The Six-gun Simulacrum: New Metaphors for an Old Genre

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A quarter century ago, the western was quite popular in the new growth area of film studies, widely screened, discussed, studied, and written about in a vigorous exchange of ideas involving genre. Westerns took pride of space in that discussion, shoving aside other likely examples such as biblical epics, war films, the vast and knotty problem of comedy, and (although it subsequently came back with a vengeance) melodrama; the western became the lab animal of genre study. Then, very quickly, the western vanished from the journals, the curricula, the film societies, no longer part of the discussion, no longer basic knowledge expected of the film cultured. Perhaps the taxonomic, structural, thematic models put forward in that earlier debate could not be made to say any more useful things, stalled as they were in their search for the essential elements of the genre.[1] This essay results from an examination of a great many western films and the literature surrounding them; we want to examine the problems in earlier, essentialist models of the western as genre and to consider current options.

This earlier (gridlocked) essentialism operates by exclusion. Andre Bazin writes of the western as being "subjected to influences from the outside--for instance the crime novel, the detective story, or the social

problems of the day," and refers to these as "passing moments of contamination" (Bazin 140). This is what Gilles Deleuze calls the will to select (1990; 253): to select what constitutes a western requires a restrictive definition. Basic to this inclusion/exclusion is the myth of the (excludable) copy which does not achieve the metaphysical "idea" behind the surface of the object, out of reach of the viewer. The copy is inauthentic: all it does is *look* like something (else). Thus, a western like *The Oklahoma Kid* might be said to be inauthentic, as it is too much like a 1930s Warner Brothers gangster film--its "western-ness," merely an imitation of "the real thing," the appearance of the genre rather than its essence. The "idea" of the real western (in this case failed, for reasons of impurity) refers us to the need for an origin of the genre.

In the majority of writing on the western, the intrinsic is given precedence over the extrinsic. Deleuze defines the Platonic motive: "To distinguish essence from appearance, intelligible from sensible, idea from image, original from copy, and model from simulacrum" (1990; 256); the first term in each pair is the intrinsic, while the second, lesser, term is the extrinsic. Interesting that the western, a genre that emphasizes surfaces, has been so often described as defining an essence behind its surface. Even when applying Christian Metz's theories to Sergio Leone's westerns, Lane Roth states, "images function as signifiers for the signified narrative," as if the image is of less importance than the story (35) Bazin's justification for the search for the "idea" behind the form of the western is pertinent here: he encountered the same problem Derrida outlines in "The Law Of Genre" (55-81), that "the same ingredients are to be found elsewhere." That is, no genre can be pure and self-contained, as every element inside the genre also exists outside the genre in another context. However, Bazin does not come to Derrida's conclusion (that genre does not exist as a pure entity). Bazin uses this situation to justify his metaphysics, to search behind the surface for the "idea" of the western, concluding the "good copy" produces the "classical," that is, the "ideal," or the "real." This logic assumes that the classical western has an intrinsic relation to the "idea(l)" of the western, while the baroque western has only an extrinsic relation to the surface (object) of the genre.

The problem of being inside/outside the generic boundary is implicit in Will Wright's structural definition of the western. He uses Vladimir Propp's typology of character actions to define the genre. However, all the actions that exist inside Wright's western genre can be found outside it as well. The same character actions structure Raoul Walsh's gangster film *High Sierra* and his later western, *Colorado Territory.* John Fell makes a similar point concerning *Underworld, To Have and Have Not*, and *Rio Bravo* (19-28). *Stagecoach*, considered the classic western by Bazin, has

a similar relationship to de Maupassant's "Boule de Suif" (and other films made from that story), while *A Fistful of Dollars* and *Yojimbo* are only two examples of a generic crossover common since the sixties (both trace their lineage to Dashiell Hammett's crime novel *Red Harvest*, which itself has been claimed as a reworking of *The Iliad*).

More recent ideas may provide an opportunity to reconceive the Western in a way which opens up paradoxes in concepts of genre: time for a new bundle of metaphors. Derrida addresses the notion of the inside and outside of the generic boundary in "The Law of Genre": "As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind" (56). Every time we try to draw a boundary, we realize how the terms of that boundary spread, and a new wider boundary must be drawn. In a way, this is an impossible boundary, because everything exists inside and outside the generic "boundary": it is a permeable membrane. From this, Derrida concludes that genres do not exist; but one may say instead that aspects of genre exist as signs or images which then act as monads, coming together regardless of notional boundary lines in certain combinations to produce a series, such as the Western. Fruitless, then, to search for origin, center, essence: the impression of origin, or center, is an image formed when certain relationships of signs come together. The surface so formed is inherently chaotic and paradoxical; the signs can reform in a range of paradoxical relationships and still signify *western*.

