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t e n

**captive images
in the
traumatic
western**

*the searchers, pursued,
once upon a time in the
west, and lone star*

j a n e t w a l k e r

Included on the laser disc and DVD editions of *The Searchers* are some striking images from the making of the film. Apparently linked together in the 1950s for a Warner Brothers promotional program hosted by Gig Young, these images, and the accompanying narration, echo the film's historiographic agenda. Where *The Searchers* tells the story of two pioneer families, the Edwardses and Jorgensens, carving out a living in Indian territory, this early "making of" document tells a parallel story of occupation. Images of tractors gouging roads "into a wilderness where roads had never existed" are followed by images of buses and trucks bringing "pioneers from Hollywood" (John Ford and company) into a formerly "trackless Navajo country . . . a thousand square mile domain of the yucca, the cactus, and the bones of earlier pioneers who had died." A sequence of shots of the Jorgensen home under construction is followed by shots of the Edwards homestead, which the narrator promises will be "entirely destroyed by fire in an Indian raid." As Natalie Wood recites after obvious coaching, "the raids of the renegade tribes were the greatest dangers that faced the frontier people." The set-building sequence

culminates in a high-angle shot from atop a ridge picturing *The Searchers*' company town "set down in the middle of a brooding wilderness."

One story of spirited physical conquest (that of the daring cast, crew, and stuntmen) echoes another (that of two unstoppable men who ride for five years to rescue a girl taken captive by the Comanche). And in both cases the landscape is crisscrossed and furrowed—scarred, if you will—by the territorial markings of the Euro-American arrivistes. Furthermore, both stories conform to the pattern of thousands of other westerns, planned and shown as fictional renditions of what Richard Slotkin, Richard White, and Ward Churchill among others have so eloquently exposed as America's own creation myth: the conquest of "the Indians" as a by-product of necessary and defensive westward expansion.

We know that the western is a historical genre, and that the history it presents is conventionalist. What I want to examine here is a particular formal feature of western film conventionalism: the catastrophic past event. I have come to the realization that westerns are not only grandly historical (peopled by historical personages and referencing actual occurrences), but that very many of them are *internally* historical as well. In countless westerns, events of disturbing proportions, events that are markedly anterior to the fictive present, propel the actions and the retaliatory violence of the narrative: the Ringo Kid must kill the Plummer brothers because they victimized his family and murdered his brother (*Stagecoach*); Lin McAdam spends years tracking the man who killed his father—we find out later that that man is his very own brother (*Winchester '73*); Union soldiers kill a man's wife and burn his house down, so he goes out for revenge (*The Outlaw Josey Wales*); a bad man stuffs a harmonica into a boy's mouth and leaves that boy supporting his elder brother hanging from a gibbet (the brother meets his inevitable end); the boy grows up with a mission, hunts down the evildoer, confronts him, and relates the haunting memory in the context of a fatal duel (*Once Upon a Time in the West*); Will Munny killed women and children (*Unforgiven*). And so they go.

The commonality of these narratives is striking, as is the way the past is handled, traumatically, as I will contend, in a series of quick flashes—rapid cuts, odd angles, lots of movement; or perhaps as a fully formed flashback, sometimes of uncertain origin (in *Once Upon a Time in the West* the two men "share" the memory¹); or as a trail of signifiers strewn across the landscape (a bloody guidon, a burning wagon, a shred of gingham); or, finally, as a structuring absence—the unseen past that animates present action and gives it its charged violence, or, at the other extreme, its extraordinary but characteristic *lack* of affect (Martin in *The Searchers*: "I hope you die!"; Ethan, laconically: "That'll be the day."). In retrospective westerns such as these, past events elude the realist register to suggest another way of knowing, one marked by ellipsis, uncertainty, and repetition.

The aim of this essay, then, is to identify a prominent subgroup of

westerns, made up of what I'll call "traumatic westerns," in which past events of a catastrophic nature are represented so as to challenge both the realist representational strategies of a genre that often trades on historical authenticity and the ideological precepts of the myth of Manifest Destiny. Traumatic westerns, it might be said, are counterrealistic and counterhistorical. They are those films in which the contradictions of American conquest—a kind of generalized trauma—become invested in particular narrative scenarios.

There are two preeminent abodes where trauma lodges, whether found separately or together in one film: the western captivity narrative and the narrative of familial succession. Both rely more than most other western narratives on the sequela of events, capture and rescue in the former case and generational accession in the second, and both are represented very often through ellipses and marked temporal warping.²

Consider *Blazing the Trail* (Thomas Ince, 1912), *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), and *Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990) as examples of the captivity narrative in action. In *Blazing the Trail* Indians stand on a bluff overlooking a pioneer encampment. Their strategy planned, they approach a family of settlers who greet them, offer food, and proffer guns to "curious Indians." But the Indians have other ideas: grabbing the guns, they shoot the father and mother of the family, wound the adult son Jack, carry off the unmarried daughter, and leave the wagon burning.

Maureen Turim, in *Flashbacks in Film*, is right to emphasize the "disruption and postponement" that characterize *Blazing the Trail*'s particular rendition of the flashback.³ In a twelve minute film, delay has got to be hard won and deliberate. And here the capture is bracketed by both delay and distance: our hero, the daughter's sweetheart, sees the telltale smoke but just . . . can't . . . get . . . there in time to stop what he "should" have been on hand to prevent. All he can do is kneel beside the dead father at the smoking campsite and then take off after the daughter. What adds interest to the sequence is the fact that we, too, are given to be late arrivals at the scene. As spectators, we arrive before the hero, but only after the parents have been shot—we don't actually see the shooting at that point. All we see is the struggling daughter disappearing around the back of the wagon in the arms of Indian braves. But here the mind's eye is enabled by filmic representation. Jack has stumbled to his feet and staggered off in search of help. Although he collapses, he revives sufficiently to tell the wagon train of settlers what has happened. This we see in a flashback that fills in the events of the massacre itself from the time we left the family making welcoming gestures to the Indians to the moment of the daughter's abduction. Thus is capture in *Blazing the Trail* marked as a trauma, one that seems to haunt the young men of the narrative, and one whose "pastness" is marked by delay and the flashback device.

Though perhaps difficult to recall in the context of an ostensibly pro-Native American film, there is also an Indian attack scene in *Dances with Wolves*. The sequence is presented as the childhood memory of the

film's heroine, Christine or Stands With A Fist, a woman who has been raised by a Lakota family after her own family was massacred by Pawnee. Indians approach a pioneer settlement. The men of the settlement, fathers of two children looking on from afar, walk out to meet them. In an instant, the Indians attack. As the pioneers turn to flee, they are mortally wounded with flung tomahawks that lodge in their backs. A young Christine, one of the children looking on, runs off across a field.

This is, in my view, the most frightening of all such massacres and the most reprehensible in its portrayal of Indian savagery: the children watching helplessly—little captive witnesses—as the tomahawks fly in slow motion, but inexorably, toward the turned backs of their unsuspecting victims; the disembodied voice of the mother calling for her daughter . . . "Christiine" . . . the sound waves floating out across the sudden vastness of the homestead we know to be already as good as reclaimed by the wilderness from which it had been so tenuously carved; the mother as good as scalped.

