk, their arguments emphasized Sirk's subversive purposes in offering "a devastating indictment of the entire society's world view."⁷⁷ For once, a Hollywood director responded positively to the needs of critics to find ideologically acceptable hidden meanings. The posters for *Written on the Wind* (1956) had described it as the story of a Texas oil family's "ugly secret that thrust their private lives into public view!", but Sirk called it "a piece of social criticism, of the rich and the spoiled and of the American family." Declaring that "irony doesn't go down well with the American public,"⁷⁸ he compared the ironic happy endings of his movies to the Athenian plays of Euripides:

There, in Athens, you feel an audience that is just as happy-go-lucky as the American audience, an audience that doesn't want to know that they could fail. There's always an exit. So you have to paste on a happy end. . . . This is what I call the Euripidean manner. And at the end there is no solution of the antitheses, just the *deus ex machina*, which today is called the "happy end."⁷⁹

Sirk's comments gave support to critical arguments that saw his movies as Brechtian critiques of both the society they depict and their own generic conventions. As Christine Gledhill has pointed out, however, these arguments required their proponents to patronize the movies' original audiences: "Irony and parody operate between two secure points: the position which we who perceive the irony occupy and that which, held at a distance, it critiques. The 'radical reading' of the 70s belonged to the critics, made at the expense of the naïve involvement of American 'popular' audiences in the 1950s."⁸⁰ These "readings" proposed that the distance between the movie's sentimental plot and its ironic style had not been visible to the original audience. In Paul Willemsen's analysis, irony was a property of the movie as a text, and the problem of the audience was dealt with by suggesting that "there appears to be a discrepancy between the audience Sirk is aiming at and the audience which he knows will come to see his films."⁸¹ The implications for a politics of gender in critical references to Sirk's "mastery" of the "woman's film" were even more bluntly revealed in Jean-Loup Bourget's assertion that, "by systematically using the cliché-image he [Sirk] creates a distance not between the film and the audience (women ply their handkerchiefs at Sirk's films), but between the film and the director."⁸²

Such criticism distinguished Sirk the subversive auteur from the genre he was working in by assuming the gullibility of the public, adopting a position that came dangerously close to the contempt for the mass audience that Huyssen drew attention to. But movies such as *All That Heaven Allows* or *Written on the Wind* provoke a multiplicity of interpretations, often in contradiction to each other, and most movies can provoke complex interpretations for reasons other than their own internal complexity. A movie may articulate contradictions powerfully without resolving them: in *All That Heaven Allows*, Cary's emotional and sexual liberation is achieved only when she subordinates her own desires to Ron's; the movie ends with the couple reunited, but only after Ron has been badly injured so that Cary becomes his nursemaid, not his lover.⁸³ A movie may simply be powerfully inarticulate, expressing the dramatic or ideological conflict at its center not through dialogue but in the form of spectacle, through decor, color, gesture, and composition, and through its ability to provoke an intense emotional response on the part of its audience. Or else a movie may derive its complexity from the number of contradictory viewpoints that it asks its audience to hold at the same time, something that generic hybrids do very frequently. Laura Mulvey has pointed out that ideological contradiction is "not a hidden, unconscious thread" in domestic melodrama, detectable only by special critical processes. Instead, contradiction is melodrama's "overt mainspring . . . the 1950s melodrama works by touching on sensitive areas of sexual repression and frustration," re-presenting contradictions in an aesthetic form.⁸⁴ The women Jean-Loup Bourget disparages may have gone to "weepies" like *All That Heaven Allows* not only to escape from reality but also to lament it.⁸⁵

Situating a movie within the historical framework of its original reception can change the critic's perception of its relation to genre. Barbara Klinger has suggested that *Written on the Wind* and other domestic melodramas of the 1950s can be seen as part of a general industry trend toward more "adult" entertainment, "defined by a combination of sensationalistic and serious social subject matters."⁸⁶ In 1956 *Variety* suggested that along with blockbusters, "unusual, off-beat films with adult themes that television could not handle" allowed the industry to retain one section of its audience. The production of such "adult" movies was facilitated by revisions in the Production Code in the same year, permitting the treatment of drug addiction, abortion, and prostitution. Studios adopted novels and plays that already had "adult" profiles, and the cultural kudos of their original authors gave the movies prestige as well as notoriety. The "adult" movie category, which involved a combination of sensationalism, "adult" subject-matter, and a style emphasizing excess and psychodrama, cut across conventional generic boundaries: Klinger suggests that in the mid-1950s it included not only adaptations of Tennessee Williams' plays like *Baby Doll* (1956), Nelson Algren's novel about drug addiction *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1956), or Grace Metalious' *Peyton Place* (1957), but also *The Searchers*, more conventionally seen as a pillar of the Western, but "adult" in its sensationalist treatment of the theme of miscegenation. Certainly *Written on the Wind* fits into this cycle very well. Studio pre-release publicity described the movie as "a searing adult drama that at one time might have been considered too explosive to handle. Today, however, it takes its place among important Hollywood products that have dared to treat unconventional themes in a sensitive, realistic fashion."⁸⁷ While contemporary reviewers disagreed as to its relative sensitivity or sensationalism, many of its press reviews concurred with the opinion that "This adult drama, a penetrating exploration of morals and Freudianism of four people tossed into an emotional whirlpool by cross-relationships, a drama of vast dimension and delicacy, is further proof that Hollywood has really grown up."⁸⁸