Derrida points out that each time we try to trace back to an origin, we find an event that at first seems to be one, but for that event to exist there must have been a prior context for it to exist within, so we find only "nonoriginary origins" (Culler 96). The project of maintaining a pure western genre with boundaries separating things "inside" the genre from things "outside" required a myth of origin. Many were provided for the western. For Andre Bazin, "The western is the only genre whose origins are almost identical with those of the cinema" (140). This myth privileges the genre, positioning the Western as the essence of the cinema.

The Great Train Robbery serves as another origin myth, "the first western film," comprising images integral to the genre: cowboys, guns, horses, trains, violence, crime, a suite of places/locales/environs. Bazin implied that the western is the essence of cinema because it records the fundamental expression of movement in the cinema (141).[2] But movement certainly predates *The Great Train Robbery*, as earlier "western scenes" in other films show. Key images in *The Great Train Robbery* express movement--movement across the screen, into the screen, away from the screen, movement to a close-up. But none of these are exclusive to the

western, nor do any of them (except for the one panning shot) originate in *The Great Train Robbery*--or in any western, for that matter. Porter's film is a deceptive origin in other ways: it has no definitive version that we can call the *original*. Distribution and exhibition practice at the time allowed for considerable rearrangement/re-editing of prints. The segment in which the gunman shoots straight into the camera was offered to exhibitors as a possible *start* or *end* to the film, or *both*. Can any of these three variations be the true original? In an intertextual transformation, this "primitive" film enfolds and transforms the earlier Lumiere brothers film in which a train enters a station toward the viewing audience, directly (as the gunman confronts the audience) and indirectly (as the image and motion of the train is amplified and varied).

Historical reality as an origin of the western has been advanced often by films and theorists alike. Bazin, Lovell, and Kitses, each in their own way, put forward the myth that the western is a *copy of reality*. A view of the western as simulacra alters the genre's subservience to reality. It is impossible to separate a reality (history) from the western: the western is a repetition that includes that reality, as that reality includes the western. One is not inside the other, and they cannot be separated. In Fritz Lang's *Return of Frank James*, myth is contrasted with reality (the distinction is assumed to exist) as Henry Fonda/Frank James inhabits a fiction of a reality in which he lives through multiple versions of his own life (just as John Ireland/Bob Ford does in Fuller's *I Shot Jesse James*). If we examine the real West, we find similarity: even when that West was happening, its occupants lived it with fictions, their actions referenced by wild west shows, theatrical plays, dime novels, newspapers. The presence of the representations expanded and altered "real" life just as that life changed the representations of it.[3]

At the end of *Flaming Star*, Elvis Presley/Pacer rides off into the sunset like a western hero departing into myth, but unlike other heroes riding into a horizon representing wilderness and freedom, he rides off to die. Elvis/Pacer is a half-breed (Indian mother, European father) doomed because society believes in racial purity and cannot tolerate him. Here, as part of a series of racial westerns, is an explicit generic example of the ideology of purity. The racial purity theme in the last image is only one aspect of genre contamination in *Flaming Star*, one that is doubled at the outset by generic and musical impurity. In the image of Elvis in the opening credit sequence, we see archetypal western depictions of Elvis and his half-brother on horseback, riding over horizons. When the title is superimposed over this image, there is no doubt that the "Star" refers to Elvis. These images coincide with a theme song which combines a standard western theme with rock'n'roll and rockabilly, emphasizing what we may

later see as a crystal image: Elvis appearing in a western.[4] The culture of rock'n'roll folds into that of the western, and with this, the role that Elvis and rock'n'roll have in working between racial and musical stereotypes. *Flaming Star*, through Elvis's star image, simultaneously flaunts its generic impurity and critiques the whole notion of purity: as the theme of racial impurity (final image) and generic impurity (opening images) indicate, the notion of a pure genre is impossible. Genres cannot be "contained" to keep them uncontaiminated. The pure western is always a myth or an image.

Gilles Deleuze's work on cinema illuminates the discussion of westerns as simulacra. Using the theories of Henri Bergson and C. S. Peirce, he proposes that the body is an image (consciousness) and that objects are images. What takes place among these sorts of images is the transition of movement. This constitutes the *movement-image*. Our relation to the screen repeats our relation to objects. This is the cinema as true repetition, not as copy. (The Platonic notion of the copy, "good" or "bad" depending on how closely it corresponds with the ideal, has been replaced by the simulacrum, a constant repetition--rather than copy--which corresponds to an unstable center driven by difference). Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* describes the organic regime of traditional representation in which the expression of movement is dominant. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* describes the *crystal regime*, the cinema of simulacrum, in which the expression of movement is subservient to the expression of time. If we look at the cinema in terms of genre, which Deleuze does not specifically do, we find that the crystal regime is always and already there. Genre has always worked according to the logic of the simulacrum, but Deleuze only discusses the western in relation to the organic regime of the movement-image. The action-image is perhaps the clearest expression of the movement-image. Deleuze posits a small form (1986; 164-168) and a large form (142, 145-7, 151) of the action-image, both of which he relates closely to westerns. Deleuze's formulation of the movement-image therefore seems to support Bazin's association of the western with movement (141), explaining what Bazin intuited but could not explain.