The scenario abides here as an example of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "genre memory": the continuing existence of an earlier generic paradigm in the narrative sediment of a later one.⁴ The pointed pastness of this flashback differentiates Pawnee savagery from the noble Lakota of the film's present, and old filmic conventions from supposedly enlightened new ones. And Christine is not actually taken captive. She escapes across the plains to find safety with the Lakota. But, in *Dances with Wolves* on this occasion of Stands With A Fist's traumatic memory, long-held stereotypes erupt through the thin crust of liberal sediment, belying the film's pretense to present an enlightened picture of Native Americans.

Moreover, this seemingly exceptional moment actually does penetrate the larger meaning of the film. As Ward Churchill has observed in passing (but monumentally), the whole film may be construed as a captivity narrative that ends as "Lt. Dunbar and the female 'captive' he has 'recovered' ride off into the proverbial sunset, leaving their Lakota friends to be slaughtered by and subordinated to the United States."⁵

In *The Searchers*, the massacre of Aaron, Martha, and Ben Edwards, and the abduction of the two girls, Lucy and Debbie, is not, technically, an event of the past. It occurs in its proper chronological place in the narrative, offscreen, yes, but still simultaneous with events in the present mode. The men ride out after what they think are Kiowa cattle rustlers, while back home the Comanche stage a murder raid on the largely unprotected homestead.

Yet, technicalities apart, the massacre belongs securely to the traumatic past. Steven Spielberg has said that the film "contains the single most harrowing moment in any film I've ever seen,"⁶ and one possible supposition would be that he's referring to what Janey Place has called "the astounding close-up of [John Wayne's] face" taken over the back of his horse, as he realizes his brother's family is lost.⁷ So many things are indeed astounding about this moment.⁸ For one thing, it is the mature

expression by director John Ford of a previously existing cinematic trope. In *Blazing the Trail* the hero senses the worst when he sees from afar the line of smoke wafting over the bluff from the direction of the campsite. But we see only the back of his head, and, of course, this silent short in no way offers the character identification of a feature narrative. Perhaps it is *Red River* that inspired Ford,⁹ for it contains a shot of Wayne's face at the moment he realizes that the smoke visible over the rise comes from the burning wagon train and signals the death of Fen, the woman he loves . . . and that there's nothing he can do about it. In *Red River* Tom Dunson (Wayne) doesn't bother to investigate, as far as we know. All he can do is hunker down for a fight with the Indians who come after him, and cherish the bracelet he had given Fen once he recovers it from the wrist of an Indian brave.

What I find most compelling about this trope, and in particular Ford's rendition of it in *The Searchers*, is what I'll call the "prospective pastness" of this sequence in future preterite. At the moment of the character Ethan's (Wayne's) close-up, the family may still be alive, but by the time he gets there, the family will have been killed (or abducted). It's already too late, even though it hasn't happened yet. Another paradox is that slowness now equals quickness. Ethan stops to feed and rest his horse, and by so doing bypasses the other men and arrives home first. But then there's nothing to be done upon arrival except to read the signs of what has already transpired: the smoking buildings, the ravaged bodies, the abandoned rag doll (and in the novel, a bit of buffalo robe where Debbie had gone to hide, and Martha's severed hand, a toy the Comanche "tossed . . . from one to another, capering and whooping, until they lost it in the dark").¹⁰

Ethan's "look back"—a last look, in a way—is one of premature grieving (since they are not yet dead). The present of the look back (when they are still alive) is already being made past from the standpoint of an imagined future (when they are dead). And all of this is mixed instantly with Ethan's guilt over his inability to help them and his failure to properly protect them. It is the "future past" now "present" in his look back that becomes the trauma that will haunt him . . . is already haunting him . . . in advance of their deaths. Of course he will never really see what happened at the massacre, but can only imagine. And he will continue to look for that scene/seen, to search for whatever can be recovered (like Fen's bracelet in *Red River*)—be they scraps and artifacts or a girl captive. Thus, it is Ethan's instant recognition as expressed by his look and not the massacre per se that is the traumatic event for him because his imagination summons the horrible images of what has not yet occurred. And his subsequent search for the captive girl will be his attempt to "recover" his (normal, pretraumatic) memory. Thus, the western landscape becomes a mental landscape. This thought is also suggested by the poster for *The Searchers*: two mounted men, tiny in the distance of a desert landscape over which they ride, and the words "He had to find her. . ."

in wavy script as if to evoke an echoing call or thought,¹¹ the graphic merging of landscape and mindscape.

The massacre scene is doubly elusive for the spectator. Not only do we not see the massacre itself (parallel editing has placed us with Ethan, the properties of cinema spectating have made us helpless to act, and no flashback will be provided), but also we are not given (thankfully) the sight of Martha's corpse.¹² This is what Ethan sees, presumably, when he ducks into the burned cabin (the camera is in there too, but angled toward Ethan and not toward what he sees), emerges reeling, and bars Martin from entering. And the smoking ruins that further veil the scene help induct the spectator into Ethan's (and Martin's) realm of horrifying imagination and loss. Now we, too, have a stake in the "ruins of memory."¹³

The ability to discern the meaning of prior events by the traces they leave is highly valued. Martin Pauley notices "something mighty fishy" about the trail the Comanche left to lure the men. But his interpretive insight comes too late anyway, even if Ethan had paid him any mind. In the novel, the men initially debate the significance of subtle signs they spot along the trail until their meaning becomes obvious to all: "This here's a murder raid. . . . They drove your cattle to pull us out."¹⁴

And, again, in the novel, the futility of hindsight, of missed signs and tardy interpretations is underlined by a joint reflection that the narrator has the characters engage in as they follow the trail of dead cattle: a reflection that contrasts impending catastrophe with the sharper vigilance of prior years. In it we read, "The last five minutes had taken them ten years back into the past, when every night of the world was an uncertain thing. The years of watchfulness and struggle had brought them some sense of confidence and security toward the last; but now all that was struck away as if they had their whole lives to do over again."¹⁵ This passage echoes, in turn, the fatalistic reverie of Aaron Edwards ("Henry" in the novel) with which the book begins. As he scouts his property at sundown, knowing something's wrong and pretty sure he knows just what, he reflects on "eighteen years of hanging on" in the face of danger ever more apparent. Yes, there had been signs: "Sometimes a man's senses picked up dim warnings he didn't even recognize."¹⁶ But he had not realized their meaning, nor had he acted . . . in time: "If he could have seen, in any moment of the years they had lived here, the endless hazards that lay ahead, he would have quit that same minute and got Martha out of there if he had had to tie her."¹⁷ Again, we have a realization that comes too late: a powerless vision of impending events; and an equally powerless vision of present events from the perspective of an imagined, inevitable, lethal future. He already didn't get Martha out in time. His novelistic reverie matches Ethan's filmic gaze: the future passes before their eyes and renders the present past. Temporal elasticity is there in film and novel both, as is the work of imagination. Reading *The Searchers* as novel we must imagine what people and things look like (as we would

reading other novels), but we are given Aaron's thoughts. Watching *The Searchers* in film we are given an open landscape—a certain amplitude of space—in which to conjure Ethan's thoughts. The look and the land: this film exemplifies the power of the trauma western to transform physical landscape into a mental traumascap for character and spectators alike.¹⁸

As the narrative unrolls its five years of searching, the massacre's pastness will be cinched. But the reminders of its torments will resurface in the form of objects scavenged from the landscape: Lucy's dress, the shred of Debbie's apron, the Civil War medallion.