Genre criticism has provided an important counter-position to auteurism, and its intertextual approach provides one of the most useful points of access to Hollywood's commercial aesthetic. But genre criticism has often itself made ahistorical assumptions about its object of study. Looking at the ways in which a movie like *Written on the Wind* was situated for its potential audience complicates an analysis that requires that audience to be no more than "women plying their handkerchiefs," victimized by a text subverting generic conventions too cleverly for them to recognize. Instead, *WOW*, as it was often referred to in its publicity, can be placed within a matrix of alternative definitions, allowing its audiences and critics to interpret its complexities in a variety of generic contexts. The movie's visual appearance, the focus of many later critical claims for its subversiveness, was promoted as part of its spectacle on its first release. Articles publicizing the movie drew female spectators' attention to its decor as a

source of inspiration for their own home decoration.⁸⁹ Barbara Klinger's historical examination of *Written on the Wind* helps to explain the way that generic conventions negotiate with and contradict each other across a single Hollywood movie. Such analysis may fragment a critically constructed genre such as "melodrama" into something much closer to the production industry's cycles, but it also extends our understanding of Hollywood as a generic cinema.

Notes

- 1 Jorge Luis Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," in *Other Inquisitions 1937-1952* (London: Souvenir Press, 1973), p. 103. Michel Foucault cites this passage, and "the wonderment of this taxonomy," as the starting point for his work, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1974).
- 2 Andrew Tudor, "Genre," in Barry Keith Grant, ed., *Film Genre Reader* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 7.
- 3 Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 5, 213.
- 4 It may be no coincidence that most of the genres delineated primarily by their content are action movies likely to appeal to a predominantly male audience.
- 5 J.P. Mayer, *British Cinemas and their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London: Dobson, 1948), p. 217.
- 6 Steve Neale, *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 22-3.
- 7 Steve Neale, "Questions of Genre," *Screen* 31:1 (Spring 1990), pp. 46-7.
- 8 Douglas Pye, "Genre and Movies," *MOVIE* 20 (Spring 1975), p. 32.
- 9 Dallas W. Smythe, John R. Gregory, Alvin Ostrin, Oliver P. Colvin, and William Moroney, "Portrait of a First-Run Audience," *Quarterly Review of Film, Radio and Television* 9 (Summer 1955), p. 398; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "Audience Research in the Movie Field," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 254 (November 1947), p. 166; both quoted in Bruce Austin, *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1989), p. 75.
- 10 Leo A. Handel, *Hollywood Looks at its Audience: A Report of Film Audience Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950), pp. 119-20.
- 11 Kleine Optical Company *Complete Illustrated Catalog* (1905), quoted in Neale, "Questions of Genre," p. 55.
- 12 In his "Cultural History of the Horror Movie," Andrew Tudor provides several different overlapping chronologies which correspond to cycles within the overall group. The main agency of development, he suggests, is a commercial version of the survival of the fittest: "financially successful films encourage further variations on their proven themes, thus generating a broadly cyclical pattern of successes which then decline into variously unsuccessful repetitions of the initial formula." Other, less immediately obvious patterns of commercial, cultural, and social factors overlay this crude commercial Darwinianism. Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 23.
- 13 Barbara Klinger, "'Local' Genres: The Hollywood Adult Film in the 1950s," paper presented at the BFI Melodrama Conference, London, July 1992.
- 14 David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 293.
- 15 Colin MacArthur, *Underworld USA* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1972), p. 34. For an