The large form of the action-image is divided into three areas: the transition from situation to action; the laws of organic composition; and the sensory-motor link. The relation between situation and action (modes of behavior) produces two inverse spirals (situation-action-situation), one which narrows towards action and the other which broadens towards a new situation, very much like "classical narrative." The laws of organic composition have five points: 1. the way that the milieu carries powers into effect; 2. the passage from situation to action--forming two lines of action (e.g., convergent montage); 3. "Bazin's law," whereby the two lines

must meet in one shot without montage; 4. the duel, in which the lines of action are staked out and their simultaneity is marked; 5. the gap between the situation and action, which exists only to be filled. The most important of these is the duel, and Deleuze puts forth the western gunfight as its purest expression (1986; 153). The sensory-motor link is the expression of the inner but visible link between the permeating situation and the explosive action (there are two types of movement here: the plant-like movement-on-the-spot which is the permeation of the situation; and the animal-like, violent movement which is the acting out of the action). When the sensory-motor link is expressed as cause-effect, the organic regime of images is invoked. When the link is disrupted, the crystal regime of simulacra reigns.

The small form of the action-image (action-situation-action) inverts the large form (situation-action-situation). In the small form, the blind action comes before and discloses the obscure situation. Deleuze, taking his cue from Jean-Luc Godard, applies this formula in particular to Anthony Mann's westerns. All aspects of the action-image seem to describe the structure of the western well, but is this all the western is? Does the action-image, in its small and large form, explain all? Or, if looked at in this way, can the western break through the organic regime and into the crystal regime?

Whereas the organic regime is expressed in the movement-image, the crystal regime is most clearly expressed in the time-image. The organic is likened to representation and the crystal to the simulacrum. The crystal has an "actual-image" and a "virtual-image." This crystalline structure works on multiple levels. It splits organic conceptions of time, in line with Bergson's theories, by making the past coexist with the present, affirming time as non-chronological. The crystal is always dividing itself in two, always changing: the actual image of the present which passes and the virtual image of the past which persists. The actual and virtual exist as surfaces signifying ideas and thought. Other crystal-images outlined by Deleuze are the "crystal caught in its formation or growth" (multiple strategies of viewing) and the "crystal in the process of decomposition." Can the crystal regime, which is posited along a chronological series as the organic regime's next step, tell us anything about the western not accounted for by the action-image?

Let us begin with a hypothesis: the western is a series of images (signs), consisting of an expansive folding surface with no beginning, no end, no inside, no outside, no center, and no origin. As a surface, it has no moral center located in a depth behind the surface, but it exhibits the multiple positioning and shallowness of the simulacrum. Instead of a single privileged subject position, the western offers a constantly changing series of points which fluctuate according to context.

The western exists on the same surface plane on which the gangster film and other genres coexist. This plane folds, disperses, and rearranges its elements. The western cannot be separated from the gangster film (*The Oklahoma Kid*, the Walsh films, Eastwood's complex image throughout his films), nor from comedy (*The Paleface, Along Came Jones, Blazing Saddles*), nor from other genres such as melodrama (*Duel in the Sun*), nor from film noir (*Ramrod, Pursued, Coroner Creek*). It is the same surface on which the popular cinema coexists with the art film and experimental cinema--with the whole body of the cinema. Popular culture and high culture coexist in complex and contradictory interrelationships, all sharing the same surface. The western is particularly fruitful for examining these relationships (without in any way claiming for it an Ur-genre status, as others have done), as can be seen in the films of Budd Boetticher, whose work posits itself simultaneously as high and low culture (intellectual and entertaining), and who, when working in genres other than the western, emphasizes western elements (*The Bullfighter and the Lady, The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond*).

Credit sequences often indicate the generic image as crystal, containing multiple surfaces of meaning. The credit sequence of William Wyler's *The Westerner* makes this paradigmatic aspect clear. The title is superimposed over the image of Gary Cooper on a horse. This film may be a classic western, but that does not mean that the image merely refers to the content and nothing else. The image is the sign of the *pure hero* of the western, the cowboy who lives between nature and culture, committing himself to nothing. The image is conscious of its status as code and as a virtual image of the genre's past. This is all the more obvious when compared to the end, in which the hero has given up his status as Westerner to marry and join the social world (a reworking of Cooper's situation in Fleming's *The Virginian*). The image of Cooper kissing his wife dissolves to a corn field with "The End" superimposed. The "corny" irony that the western is finished once the hero is civilized is not lost on the film. It seems necessary for the image to be used as crystal in order for the film to function as a classical western. In order to signify a level of irony in the present image which passes, it must play off a virtual image of the past, of previous western images.