Cathy Caruth writes that "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event."¹⁹ In this sense *The Searchers*, and other westerns in which the catastrophic past event is a prominent feature of the narrative, are *traumatized*—and now I use the term technically. They are "possessed by" certain events and images (those swatches of gingham) that keep turning up both in single films and in multiple westerns of the traumatic cycle as a whole.

Specifically, traumatic westerns share the formal features of traumatic memory as associated with and described by the literature of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The American Psychiatric Association defines PTSD as a response to an event or events that takes the form of "distressing recollections," "recurrent distressing dreams," "illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes."²⁰ This, to my mind, describes very well how certain ostensibly classical westerns depart from strictly realistic conventions to depict catastrophic events in a subjective style marked by nonlinearity, repetition, emotional affect, metonymic symbolism, and flashbacks. I'm not saying that the characters suffer from PTSD (though if one were to psychologize a fictional character, that diagnosis would be as good as any). What I do want to say is that the films themselves display the formal and stylistic characteristics of the traumatic mindscape in which disturbances of memory are prominent.

As Judith Herman expresses it, "trauma simultaneously enhances and impairs memory. . . . On the one hand, traumatized people remember too much; on the other hand, they remember too little."²¹ Writing about the mental changes found in "casualties of war and political oppression—combat veterans, political prisoners, and concentration camp survivors; and in the casualties of sexual and domestic oppression—rape victims, battered women, and abused children,"²² Herman reports that such individuals may relate stories about their experiences in which large parts of the story are missing or misplaced. Or, the survivors of such experiences may not have ready access to the memory of the things that befell them. Specifically, whereas people relating terrifying experiences tend to be unusually accurate in describing their "gist" and "central detail," they tend to be inaccurate in the "peripheral detail, contextual information, [and] time sequencing."²³ From a broader perspective, Herman delineates what I have called, elsewhere, the "traumatic

paradox.”²⁴ That is, the very fact that an event of horrifying proportions really did occur interferes with the ability of a witness, survivor, or participant to remember and report accurately the actual details of that event. The catastrophic event is, literally, mind-boggling.

Herman and others, including Lenore Terr and Elizabeth Waites, have done pathbreaking work in the area of PTSD,²⁵ and theirs is a convincing argument that traumatic experiences change peoples’ ability to remember what they went through.²⁶ Yet there remains a dearth of literature documenting the specific nature of the alterations people make and/or the embellishments they add to their stories. What these clinicians and authors *have* established is that such material must come either from the realm of the rememberer’s own experiences, including her experience of interactions with others and with media texts, and/or from her fantasy life. Traumatic memory, these researchers show, mingles the realms of fantasy and reality.

If all this is so, then what is the nature of the underlying traumas with which audiences are presented in traumatic westerns? How can we account for the perseveration that produces and reproduces these particular stories? What is achieved in the recourse to the nonrealist register? What insights can be gained from sorting out the realms of fantasy and reality in the traumatic western? My answer is historiographic in nature, and also psychological. Traumatic westerns feature the American mind and bodyscape in history; their internal pastness doubles the western’s historical setting, interpolating the spectator into the terrain of history and memory.

As PTSD literature teaches us, traumatic memories, due to the incomprehensible nature of the events that produced them, tend not to resolve themselves into clearly demarcated facts and falsehoods. Instead, traumatic memories are made up of veridical *and* revised elements; that is, of elements that refer directly to determinate past happenings, and elements that have been mentally “shade[ed] and patch[ed] . . . combine[ed] and delete[d]” according to the exigencies of the current world of the rememberer.²⁷

And, when the rememberer is a perpetrator of violent crimes, denial and prevarication along with the unconscious vicissitudes of memory are all the more common. Although relatively little is known about the mental life of people who perpetrate violent crimes, Herman suggests that one common line of defense used by perpetrators is to “attack the credibility of the victim and anyone who supports the victim. . . . The victim is deluded; the victim lies; the victim fantasizes; the victim is manipulative; the victim is manipulated.” Herman stresses the eagerness of the perpetrator to put his own “spin” on reality and explores the relative power of perpetrators to do so: “The more powerful the perpetrator, the greater will be his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments will prevail.”²⁸

This is the sort of “shading” and the sort of relationship to history that obtains in captivity westerns. It must be partially true that people have long enjoyed scenes of Indians massacring settlers and taking captives because these scenes represent both the enormity of conquest’s obstacles (“the greatest dangers that faced the frontier people” à la *The Searchers* promo) and because they seem to justify retribution, leading to the gratifying search and rescue portions of the captivity narrative in which the Indians wind up dead. But might this not be a perpetrator’s view of traumatic events? It is true in reality, as seen in conventional fictionalizations, that some Native Americans killed or abducted European settlers. But it is also true that the vast majority of the victims of these encounters were Native Americans. Thus I contend that while captivity sequences do recall and “justify” the settlers’s perspective, because they are traumatic texts they also do more than that. Repeated in multiple films, characterized by fragmentary imaging and stereotypical portrayals, these texts represent the “gist” and “central details” of Indian/settler confrontation—the conquest of American Indians—in a form in which “contextual information, [and] time sequencing” are altered (see Herman). In other words, at the same time that captivity sequences ascribe an insistent false consecutiveness (“they started it—we were only fighting back”) to rewrite conquest as defense, they also delete, dissociate, and reverse the genocidal onus. In short, these texts represent the massacre of American Indians *as* the massacre of settlers.²⁹ Indian savagery redux shadows white vengeance as the misbegotten marker of Native American dispossession and death, and the subjugation of Indians by whites is referenced only obliquely through the shifting roles of fantasy structures in traumatic texts. Traumatic captivity sequences represent indirectly a historical reality they cannot really justify: the conquest of Native Americans and the appropriation of their land.

Memory work sees through such deceptive textual operations. The ellipses, symbols, and smoke that characterize captivity sequences: also signal their status as traumatic texts and the concomitant need to approach them through what Ian Hacking calls a “memoro-politics” of reading.³⁰ As Robert Burgoyne has argued in relation to the more recent film *Thunderheart*, so too in captivity sequences: attacking Indians function as projections of Euro-American selves.³¹ This is facilitated by the commonplace doubling of Hero and Savage (as with Ethan and Scar), and (at another level) by the commonplace casting of caucasian actors in the roles of Indians (“racial drag” signaling reversal). Moreover, the fictional westerner’s consistent failure to act in time to prevent what he knows is coming—experience in future preterite—is a better description of what must have been the Native Americans’ and not the conquerors’ experience of conquest. American Indian history in traumatic westerns is not unrepresented. It is there. But it is there in another guise, legible through the reading practices appropriate to the traumatic text.