- extended discussion of this case, see Richard Maltby, "'Grief in the Limelight': Al Capone, Howard Hughes, the Hays Office and the Politics of the Unstable Text," in James Combs, ed., *Movies and Politics: The Dynamic Relationship* (New York: Garland, 1993), pp. 133-82.
- 16 Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise 1930-1939* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), p. 179.
 - 17 Barry R. Litman, "Decision-Making in the Film Industry: The Influence of the TV Market," *Journal of Communication* 32:3 (Summer 1982), pp. 44-5, quoted in John Izod, *Hollywood and the Box Office 1895-1986* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 183.
 - 18 Andrew Britton, "Blissing Out: The Politics of Reaganite Entertainment," *MOVIE* 31/32 (Winter 1986), pp. 2-3. The tendency of horror-movie audiences to engage with the movie in this fashion has often brought down the moral or political disapproval Britton exhibits here. Rather than indicating a vicarious and sadistic participation in the acts of mayhem, it may indicate, as Carol Clover and Marco Starr have suggested, a more complex act of self-defence by viewers identifying not with the killer but with his victims. It is also worth noting that vocal audience engagement was a normal feature of theatrical audience behavior until fairly late in the nineteenth century, and remained an element in moviegoing until the introduction of sound. Marco Starr, "J. Hills is Alive: A Defence of *I Spit on Your Grave*," in Martin Barker, ed., *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media* (London: Pluto, 1984), p. 54. Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1992), pp. 118-19. Bruce A. McConachie, "Pacifying American Theatrical Audiences, 1820-1900," in Richard Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). Lawrence W. Levine, *High-brow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
 - 19 Carol Clover comes up with an alternative formulation, in which the movie's exhibition becomes "a cat-and-mouse" game in which the movie tries to catch the audience by surprise. She also understands the vocal responses of audiences in these terms. Clover, p. 202.
 - 20 Ring Lardner Jr tells a version of this story in Aljean Harmetz, *Round Up the Usual Suspects: The Making of Casablanca - Bogart, Bergman, and World War II* (New York: Hyperion, 1992), p. 107.
 - 21 Quoted in Clover, p. 10.
 - 22 Neale, "Questions of Genre," p. 56.
 - 23 Klinger's analysis of the "progressive/subversive" genre as an object manufactured by a particular critical practice (much like two of her instances, film noir and melodrama) is acute, as is her critique of that criticism's practice of "textual isolationism." Rather than attribute an immutable politics to a text by its possession of this or that narrative, thematic, or stylistic feature, Klinger sees generic variation as a form of regulated difference and an essential functioning element of the overall Hollywood system. Barbara Klinger, "'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' Revisited: The Progressive Genre," in Grant, pp. 74-5, 88-9.
 - 24 Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, p. 211.
 - 25 James Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 84.
 - 26 This move from genre to auteur is built into the organization of several of the important early works on individual genres, such as Colin MacArthur's *Underworld USA* and Jim Kitses', *Horizons West: Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah: Studies of Authorship within the Western* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969).

- 27 Clover, p. 11.
- 28 Robert Warshow, "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner," in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, eds, *Film Theory and Criticism*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 449-50.
- 29 Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), p. 15. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68:270 (1955), pp. 428-44; Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968). Vera Dika's analysis of the "stalker film," discussed later in this chapter, provides an example of the structuralist approach to movie narrative.
- 30 Although we could, if we were distinguishing among devices that could be used for storing liquids. The quotation from Jorge Luis Borges at the beginning of this chapter is both funny and provocative, because its system of generic classification is nonsensical, but it might make us wonder if our own systems are any more coherent or appropriate.
- 31 Pye, p. 31.
- 32 Thomas Sobchack, "Genre Film: A Classical Experience," in Grant, p. 103.
- 33 For example, Barry Keith Grant, who identifies *Casablanca* (1942) as a "nongenie film." Barry Keith Grant, "Experience and Meaning in Genre Films," in Grant, p. 117.
- 34 Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 38.
- 35 Alan Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9:2 (Spring 1984), pp. 123-4; Tag Gallagher, "Shoot-Out at the Genre Corral: Problems in the 'Evolution' of the Western," in Grant, pp. 202-16.
- 36 Paul Schrader, "Notes on Film Noir," in Grant, p. 169.
- 37 Charles Musser, "The Travel Genre in 1903-04: Moving Toward Fictional Narratives," *Iris* 2:1 (1984), p. 57; Neale, p. 54.
- 38 Thomas Elsaesser refers to this as a "phatic" process, by which the movie is greeting the audience, and letting them know what kind of experience they may expect. Thomas Elsaesser, "Narrative Cinema and Audience-oriented Aesthetics," in Tony Bennett, Susan Boyd-Bowman, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollacott, eds, *Popular Television and Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1981), p. 271.
- 39 Vera Dika, "The Stalker Film, 1978-81," in Gregory A. Waller, ed., *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 93-4.
- 40 Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," in Grant, p. 30.
- 41 John Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green Popular University Press, 1970).
- 42 Kitses, p. 11.
- 43 Brian Henderson, "The Searchers: An American Dilemma," in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods Vol. II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), p. 444.
- 44 Warshow, pp. 438, 439, 449.
- 45 Jon Tuska, *The American West in Film: Critical Approaches to the Western* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985), p. 263.
- 46 Edward Buscombe, ed., *The BFI Companion to the Western* (London: André Deutsch, 1988), p. 35.
- 47 Robert Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 75, 84, 69.
- 48 Pye, pp. 34, 36.
- 49 We once witnessed a critical exchange in which one speaker's insistence that the