When the title sequence of *The Naked Spur* is compared to that of *The Westerner* we can see how the image is a crystal dividing and deconstructing its many surfaces. The sequence works in relation to the type of western title that we find in *The Westerner*. *The Naked Spur* opens with the credit for James Stewart and Janet Leigh, then pans violently to the close up of a spur on a cowboy boot. The image is held as the words "The Naked Spur" are superimposed over the image of the spur. In both

films, the word and image retain the power of the signifier, maintaining a surface quality. The Mann title plays metonymically on the knowledge of the earlier style, submitting a minor element of western imagery for that of the Westerner himself. The credit sequence of *The Westerner* is a virtual image contained in the credit sequence of *The Naked Spur*. The actual image of *The Naked Spur* immediately passes from the present into both the past of the genre and its future. The word "naked" is significant here as a sensational, faintly erotic adjective, forcing a shift in the western image. This deconstruction of the image is taken further when the shot is maintained as the spur rides off, producing a reverse image of that of the westerner on his horse. This time the director's credit, "Directed by Anthony Mann", is superimposed over the cowboy. This image plays off the image of the man on his horse with the word Man(n) (Godard 116-120). If *The Westerner* title was always in the realm of surfaces, then this title by Mann is certainly a crystal-image. The credit sequences in Leone's westerns, with the Morricone music, the literalization of the signs of the western, and the movement of the titles (often with gunshots) is self-conscious simulacra (the most self-conscious up to that time), although the western could always (having no point of origin) produce the image as simulacra.

If the western has a particular relationship to surface, it is, as with all genres, constantly changing according to the viewpoint taken, the films already watched, and the new films that continually redefine its parameters. All generic texts have a virtual-image of the past that remains and an actual-image of the present, that passes. The present in any generic text splits "in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past" (Deleuze 1989; 81). The individual text can never be understood alone, always forcing an intertextual relationship that is akin to the time-image.

In Bazin's "The Evolution of the Western" (149-157) we can see at work the four aesthetic stages set out by Henri Focillon in his *Vie des formes*: the primitive, the classical, the radiating ("rayonnant"), and the baroque, summarized by Tom Conley thus:

> An "experimental" beginning seeks solutions to problems
> that the "classical" moment discovers and exploits. A
> radiating period refines the solutions of the former to a
> degree of preciosity, while a "baroque" phase at once
> sums up, turns upon, contorts, and narrates the formulas
> of all the others. (Conley, in Deleuze 1993; x)

These stages are usually seen as chronological. Bazin uses them to further his essentialist reading of the genre, proposing the classical as the stage closest to the essence of the western. Omar Calabrese, on the other hand, proposes that all four stages coexist within any single work (18-22), as

with Deleuze's crystal image, in which non-chronological time-images coexist as multi-faceted surfaces. Calabrese's view of Focillon's model is useful when scanning the differing interpretations of the western genre. For example, John Ford is generally considered (as by Kitses and Wollen) at the classical center of the genre; Warshow seems to see him as baroque. For Bazin, *Stagecoach* is classical, while *My Darling Clementine* is baroque. Lovell, on the other hand, sees *My Darling Clementine* as *the* classical western. *Red River* is considered classical by Bazin, but Thomas Schatz places it as baroque. Warshow and Bazin see *Shane* as baroque, but to Wright it is classical. And so forth.

Bazin categorized Robert Aldrich's *Vera Cruz* as classical. It is not. Along with his other westerns (*Apache, The Last Sunset, Ulzana's Raid*), it is a study of the western as surface. The film's credits simultaneously evoke the loose calligraphy of other westerns and the blood red titles of E. C. horror comics. Then a written introduction (over scenes of groups of horsemen) explains the movement of bands of mercenaries to revolutionary Mexico following the American Civil War, after which the classical image of a single rider, distant, coming towards us in the wilderness, with the superimposition: "...And Some Came Alone," renders the image as crystal. In the following shot, the rider comes close enough for recognition (Gary Cooper). This image of the moving object (westerner, horse) on an abstract plane (the flat horizon) as time-image recalls the persistent image of the cowboy-milieu relationship.[5] Then, in the first of many precise instances, the first action of the film: Cooper shoots his horse, picks up his saddle, and walks off, doubly situating the film in the crystal regime and raising the first of many enigmas: if he was defined as alone when he had a horse, what is he now? (Budd Boetticher later amplified this image in *The Tall T*).