As suggested at the outset, the captivity theme is not the only one through which the western's engagement with the traumatic past is realized. Perhaps more narratively diffuse but of equal significance is the theme of fathers, sons, and familial succession. Here, too, the past abides as an unrecoverable time of wrenching trauma. *Pursued*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and *Lone Star* are all films in which grown men are driven to action by traumatic boyhood events. More specifically, in these films and others like them, the death of a father, or a father figure, looms large. In *Little Big Man* a boy bursts into a bar and fatally shoots Wild Bill Hickok, all the while shouting, "I've been looking for you all my life—you killed my father." The joke—that a mere boy could lay claim to a protracted past, and that he could successfully ambush the gunfighter Hickok—wouldn't work if dead fathers (mentors, or brothers) and lives exhausted by family loyalty were not common in western films. These themes are indeed central to a significant number of westerns, especially those, including *Stagecoach*, *Winchester '73*, *The Man From Laramie*, and *Nevada Smith*, that define what Will Wright has called the "vengeance variation" of the genre.³²

Of particular interest here, for course, are films in which past events pertaining to familial succession now are visually and/or aurally evoked as the memories, dreams, and/or hallucinations of central characters. Represented, once again, through nonrealist devices including the deliberate blurring of past and present time frames, uncertain narration, and nonsynched sound, these hazy evocations of times past suggest a traumatic logic at work here as in the captivity sequences.

Virginia Wright Wexman has provided what I take to be the most extended and insightful exposition of dynastic progression in the western, "the family on the land."³³ Westerns about familial succession represent, she argues, a regulated system of property inheritance ensuing from father to son, threatened by exterior agencies, but sufficiently entrenched to counter even the "genre's pervasive emphasis on violence and killing."³⁴ And, by attending to the role of the family in this subgroup of westerns, Wexman is able to bring gender issues to the fore, showing the centrality of gender to a genre so often regarded as one that leaves women out. She reveals, in short, the inseparability in the western of formations of gender and the frontier.³⁵

Wexman begins her section "The Land as Property and the Ideal of Dynastic Marriage" by stating, succinctly, "What is most conspicuously at issue in westerns is not the right to possess women but the right to possess land."³⁶ But as we see, tracing Wexman's developing argument, the right to possess land is after all based on an "ideal of dynastic marriage," returning ultimately to gender relations, specifically "the right to possess women." Bringing contemporary cultural studies literature on the west together with Friedrich Engels's ideas about and Edward Shorter's history of gender and property, Wexman shows that the couple

in the western is not the romantic essence that nostalgic memory conjures up, but rather a supremely economic unit, a "created" couple. For example, in *Arizona*, Wexman recounts, "William Holden decides to marry Jean Arthur on first seeing her, and Arthur, who needs someone to help run her ranch, makes up her mind about Holden almost as quickly."³⁷ Not only do westerns abound with such "affectionless" marriages "held together by considerations of property and lineage,"³⁸ but the "economic struggles involved in establishing the presence of the family on the land" and "issues of inheritance" very often outweigh depictions of any kind of courtship at all in western narratives.³⁹

Then what's the problem (apart from the all too historical conception of women as property)? If familial succession westerns are to be seen as traumatic, wherein lies the catastrophe? What is the motive force of traumatic representation in this subgroup of westerns? Although Wexman seems to regard dynastic progression as a largely positive force that "counters" or perhaps compensates for the violence of the western, she does mention the frequent theme of rivalry between brothers and the "odd aura of incest prohibition,"⁴⁰ usually of the mother-son variety, that pervades these films. To my thinking these insights could be extended. Familial succession films harbor a landscape that is every bit as traumatized as that of the captivity western, and traumatized precisely at the point where property informs intergenerational conflict.

In *Pursued*, Jeb Rand (Robert Mitchum) is in a position to inherit precisely because his father has been killed. In a distinct echo of Sigmund Freud's family romance, Jeb finds himself adopted into a wealthier family, one that is, conveniently for the boy's prospects, already missing its patriarch. The events he struggles to remember against defensive forgetting have already accrued to his economic benefit. And in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, the sadistic act that the boy sets out to avenge (the hanging noted at the beginning of this chapter) is perpetrated by a land-hungry bad man whose representation locates him simultaneously outside of and inside the film's core family unit. As with captivity narratives where the external threat posed by Indians veils the homicidal impulse of settlers, so with westerns of familial succession the family itself harbors a murderous rivalry, veiled but not obviated by the demonization of the evil antagonist.

These are Oedipal issues and Wexman is right to bemoan the dearth of psychoanalytic analyses of the western. The westerns she discusses are unmistakably "anchored by issues of a compelling psychological nature,"⁴¹ as are traumatic westerns by definition. In view of this lack, two lengthy articles on *Pursued*, one by Paul Willemen (1974) and one by Andrew Britton (1976), are still unsurpassed early contributions to the psychoanalytic study of the western.⁴²

Both authors attribute to the film an ambivalence about the family, and specifically about the father: "It is one of the film's main strategies to imply that, whether protective or aggressive, the parent generates anxiety

in the children," writes Britton.⁴³ Willemen argues that the traumatic sequence presented multiple times in flashback is in fact a "primal fantasy" expressing the child's wish to eliminate the father. It's particularly interesting, given this consistency of thought, that the Britton article is a refutation of Willemen's, with the main point of attack being precisely Willemen's identification of primal scene imagery and "incestuous overtones" in *Pursued*.

I agree with Willemen on both points. The film is frankly Oedipal and the rivalry is not just between the boy Jeb and the bad man Grant Callum who is after him, but also between the boy Jeb and his own father. It comes as something of a surprise, then, to note that in the same article that Willemen identifies father-son rivalry he also denies it, saying that virtually all of the men *except* Grant (who is bad) stand in for the father. In other words, both critics acknowledge *and also disavow* that the film couches a mutual murderousness between father and son.

If anything, Willemen could have been more, and not less, adamant about the Oedipal impulses that inform the film. But the blind spots of his otherwise brilliant and pioneering article are likely those of its time: his attributions of Oedipality wither because they are not grounded in historical exposition of the centrality of land ownership in the West/western (Wexman's "*family on the land*"), and because the contemporary literature on posttraumatic stress disorder had not yet been written at the time.

I return to *Pursued*, therefore, to locate as traumatic representation some of Willemen's insights about the function of memory and imagination in the film, to add to some of his findings, and to suggest the film's intimations of Oedipality provide a counterreading of the inheritance structures that undergird American settlement.