- cutting between shots of the feet of the protagonists during the build-up to the climax of a spaghetti Western deliberately confused their identities was greeted with the contemptuous assertion by one listener that if the speaker could not tell a Mexican boot from an American one, he had no business expressing an opinion about Westerns. In *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* Billy also tells a story in which a mistake in etiquette over a pair of boots leads to a fatal gunfight.
- 50 Silent film was a highly malleable form: intertitles could be changed or movies shortened by individual exhibitors as well as by distribution companies and censors. Although sound introduced a greater degree of material fixity, complete standardization was never achieved, and when the recycling of movies on television became acknowledged in the production process, the practice of making "protection shots" to preserve narrative continuity while using less explicit material once again became as common practice as it had been in the 1930s. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* had a second theatrical release in a "special edition" three years after its initial appearance in 1977. As happens occasionally with more recent movies, the second video release of *Aliens* (1986) promoted itself by advertising that it contained "seventeen minutes of extra footage restored to the original film by its director James Cameron," who referred to it as "a dance mix." Peter Dean and Mark Kermode observe that "it is no longer enough to have seen a movie; the true cinéaste must own a favorite film (in its many different formats) and have ruthlessly dissected the work in an attempt to divine (and perhaps control) its indefinable power." Peter Dean and Mark Kermode, "WindUp," *Sight and Sound* 3:3 (new series, March 1993), p. 62. The newest technology thus promises to return to the idea that movies exist in multiple versions, reminding us of how questionable is the idea of an "original" version of a Hollywood movie.
- 51 Producer Darryl Zanuck removed thirty minutes from John Ford's director's cut of *My Darling Clementine*, "deleting some humor and 'sentimentality,'" and allegedly strengthening "the storyline and pace." To Ford's chagrin but on the basis of preview reactions, Ford's preferred ending was changed so that instead of shaking hands with Clementine before he rides off, Wyatt kisses her. Tag Gallagher, *John Ford: The Man and his Films* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), p. 233.
- 52 Philip French, in his introduction to a BBC television screening of the version released in 1989. The acrimony surrounding the movie's production and editing is detailed in Paul Seydor, *Peckinpah: The Western Films* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 183-211; Garner Simmons, *Peckinpah: A Portrait in Montage* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 169-88; and Marshall Fine, *Bloody Sam: The Life and Films of Sam Peckinpah* (New York: Primus, 1991), pp. 240-60. Michael Bliss discusses the differences between the two versions, and suggests that the 1989 release version was an early, unfinished cut, in *Justified Lives: Morality and Narrative in the Films of Sam Peckinpah* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), pp. 217-18, 327-8.
- 53 Buscombe, p. 289.
- 54 The title has a more obvious explanatory function in "Peckinpah's" version, where it distinguishes between the flashback and the framing scenes.
- 55 The opposition between "official" and "outlaw" heroes is explored in Ray, pp. 59-66.
- 56 Gallagher, in Grant, pp. 209-10.
- 57 André Bazin, "The Western: Or the American Film Par Excellence," in *What is Cinema? Vol. 2*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), p. 147.
- 58 Warshow, p. 438.
- 59 Budd Boetticher, quoted in Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 19.