A more elaborate example of the organic regime raised to the surface of the crystal regime occurs in the film's final duel between the two protagonists (allies and rivals, equals and opposites), Cooper and Burt Lancaster. The elaborate build-up uses deep-focus shots to accentuate the perspective of the shootout; the rapid cutting at the moment of shooting treats it as crystal-image, recalling in its virtual images the whole history of the western. When the shooting is finished, it appears that neither man has been shot: we see several alternating one-shots of Lancaster, then Cooper, looking at each other, revealing nothing. Then, as we are discounting the miraculous possibility, Lancaster falls, dead. Time has been rendered unreasonable, stretched past its boundaries: it is either too quick (the moment of shooting) or too slow (the revelation of the outcome, the death). The bullet hitting Lancaster is not meant to refer to a real event but to the sign of this classical western image (the duel); the sign is treated as a surface which can be bent, skewed, distorted.[6] The image has certainly

become a baroque surface. In *Mad Magazine*'s send-up, Lancaster goes home after the gunfight, brushes his teeth--another baroque, crystal moment from earlier in *Vera Cruz*, appropriated by Godard in *Une Femme Est Une Femme*--and fiddles with other domestic chores before finally falling dead, another sort of certification of the event's crystal status. The surface of *Vera Cruz* produces an effect of the powers of the false as the foregrounding of the sign removes it from a direct and causal relationship with the signified, leaving the meaning as ambiguous and contradictory. The gunfighters are like Deleuze's forger (1989; 137-147), the character who asserts the power of paradox, denying truth and purity.

Howard Hawks positioned *Red River* as a consciously classical western, but his use of repetition plays off the notion that the film is somehow at the center of a genre constituted as infinite possibilities of variation within the formulae. *Red River*'s idea of the center seems to have characteristics similar to the Deleuze's simulacrum :

> Resemblance then can be thought only as the product of this internal difference. It matters little whether the system has great external and slight internal difference, or whether the opposite is the case, provided that resemblance be produced on a curve, and that difference, whether great or small, always occupy the center of the thus decentered system (1990, 262).

The relation of *Red River* to the center of the genre is a telling one; the film presents itself as a central western text, while also producing that center as an *out of focus condition* that cannot be finitely located. The "voyage form" (Deleuze 1986; 210) of the film produces the center and the boundary as always in the past or future but never in the present, never definable. The journey is not westerly, toward paradise, haven, a new home, but a northward commercial trip to sell cattle. The voyage form of the narrative ensures the film is always moving; the western location becomes a flowing manipulation of changing images, situations, and actions. All the images of the western are encountered in varying combinations along the journey. While the frontier town is seen only at the end and the saloon barely glimpsed, they hover there, ready to be encountered at any time. The treatment of images is non-chronological; they keep shifting, overflowing into the next one. Here is a type of baroque chaos that exists within the classical, as integral to its functioning, denying the classical any status as a pure entity apart from the baroque.

One noted image in *Red River* is the 360 degree pan at the start of the cattle drive. The purity of this shot is famous: its geometric circular movement is poised at the center of the genre, at the center of classical Hollywood cinema; it denotes the symbolic center of the film and the

subject positioning of the western.[7] However, if looked at another way, this circular movement seems to correspond to the decentered circle of the simulacrum. The circular point-of-view shot does not describe the supposed single dominant subject position that westerns are often credited with. The shot begins from John Wayne's point-of-view and ends with Montgomery Clift's.[8] As Deleuze says of the simulacrum:

> ... the simulacrum implies huge dimensions, depths, and distances that the observer cannot master. It is precisely because he cannot master them that he experiences the impression of resemblance. This simulacrum includes the differential point of view, and the observer becomes a part of the simulacrum itself, which is transformed and deformed by his point of view. (1990; 258)

The single circular pan describes the circle as impure, the center and the western as of infinite depth where the multiple point of view is used. We can extend this observation to say that the shot includes the viewer within the simulacrum. This shot is indicative of much "classic" Hollywood mise en scene, which shifts from subjective to objective camera work within a single shot. The impression given is that of sameness, but in fact it includes an inherent difference and a differential point of view.