In *Pursued*, the Robert Mitchum character, Jeb Rand, experiences recurring flashbacks to a scene he witnessed as a boy of about three or four years old. But he can't mentally pin down the details of what took place—nor will his adoptive mother, who was also present at the scene, tell him. Finally, in desperation to remember, Jeb returns to the place where the events occurred, the little house at Bear Paw Butte, and waits for the return of memory and for events to come to a head. This return is particularly prominent plotwise, for it forms the start of the film, the body of which is told in flashback from that beginning point as Jeb relates his life story to Thorley (Teresa Wright), his adoptive sister who became his wife. At the film's climax, Jeb "recovers" the memory of what he had witnessed from his childhood hiding place below a trap door: the death of his father, sister, and two brothers in a gun battle with the Callum brothers, one of whom is also killed. With the memory recovered, the film proceeds toward resolution.

What Jeb learns is that the basis of the feud was an extramarital affair between Jeb's father and "Ma" Callum, the woman who would carry young Jeb away when the shooting died out and become his adoptive

mother. Her husband (the Callum who died in battle) and his brother, Grant Callum, killed Jeb's father because he provoked adultery in the Callum clan. And Grant left the battle with every intention of finishing the job by hunting Jeb down and killing him, too.

Because Jeb knew nothing of this before his final return to Bear Paw Butte, the autobiographical incidents he recounts to Thorley are introduced as a series of lucky escapes, near misses Jeb avoided through dumb luck alone. Audiences, however, are able to appreciate the depth of Jeb's predicament because we know more than he could have, either at the time events were occurring, or even later, when he relates them to Thorley.⁴⁴ For example, as a ten- or eleven-year-old, Jeb didn't know that it was Grant Callum who shot the colt out from under him, nor did he know that the intended target wasn't the colt at all but rather Jeb himself. Therefore, *we* know that Jeb's *not* knowing makes him a sitting duck for Grant Callum. Moreover, Jeb's not knowing keeps he and Thorley apart. He needs to know about his past in order to secure his future and to preserve his marriage to Thorley. Thus, as in *The Searchers*, the mood of the film is retrospective immediacy. Jeb must learn what he already did not know before it's too late. But this time, unlike in *The Searchers*, it's not too late.

The key to safety is memory, but memory is presented as a dicey proposition. As Paul Willemen points out, the most remarkable element of the flashback sequences in *Pursued* is the "doubt, or rather . . . ambivalence" that "is created regarding Jeb's memories: the distinction between memories and imagination has been blurred" and "the reality status of that memory is thereby evacuated."⁴⁵ The initial image whose reality status is in doubt is that of a man who "come[s] killing." This latter image is the inaugural memory of the film. "I don't know all of it, but I know some," says Jeb to Thorley. "I've been thinking and figuring," he continues. "This is where it started, this is where it's gonna end. See that rise? They'll be coming over that. They'll come killing." Jeb looks screen left and his words are supported by the blurred image of a single man superimposed on the desert landscape. The specter's threatening words (presented in voice-over) echo over the image: "Come out or we'll come in after you." A close-up of Thorley follows; she looks in the direction Jeb indicates. But the eyeline match yields only an empty landscape: "Jeb honey, there's no one out there. You're imagining." "I'm not imagining, I'm remembering," Jeb counters, and, at that point in the film, we can't tell for sure which it is.

Near the end of the film events occur that take up the action where it was interrupted by the extended flashback and they seem to bear out the validity of Jeb's memories. Grant Callum appears over the rise, this time with the intent to kill the grown-up Jeb. However, it is never completely certain whether Jeb was, as he claimed, "remembering," and not imagining or, as Andrew Britton suggests, "predicting." And, as Willemen further contends, this "distinction between phantasy and the real operates



Figs. 10.1 and 10.2. Jeb (Robert Mitchum) remembers or predicts what happened or is yet to happen in *Pursued* (Raoul Walsh, 1947).

only within the film [the diegesis].⁴⁶ Objectively speaking, the formal operations of the film support no such distinction between fantasy and reality.

Willemen's other strand of argument is that the film functions according to a logic of Oedipal desire. What Jeb witnessed, a father shooting and a mother "lying down," constitutes a Freudian "primal

scene" ("a scene of parental coitus, observed by the child or inferred and phantasized on the basis of a re-activation of unconscious memory-traces"⁴⁷). And it is a scene that ends well for the boy. Willemen describes the events as follows: "After they have gazed into each other's eyes, she takes him into her arms. No wonder the child is not anxious to leave and grabs hold of the doorposts in an effort to remain at the scene of his triumph."

Moreover, the film's character roles are overdetermined and shifting: Thorley is not only Jeb's stepsister and then wife, but also a "(narcissistic) love object/mirror image to Jeb" and "stand-in for mother."⁴⁸ Adam, Thorley's brother, and Jeb's too after the latter's adoption into the family, is rightful heir to the Callum ranch and thus another occupant of the father role.

This is where Willemen could go further, both with the Oedipal issues he distinguishes and with the supporting stylistic analysis. Jeb's memory/hallucination is actually made up of two conjoined portions, and this doubleness is key to the film's central concern: the threat that adult men/fathers pose toward boys/sons. In the main, what Jeb struggles to recall is the gun battle that results in the death of his father and siblings. And we are given four more-or-less complete renditions of this emergent memory. But the other portion of the memory is its sort of prologue: the hallucination/memory of the man who "comes killing." And he *keeps on* coming. When he ambushes Jeb, killing the colt, he starts a train of actions that triggers one of Jeb's flashbacks. Next, he manipulates events so that Jeb has to go off to fight in the Spanish-American War, where Jeb is wounded and suffers another flashback. Finally, as the film's own flashback structure comes full circle, Grant Callum arrives at Bear Paw Butte to kill Jeb Rand, who is now a grown man.

But Grant Callum isn't "the father"—or is he? Willemen, before me, has discussed how the gun-battle-as-primal-scene couches disavowal and Oedipal fantasy. Jeb disavows the presence of his father in the first extended telling of the memory ("Daddy, Daddy," the boy Jeb cries. "He wasn't there," the adult Jeb narrates). And in the final telling Jeb recounts his father's death and his own flight from the scene in the arms of his new mother. But Willemen hesitates over the role of Grant Callum. He does perceive that "[a]ny representative of this scene," including Callum, "must bear the marks of both the father's castration threat, ie. the name of the Father, the Law, and of Jeb's blocking out of castration."⁴⁹ And Willemen acknowledges that "Grant Callum therefore functions as an incarnation of the conflicting elements at play in the phantasy."⁵⁰ But Willemen refuses what his own argument suggests: that Callum might occupy the father role. There is no shortage of other minor characters to whom Willemen *is* willing to grant the father role, including Thorley's beau Prentice and Jeb's mentor, Dingle; only Callum is left out. Callum, writes Willemen, is "not a representative of the father, but of the elements represented in the scene, he is a representative of the representation." And

Willemen concludes his study as a whole by arguing that the “center of interest of the phantasy” in *Pursued* is not, after all, the spectacle of Jeb’s nightmare/memory, but rather the look itself. Thus, Willemen’s title, “The Fugitive Subject,” indicates that it is the condition of split subjectivity that is central to the film and not the threat posed by the father, denied or otherwise.