- Although Mulvey, whose use of the quotation has made it notorious, does not record the fact, Boetticher was referring specifically to the role of women in Westerns rather than movies in general.
- 60 Garrett's Mexican wife appears in one scene in the script, when Garrett returns to Lincoln after Billy's escape. She denounces his pursuit of Billy, and they argue. The scene was cut for the MGM release version, and is also missing from the version released in 1989. Seydor, p. 201; Doug McKinney, *Sam Peckinpah* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), p. 166; Terence Butler, *Crucified Heroes: The Films of Sam Peckinpah* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1979), p. 123.
- 61 As a result, Garrett's reluctance to pursue Billy, and the ambivalent attitude they share to the law, is more explicitly enacted in this version than in the "original" release.
- 62 Warshow, p. 449.
- 63 Butler, pp. 90-1.
- 64 Carol Clover produces a brilliantly perverse account of the generic migration of the "settler-versus-Indian" story to rape-revenge movies such as *I Spit on Your Grave* (1977): "by making the representative of urban interests (what would normally be taken as the white male elite) a woman, and the representatives of the country (what would in the western have been Native Americans) white males, these movies exactly reverse the usual system of victim sympathies. That is, with a member of the gender underclass (a woman) representing the economic overclass (the urban rich) and members of the gender overclass (males) representing the economic underclass (the rural poor), a feminist politics of rape has been deployed in the service of class and racial guilt. Raped and battered, the haves can rise to annihilate the have-nots - all in the name of feminism." Clover, p. 163.
- 65 Clover, p. 168.
- 66 Bazin, "The Evolution of the Western," in *What is Cinema? Vol. 2*, p. 149.
- 67 Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in Christine Gledhill, ed., *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987), p. 11.
- 68 Jackie Byars, *All That Hollywood Allows: Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1991), p. 14.
- 69 Frederic Taber Cooper, "The Taint of Melodrama and Some Recent Books," *Bookman* (February 1906), pp. 630-5, quoted in Ben Singer, "Female Power in the Serial-queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly," *Camera Obscura* 22 (January 1990), p. 95.
- 70 Montrose J. Moses, "Concerning Melodrama," *The Book News Monthly* (July 1908), p. 846, quoted in Singer, p. 95.
- 71 Steve Neale, "Melo Talk: On the Meaning and Use of the Term 'Melodrama' in the American Trade Press," *The Velvet Light Trap* 22 (Fall 1993), pp. 70, 75.
- 72 Neale, "Melo Talk," p. 72.
- 73 Balio, p. 235.
- 74 Carol J. Clover notes that video stores are more likely to classify a plot as "horror" when it is low-budget and "drama" or "suspense" when it is high-budget. Clover, p. 5.
- 75 *Halliwel's Film Guide* describes *The Prince of Tides* as "a lushly romantic melodrama." *Halliwel's Film Guide*, 8th edn (London: Grafton, 1992), p. 896.
- 76 Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in Tania Modleski, ed., *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 191. Tania Modleski and Dana Polan also engage these issues in their essays in this book.
- 77 Roger D. McNiven, "The Middle-class American Home of the Fifties: The Use of Architecture in Nicholas Ray's *Bigger Than Life* and Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven*

- Allows*," *Cinema Journal* 22:2 (Summer 1983), p. 55. A number of influential essays first appeared in a special issue of *Screen* 12:2 (Summer 1971).
- 78 "Irony doesn't go down well with the American public. This is not meant as a reproach, but merely that in general this public is too simple and too naïve - in the best sense of these terms - to be susceptible to irony. It requires clearly delineated positions, for and against." Sirk, quoted in Paul Willemen, "Distanciation and Douglas Sirk," in Laura Mulvey and John Halliday, eds, *Douglas Sirk* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival, 1972), p. 26.
- 79 John Halliday, *Sirk on Sirk* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1971), pp. 116, 119.
- 80 Gledhill, p. 11.
- 81 Willemen, p. 26.
- 82 Jean-Loup Bourget, "Sirk and the Critics," *Bright Lights* 6 (Winter 1977-8), p. 8.
- 83 Brandon French, *On the Verge of Revolt: Women in American Films of the Fifties* (New York: Ungar, 1978), p. 102.
- 84 Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," *MOVIE* 25 (Winter 1977-8), pp. 53-6.
- 85 Rainer Werner Fassbinder suggested that the audience weeps during *Imitation of Life* (1959) because it understands why the movie's characters must be in conflict, and how that conflict is inevitably produced by social forces: "The cruelty is that we can understand them both [Annie and Sarah Jane], both are right and no one will be able to help them. Unless we change the world. At this point all of us in the cinema cried. Because changing the world is so difficult." Rainer Werner Fassbinder, "Six Films by Douglas Sirk," in Mulvey and Halliday, p. 106.
- 86 Barbara Klinger, "Much Ado About Excess: Genre, Mise-en-scène and the Woman in *Written on the Wind*," *Wide Angle* 11:4 (1989), p. 11.
- 87 Quoted in Klinger, "'Local' Genres," p. 10.
- 88 Quoted in Klinger, "Much Ado," p. 12.
- 89 Klinger, "Much Ado," p. 15.