Beyond the inclusion of the differential point of view, genre involves at least a three-way relationship between author (director, writer, star, etc.), film (the individual work and those that precede and succeed it), and the audience in its many manifestations. The generic text is created through a complex relationship that accentuates this difference in a product that has the image of sameness. The important point is that this image is based on difference; the three elements that help form the film are not reconciled in a single dominant viewpoint but one that expresses that process. This is why Deleuze talks of the impression of sameness in terms of the simulacrum that masks the depths and differential point of view of the simulacrum. Genre is subject to the same vertigo as the simulacrum: it is inherently decentered while giving the impression of origin and center; it has the impression of sameness but in fact conceals difference of a magnitude the viewer cannot articulate; and it gives the impression of favoring a single dominant point of view but in fact contains the multiple, paradoxical, and shifting point of view of the simulacrum. Hawks goes straight for the center and shows it to have the depth of the simulacrum, the anarchy of the baroque. *Red River* renders the generic frame of the classical western as an out-of-focus condition upon which images flow, denying boundaries, causing the frame to disappear through the surge of the baroque, but all the same using the sign of the classical. *Red River* presents the classical center as the *in-between* state: unlocatable.

The crystal image of the star cuts across genre "boundaries," as in *The Oklahoma Kid*'s self-conscious use of gangster actors (James Cagney as the hero, Humphrey Bogart as the villain) to play cowboys, becoming part of one paradoxical surface. In *One Eyed Jacks*, Marlon Brando himself signified a certain series of films and acting, making actions and situations read as crystal images; he might be said to be treating aspects of Deleuze's movement-image (particularly what Deleuze calls the laws of organic composition) as time-image (or as baroque surface), through a slowing of the action to the point where the relationship of the character to milieu and the convergent passages from situation to action are read as signs of the genre. The experience of *The Oklahoma Kid* is mirrored in Robert Warshow's closely related articles on the two genres, "The Westerner" and "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" (127-154). Warshow defines the westerner in opposition to the gangster, while both are defined by their relationship to guns and a code of behavior. The westerner is cool and introverted (classical), the gangster is aggressive, brutal, extroverted (baroque). Clint Eastwood combines both these significations into one image, as did Bogart in *Virginia City* and Cagney in *Run For Cover*; but this synthesis is a fairly common occurrence (it cannot *not* happen) and colors the manner in which the intertextuality of the star cuts across generic lines. Martin Scorsese makes this point in *Goodfellas* when Joe Pesci cites *The Oklahoma Kid* as a gangster role model; that the two genres coexist as part of the same surface is reiterated at the end of *Goodfellas* when the film quotes the cowboy shooting at the screen from *The Great Train Robbery*.

> "Punk, you're lucky that you're livin',
> 'cause I'm the UNFORGIVEN"
>> --Ice Cube, "Make it Ruff, Make it Smooth"
>> *Lethal Injection* (Priority Records, 1994)

Just as Ice Cube harnesses the western to the Hip Hop culture, he evokes both the western image of Clint Eastwood by referencing *Unforgiven* and Eastwood's rogue cop image through the use of the word "punk" from *Dirty Harry*. As a crystal image, Clint Eastwood works his various genres as part of an ever-shifting surface: in his star image, Josey Wales's Colt's Navy model and Dirty Harry's .44 Magnum share the same surface. Eastwood's situation is the opposite to, and more complex than, that of *The Oklahoma Kid* (stars signifying gangsters playing westerners). Eastwood made his name playing a westerner, first as Rowdy Yates on TV's *Rawhide*, then as The Man With No Name in Leone's Dollars trilogy. Then, in *Coogan's Bluff*, he played a cop from rural Arizona on a mission to New York City. The film consciously plays on the insertion of cowboy signs into modern police work, providing a transition for Eastwood's image

into *Dirty Harry*, where the image of the rogue cop and the westerner become one. By the arrival of *Unforgiven*, both the Man With No Name and Dirty Harry inform the image--the rogue-cop-as-westerner comes back and "re-infects" the western.

Eastwood dedicated *Unforgiven* to "Sergio and Don," marking in another way the importance within the film of The Man With No Name and Dirty Harry/Coogan. The next film Eastwood directed, *A Perfect World*, also plays off these two series, referencing his history in an oblique way. The obvious allegory of the film implies the end of the perfect world, the end of truth and certainty that came symbolically with the assassination of Kennedy in 1963, and the start of the world of the simulacrum. It also coincides with the start of Eastwood's work as the Man With No Name (*Fistful of Dollars*, 1964), at which point Eastwood's image is raised to the crystal surface of the simulacrum.

From this point on, Eastwood inverted the image of the classical westerner: "I do all the stuff John Wayne would never do..." (Frayling 154). His first seven years as a cowboy were spent on *Rawhide*, a cattle drive western loosely based on *Red River*. Eastwood played the second lead, the (Oedipal) surrogate son, corresponding to Montgomery Clift in the Hawks film; and like Clift turning on Wayne in *Red River*, it seems fitting that Eastwood would similarly subvert Wayne's western image. Eastwood's collaboration with Leone coincided with what Deleuze calls "the moment of pop art"--the spaghetti westerns, beginning in 1964, posit the genre clearly as a self-conscious, widely understood simulacrum.