I beg to differ. Willemen’s claim that Callum is a “representation of a representation” seems suspiciously like a disavowal of the elements he himself has identified, which elements include, of course, the mechanism of disavowal itself. Willemen stops short of arguing—he seems to deny—that a murderous character could occupy the father role. I believe a murderous father can and does. The Callum character functions precisely to embody the most potent of threats posed by fathers against sons: to come killing (sexual pun intended).

It is the conjoined nature of Jeb’s memories that ensures that Grant Callum does indeed occupy the role of a murderous father in the film’s fantasy logic. The image of the man who “come[s] killing” is not repeated in conjunction with the recovered memory of the gun battle, but *replaced* by it. The killer’s image is followed by the first rendition of the gun battle scene in which Jeb’s actual father is absent, never to be seen. Jeb usurps the place of his real/dead father with Ma, which makes him vulnerable to the father’s wrath, here embodied by Grant, the man who “keeps coming.” In this way a substitution is made: bad man for good; effectual man for ineffectual; killer for father.

Another aspect of the film that links Callum to the violent father is the fact that, while “they’ll come killing” refers to a group of men, it is only Callum that we see in the flashback.⁵¹ There’s no sign of the others, including Callum’s brother, who must have participated in the battle. Thus, the lone man in the image is *the* prominent male figure in Jeb’s life and psychosexual makeup. And his intent is murderous. None of this is at all surprising in Freudian terms, where a boy may very well perceive his own beloved father as being eminently capable of violence against the mother and against the boy himself.

True, the film represents said threat only in fantasy form, “distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes.”⁵² Callum is not *actually* Jeb’s father, nor has *this* Callum known Jeb’s mother. However, the appearance of the Callum mirage adjacent to a scene that depicts and erases a father’s violence does indeed suggest that Callum incarnates a role that can’t be represented more directly nor talked about critically without the urge to deny: the role of the violent father.

The father’s threat has the further distinction of being at the crux of the film’s productive “ambivalence” over memory, imagination, and, prediction. Not only do the conjoined memories substitute Callum for the absent father, but they clinch the substitution’s violent import: what we see when we see Jeb mentally conjuring his father is the image (achieved through the technique of superimposition) of his father’s

spurred boots stomping on his face. Moreover, the dialogue given to the character Jeb when he finally (supposedly) remembers the traumatic scene downsizes a two-family feud into a one-family affair involving his own nuclear family. Two shooting men collapse into one: “The man shooting was my father. My sister lay on the floor dead. And my brothers were prone, too.”

The plot justifies the son’s desire to have the father eliminated by weaving a story of self-defense against an evil outside agent. In this film Grant is killed by Ma so that Jeb can go off (in possession of the Callum ranch?) with Thorley. But on the level accessed through trauma literacy, it is the father’s death that reads as a necessary and desirable preamble to “dynastic marriage.”

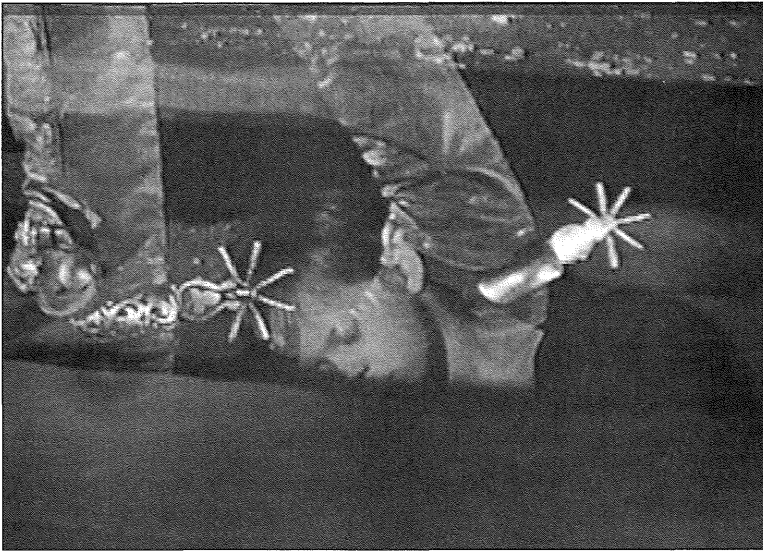
In a limited Freudian psychoanalytic reading, one could say that *Pursued* figures rivalry and castration as the “imaginings” (read: fantasies tout court) of the boy child—a fictional character.⁵³ But I think the film does more. What it also provides, and what psychological theories of trauma allow us to discern in it, is a meditation on the unpalatable nature of memory.

As Cathy Caruth explains, “[T]he impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time. . . . [Traumatic events] assume their force precisely in their temporal delay.”⁵⁴ Jeb claims he is remembering and not imagining, but his purchase on the events that occurred is imperfect. For one thing, he has forgotten them until the rush of memory at Bear Paw Butte. But what is more significant is the fact that, even when he has supposedly remembered what transpired, gaps and inconsistencies remain. Why has he remembered only a solitary opponent? And shouldn’t he have remembered his father’s dead body rather than no father at all? What he claims to remember, then, is never borne out fully by the events of the film.

Trauma-generated delayed memory is applicable not only to character memory but to the viewer’s experience as well. Trauma westerns invite a way of apprehending the world that is disorienting. When we take in Callum and characters like him in trauma westerns, we read realist representation pragmatically (all is what it seems) *and* we read traumatic representation fantastically (meaning and identity are shifting propositions): Callum is and isn’t the father; Callum as father/not father is/isn’t violent; fathers are/are not capable of violence toward sons.

That the theme of father-son rivalry and the rhetoric of ambivalent memory resonate for audiences is suggested by their presence in other films. *Once Upon a Time in the West* and *Lone Star* also pay sustained attention to the son’s trauma and its ongoing effects and they, like many other westerns, deepen and complicate the “good but dead father” plot, or, as I see it, partial pretext.

Christopher Frayling writes that *Once Upon a Time in the West* is full of references to Hollywood westerns, and that this use of quotations as



Figs. 10.3 and 10.4. A conjured image of paternal violence in *Pursued*. What the boy experienced. What the man remembers/dreams.

well as his “professional expertise in Hollywood film technique” are what allowed Sergio Leone, in his spaghetti westerns, to overturn the myths of Hollywood fare. *The Iron Horse*, *Johnny Guitar*, *High Noon*, *Shane*, and *Dodge City*, not to mention the themes and settings of any number of John Ford films, are all cited by Frayling as films “quoted” in Bernardo Bertolucci’s three-hundred-page treatment for *Once Upon a Time* and/or in the finished film. That Frayling doesn’t mention *Pursued* is surprising, for *Once Upon a Time* seems to draw from that psychological western not

only its central character motivation (a man driven by a traumatic boyhood experience), but also its central memory fragment: the initially blurred image of a single man approaching, step by step, superimposed on the desertscape, his left arm (the same arm Callum lost to the gun battle in *Pursued*) raised to grasp a coat slung over his shoulder. This image, accompanied each time on the soundtrack by the nondiegetic wail of a harmonica, appears twice to the character Harmonica (Charles Bronson), and then once more, this time in focus, as a preface to the revelation of the traumatic past event.

Here, as in *Pursued*, a recurrent but unfocused and incomplete image and musical theme haunt a character’s memory and also the film’s mise-en-scène. The association with *Pursued* is even stronger for the fact that, while we assume Harmonica knows why he’s hunting Frank (that is, we assume he recalls the incident he’s avenging), the initial blurring and increasing clarity of Frank’s (Henry Fonda’s) image—for it is he who comes—evoke a process of memory retrieval that is unmotivated by the narrative alone but very suggestive of what Jeb undergoes in *Pursued*. Of course, the use of soft focus is a practical solution to the need to withhold Frank’s identity from viewers. Whatever its intent, the device itself constructs the traumatic past as a quantity that may only be purchased on the installment plan. *Knowing* is represented identically to *remembering*, as a progressive transaction entered into jointly by viewers and characters.

Frayling may have neglected the association of *Once Upon a Time* with *Pursued* because he takes “the impact of technological developments on the Western frontier” to be the main theme of the film.⁵⁵ What I want to show is that such issues of frontier history *are* quite central but that, far from overwhelming the aspects of the film concerned with the man who came killing, they are inextricably bound to this image of adult male violence.

Frank is not only a killer, but a child killer and sadist to boot. Near the start of the film, and in the narrative present, he and his men sneak up on the McBain homestead where the (iconically European) wedding feast is being prepared. There they slaughter the entire family, minus the bride—McBain’s second wife, who has not yet arrived. This is the “ballet de mort” that Frayling sees as the “‘pessimistic’ version of the family dance” in *Shane*, “enjoyed by the rugged homesteaders on Independence Day.”⁵⁶

The McBain massacre sequence is also a very appropriate precursor for the climactic flashback that recalls what Frank did to a young Harmonica and his brother years before.⁵⁷ Indeed, Frayling indicates several links between the two sequences: the chiming of a bell heard on the soundtrack as the youngest McBain son is shot reverberates with the ringing of the bell from which Harmonica’s brother hangs; the subjective point-of-view shots seen as each McBain child meets his or her death are reflected in the ultimate subjective close-ups through which Harmonica and Frank share the final flashback.



Figs. 10.5 and 10.6. Harmonica's memory in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1968). Frank (Henry Fonda) approaches.

Frayling could go further. The “balletic” qualities, the “fantasy” violence,” the “flamboyance,” and the intense stylization that Frayling locates in the film are, for me, telling indicators that the film's traumatic plot conveys a meaningful fantasy logic in which things are what they seem . . . and more. First of all, matching up the two sequences eyeball to eyeball editorially speaking, puts Timmy McBain (the youngest child) in the position of the boy Harmonica. The earlier sequence is constructed of alternating close-ups of the boy and his adult male killer, interrupted only by close-ups of Frank's gun barrel. A similar exchange of close-ups between Harmonica and Frank marks the climactic sequence, although this time the close-ups are periodically interrupted by shots of Harmonica's brother (the literal victim) and by Frank's men looking on (in both sequences Frank's actions are performed for an audience).

The first sequence ends focused not on Timmy but on a close-up of the gun that kills him. We never see him fall. Instead, the image that follows the gunshot is an out-of-focus shot of a steaming locomotive accompanied by the startling sound of the train's whistle. We have been transported into the adjacent scene, one that takes place elsewhere, geographically and narratively. However, the image of the boy's fall is provided after all—with a difference—in the climactic scene: here we see

a boy fall, and that boy is Harmonica, falling to the ground as his brother hangs. Moreover, the climactic flashback sequence not only shows but *dwells on* the formerly elided fall by depicting it in slow motion and by repeating it a second time: we see it first as Harmonica's memory (we assume) and then as Frank's (we assume). Harmonica is Timmy.

Harmonica would then have to rise from the dead to take revenge on Frank. And, in fact, although Frayling does not discuss the fantasy logic in which Timmy and Harmonica are linked, he does see Harmonica as a revenant.⁵⁸ “The massacre at Cattle Corner station, which opens the film, ends with four bodies lying near the railroad line,” writes Frayling. “[B]ut, some hours later, one of them rises from the dead, with work still to be done. Harmonica . . . exists in a different dimension to the rest of the characters. . . .”⁵⁹ His “extradimensionality” and his connection to Timmy are also expressed by his possession of Frank's name. Timmy is killed for knowing Frank's name. His death is preceded by the following exchange between Frank and one of his men:

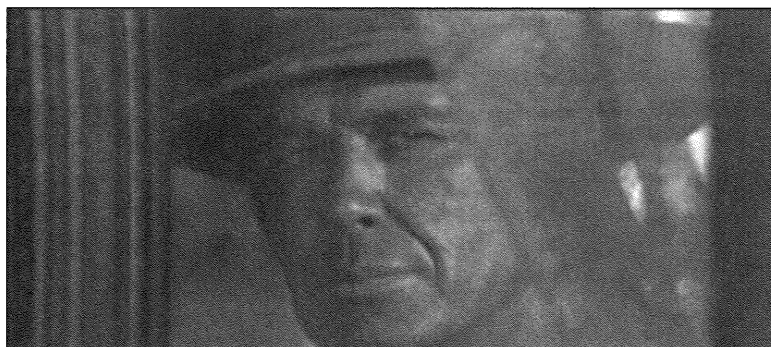
Man: “What are you gonna do with this one, Frank?”

Frank: “Now that you've called me by name . . .”

Frank's sentence ends with a bang. But the knowledge of Frank's identity that died with Timmy lives on in Harmonica, whose first words in the film are “Where's Frank?” One could say that Harmonica rises from the dead three times: first, as the boy he once was, rising from the ground beside his brother's suspended body in the wake of Frank's cruelty; second, as a kind of reincarnated Timmy, in possession of the knowledge that killed him; and third, from the shoot-out at Cattle Corner. This is the triply overdetermined premature death and resurrection of the child/man Timmy/Harmonica that is avenged by Frank's fall. For fall he does when he loses the final duel, and from right to left into close-up as did the boy Timmy/Harmonica.

Frank, like Callum, is a bad and violent man. And, also like Callum, he is ultimately dispatched by a grown-up boy. The reader may not be surprised, therefore, when I argue further that Frank, again like Callum, occupies the role of the violent outsider *and* that of the (violent) father in the fantasy structure of the film. Three main scenes solidify this association: the McBain massacre, the final memory/duel, and an additional sequence that bears the marks of another primal scene analogous to the one in *Pursued*.

First of all, Frank is closely linked to the only father of the film, Brett McBain, and linked, furthermore, through images and acts of violence. If the last shot of the McBain massacre sequence is up the barrel of Frank's gun, the first shot of that same sequence is of the double barrel of McBain's shotgun (being employed on a partridge hunt with Timmy). And if Brett McBain isn't the child murderer Frank is, he is retrospectively linked to Frank by a violent act that turns out to be one of his last: he slaps his eldest son hard. Through a metonymic process, McBain's gun



Figs. 10.7, 10.8, and 10.9. A succession of shots in which Harmonica (Charles Bronson) appears at first to be watching Frank and Jill (Claudia Cardinale).

finds its substitute in Frank's hand and a shot takes the place of a slap. Director Sergio Leone is here modifying the Hollywood tradition. The good father whose death Timmy would have avenged had he survived is associated from the start with his own son's killer. Frank is McBain.