The Man With No Name is itself a crystal image. The image brings to the surface aspects of the westerner as set out by Warshow, consciously inflecting and literalizing them much as 1950s westerns such as *Johnny Guitar* did earlier. Robert Warshow's argument about the western has often been read as an essentializing one, but much of that argument implicitly defines the western as simulacra. What his essay reveals about the role of the code, the image (as surface), the relation of the code to the "real" (realism as a style), and the role of repetition in the western supports an analysis of the western as repetition and difference--as the Man With No Name made explicit. In the western, the code becomes a literalization of Deleuze's organic regime, forcing it to break through the cliche and assert the power of the false. Warshow sees the characters in *The Virginian* as living by a code--not by an organic "reality" but by the rules of a genre (the film cannot be seen as purely organic if actions are seen to be determined by a code).

To Warshow, the western is preoccupied with the extrinsic nature of the image--with the image's surface.[9] The preoccupation with style as seen in the images of cowboys, and guns is, for Warshow, directly opposed

to the anti-style of modernism. The western employs style as an extrinsic relation to an object, as opposed to modernism's anti-style, in which an intrinsic relation to an "idea" is seen as a true relation (in this respect Warshow's assessment of the genre is more radical than Jim Kitses, who favors the intrinsic). The central concern of the western is "honor," but here honor is a style, not an intrinsic moral value. Warshow's westerner is concerned about image, where his guns are, how he reacts and moves in moments of calm and of violence, "the clarity of his physical image against his bare landscape" (139) The westerner does not hide his gun: he is a walking sign whose appearance is his essence. Guns are treated as surface signs. Violence is not "real" but experienced as a style. Warshow implies that the western is always in the realm of simulacra, as we can see from his analysis of *The Virginian*.

The crystal-image of the Man With No Name can be compared to Will Wright's list of character actions for the western hero. In the Dollars trilogy, the functions of the classical western hero as described by Wright (48-49) are raised to the level of simulacra, where the signs pertaining to the hero are literalized, inverted, and played with. Wright's chronological lists of functions exist in the image of Eastwood and in the image of Leone's films, all at the same time rather than being progressively drawn out through the continuing narrative. *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* starts with a shootout. Normally shootouts, following Wright's list, take place near the end of each western. The figure of the Man With No Name at every moment plays off a knowledge of these images and actions, and his image gains its significance from the implicit image of the actions performed by the hero, such as those described by Wright or Warshow.

Added to this crystal image is the pop existentialism that seems to narrate and critique the other images in the Eastwood crystal. Existentialism has been used by others to inform the western image (as in Monte Hellman's *Ride in the Whirlwind* and *The Shooting*), but in the Dollars series existentialism is a pop sign, not a philosophy. Comedy infiltrates the western hero in Man With No Name, showing the impossibility of keeping various forms and series distinct. The bounty hunter figure turned up occasionally as a central character in Mann's *The Naked Spur* and *The Tin Star*; in Boetticher's *Ride Lonesome*; in Andre de Toth's *The Bounty Hunter*; and in TV series such as *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, which made Steve McQueen a star, and *Trackdown*, which did the same for Robert Culp. Eastwood's use of the bounty hunter in *Unforgiven* brings the Man With No Name to the foreground of its image.[10]

Eastwood's image in *Unforgiven* as the bounty hunter William Munny[11] relies primarily on the image of the Man With No Name and Harry Callahan in *Dirty Harry*. In this way, a film that signifies as a western,

through the image of its star and prime signifier, denies strict generic boundaries. *Unforgiven* would not make as much sense if we excluded *Dirty Harry*. Certainly the scene in which Munny kills Little Bill gains some of its power through its relation to the scene in which Harry kills Scorpio. When Munny shoots Little Bill with the line, "Deserves got nothing to do with it," the moment functions as a crystal-image that recalls Harry Callahan saying, "This is a .44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world...do you feel lucky, punk?" and, "Go ahead--make my day." William Munny embodies a folding over of two genre surfaces--the westerner inverted by the Man With No Name and the cop Harry Callahan--and cannot be made sense of without both these crystal elements.[12] Through the multiple (contradictory) viewpoints and in the framing of the hero of *Unforgiven*, Eastwood decenters the hero (in contrast to Leone's practice, literalizing the hero by centering him).

Notes

For Bill Routt and Anna Nervegna.

[1.] Dropping such an interesting and varied body of work so completely out of currency is a rather high price to pay for a couple of exhausted theoretical models.

[2] An example of the inside/outside problem can be seen in Bazin's essay "The Western, or the American Film Par Excellence" in which he says, "...the western must possess some greater secret...(that) identifies it with the essence of the cinema"(141). This is a succinct statement of the myth that the western is the metaphysical "idea" behind the cinema. Bazin implies that this essence is due to the western being the prime expression of movement in the cinema (movement being central to cinema). But Bazin's claim can be turned on its head: if the western is the essence of all cinema, then all films, regardless of genre, are somehow westerns through their relation to movement: if the western is part of all films, then all films are part of the western; boundaries collapse in this essentialist paradox, all films are both inside and outside the western.

[3] Christopher Frayling recounts the close links that frontiersmen, outlaws, and lawmakers of the old west had with their constructions in myth/fiction.

Wild Bill Hickok and Buffalo Bill Cody both played themselves in the theatrical drama *Scouts of the Prairie*, just before Hickok was gunned down in 1876. Cody played himself in a number of films before he died in 1917, as did Wyatt Earp. Earp's pallbearers at his 1929 funeral included film stars Tom Mix and William S. Hart (as mentioned in Robert Mitchum's narration in *Tombstone*). Frayling cites the influence of the book *The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid* on William Bonney's subsequent actions; the influence of Jacobean tragedy on Jesse James; and the book Emmett Dalton wrote in 1937, *When the Daltons Rode*, in which Dalton fabricated his own heroic death 45 years earlier (192-3).

From other accounts, we know that early westerns were made with former cowmen as extras and featured players. Before joining D. W. Griffith as cameraman, Billy Bitzer shot a reconstruction of marshal "Big Bill" Tilghman's famous bank robbery shootout with Tilghman playing himself.

[4] The westerns of the 1950s often foregrounded themselves through the medium of title songs, commercially designed to tie the film in with record sales, but which also served to provide another--crystal, simulacrum--version of the film over the credits and throughout the film: *High Noon, River of No Return* (sung by Mitchum himself), *Rio Bravo* (two here: Dean Martin's ballad in the film, Ricky Nelson's issued as a single); *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Note also the onscreen balladeer in Sam Fuller's *Forty Guns*, interacting with the characters (typical for Fuller, a primitive/modernist), prefiguring Nat King Cole and Stubby Kaye's place later in *Cat Ballou*.

[5] The images in the western, from the horseman on the open plain to the western town as a series of objects sited on an abstract grid (prime example: *Once Upon a Time in the West*), are precise cinematic expressions of the modernist transition from figure-ground relationships to the abstract object-plane relationships that characterize modern architecture and painting from de Chirico to Russian constructivism to Brazillia.

[6] Only a few years after *Vera Cruz*, Samuel Fuller also emphasized the distortion of space and time implicit in the western duel. In his CinemaScope *Forty Guns* (anticipating Sergio Leone) the insertion of an extreme close-up deconstructs the spatial coherence of the shootout.

[7] See Gerald Mast's analysis of this shot in Mast: 313-314.

[8] The blurring of the distinction between the objective (what the camera

sees) and the subjective (what the character sees) is central to Deleuze's discussion of the "powers of the false," which corresponds to the simulacrum. (Deleuze 1989; 147-148)

[9] Note here that the painter and film critic Manny Farber, from the late 1940s on, has been the pre-eminent Anglophone Deleuzian crystal/ simulacrum film writer (although no more concerned with the western than other sorts of film). The organic regime had a minor place in his work; he preferred to concentrate on what surfaces did, what they might mean, and how he could surf the facets to other places. Frustratingly, for critics and readers over the decades, his critiques rarely dealt with a given film as a complete unit; he preferred to select bits from the surface and connect them to other surfaces in other films or in other media. A remarkable writer (for a film critic), his articles themselves are excellent examples of the folded plane metaphor.

[10] A notable use of the bounty hunter image in the period between the *Dollars* trilogy and *Unforgiven* is *Bladerunner*, which was adapted for the screen by David Webb Peoples, who also wrote *Unforgiven*.

[11] Simulacrum as crystal pun: here is an onomastic game in which the monetary terms "bill" and "money," as someone's name/label/signifier/ identity are playfully (because unsuccessfully, as intended) disguised.

[12] The image of Munny actually takes these images and further decenters them. When Munny (Eastwood) says to Ned (Morgan Freeman), "Remember that drover I shot through the mouth and his teeth came out the back of his head?", he evokes an image of recent splatter films or postmodern horror as well as Peckinpah's slow-motion violence and the reputation the *Dollars* trilogy had for exploitation-style violence in the 1960s. When Munny sits in the saloon before being beaten up, he clutches his coat around himself and shivers, looking at once the image of a gangster and a westerner. After being beaten by Little Bill, he crawls to safety, recalling a similar scene in *A Fistful of Dollars*.

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