This substitution is furthered when Frank sleeps with (rapes) McBain's wife Jill in a delayed and distorted consummation of what would have taken place had McBain survived his marriage banquet. Frank rapes Jill, all the while threatening either to marry her or kill her, while Harmonica

peers through the lace-curtained window. Or so we believe at first. In the subsequent shot we realize, retrospectively, that Harmonica's gaze through the window belongs not to the original scene but to the next one: the window Harmonica is looking through is not that of Jill's room but rather that of the hotel bar where her property is being auctioned off. Frayling provides this ambiguous transition as evidence of how Harmonica "is always there" even if it means being in two places at once.⁶⁰ I think the transition also simultaneously suggests and denies the familial relations and replacements that obtain in the film. Timmy as witness to paternal violence is hereby replaced by Harmonica as (non)witness to (extra)familial violence in this extended primal scene.

In light of these earlier scenes, the climactic duel is clearly Oedipal. In dispatching Frank, Harmonica not only achieves his long-sought revenge but gains free access to Jill as well. Where Ma Callum's desire for Jeb (apart from her desire for him as a son and later son-in-law) may be discerned only through an interpretive substitution of Thorley for Ma,⁶¹ Jill's desire for Harmonica is referred to overtly by Cheyenne (Jason Robards), a character who loiters on the premises of the film. Thus, as was the case for the character Jeb Rand, Harmonica's manhood is secured in and through remembering and acting against a violent father figure, gaining the right to take his place.

Furthermore, Harmonica's authority over Frank is contingent on getting Frank to remember the assault he perpetrated years ago on Harmonica's brother, and on Harmonica himself, for it is Harmonica who is traumatized—the brother is merely dead. Harmonica bides his time throughout the film, waiting for just the right moment to shoot Frank. He waits for an unhurried interlude where time may be allotted not only to kill Frank but to remind him "at the point of death," of the incident that made this confrontation inevitable.

Thus the face-off, when it occurs, is handled as a mix of remembered and lived actions, past and present comingled. In the past, Frank approaches (his younger look achieved in part by the beard Fonda sports). Then we see Frank in the present, beardless, taking up his position for the duel. Harmonica's fall (a past event, twice represented) is echoed by Frank's fall to the ground as he is vanquished (in the present) by the grown-up Harmonica. And then we have Harmonica's memories of the hanging itself, represented here with a distinct antirealist bent featuring extreme angles (the high angle shot of the gibbet that would correspond to nobody's actual perspective) and asynchronous sound (as when we see the brother mouth a speech that isn't heard as dialogue).

Thus is emphasized the psychic dimension of trauma, and, significantly, the representation of memory as a receding vision. Traumatic westerns figure memory as compensatory, as a phenomenon that stands in for what can never be perfectly known. Frank's memory is a recovered one—he had forgotten the events that he is now being reminded of. Harmonica's memory is continuous, supposedly. And yet

these representational extremes, like the blurring of Frank's image in its initial appearances, suggest an incomplete purchase on the very memory that motivates the entire narrative. True, we are provided with a scene that fills in the motivation for Harmonica's otherwise enigmatic actions, and we're given no reason to doubt the veracity of the memory when it is finally provided—the "gist" of the traumatic events is intact. However, the formal qualities of this climatic sequence along with the earlier memory images suggest that there is something more at stake than the question of what, exactly, happened. Why, for example, is Harmonica not "cured" of his need to move on once the joint goals of killing Frank and making him remember are achieved? Why is his last line to Jill "Gotta go" instead of "Gotta come"? Why does Harmonica's "extradimensional" mood overspill the revenge framework?

I contend that all of these strategies, the mixing of past and present, the intercutting of a continuous memory (Harmonica's) with a recovered one (Frank's), the marked absence of synched sound in certain places, and the twisted violence of the traumatic scene, combine to achieve the film's symbolic annihilation of realist strategies as a means of knowing. But if it does annihilate realist strategies as a means of knowing, if this film is traumatic, then what is it that cannot be known, realistically? The murderousness of the son, I would argue, and the relationship of this to land possession.

In *Once Upon a Time in the West* the "primal scene" in which Harmonica seems to be peering in Jill's window is also securely tied to inheritance—in this case the inheritance of land worth "thousands of thousands" as the character Cheyenne puts it ("Millions," Harmonica corrects). As I have indicated, it isn't really Jill's window that Harmonica is looking through, but that of the auction house. We are fooled initially not only because of the editorial sequence (the shot of Harmonica looking follows a shot of Frank raping Jill but precedes a shot of Jill auctioning off her property), but because the lace at the window is more suggestive of a brothel or of Jill, a former prostitute who wears lace, than of a setting where business is transacted. In fact, this confusion between the two locales and between business and sexual conduct exemplifies Wexman's perception about the inextricable connection that obtains in westerns between "the right to possess women" and "the right to possess land." I would go even further to argue that, as with *Pursued*, the connection made in the interstices of these two scenes is one of generational conflict.

Structurally, Harmonica and Frank are constituted as rivals around the rape of Jill and the possession of property. Harmonica defends Jill from Frank's men, and yet he also stands in for Frank, with the dangling train station sign as a signifier of what's at stake. Harmonica haunts Jill's environs. Three visits prior to the shoot-out (which "happens" to take place outside Jill's window) seem particularly significant: first, we sense Harmonica's presence outside the window; we hear the strains of his

instrument as Jill discovers the miniature train, train station, and town buildings that Brett McBain had stored in a trunk; second, Jill discovers Harmonica staring down at her from a jagged hole at the top of the barn as she prepares to abandon the farmhouse property; third is the visit that includes Harmonica's glance through the auction house window.

On the first occasion, Jill barricades the door and readies a rifle to defend herself against the unseen figure lurking outside in the dark. But the menace she senses is elided by the coming of morning, handled across a single, sudden cut from the dark of night framed by the window to the light of day. Any questions the viewers may have about what Harmonica would do to Jill were he to enter (or did do for all we know) are left unanswered.

Thus, the scene in which Harmonica appears, rather magically, atop the barn functions as a kind of delayed response. After a dolly in to his silhouetted figure against the sky, Harmonica comes forward toward Jill. He rips the lace from her bosom and states, "Once you've killed four, it's easy to make it five." He then pushes her down on a haystack, his palm pressed across her heaving breast. This is the cinematic language of rape.

We come to realize, retrospectively, that Harmonica acts to protect Jill from Frank's men who have "come killing" ("He not only plays, he can shoot too," observes Cheyenne), and that his dialogue about having killed four refers to Frank's actions and not to Harmonica's own. And yet the delay, along with the *mise-en-scène* and dialogue of the moment, combine to open a duration over which there abides the suggestion of an assault, sexual and otherwise. Thus the rivalry between Harmonica and Frank is figured not only as that of a good man against a bad one but also as that of an interchangeable pair. Harmonica is Frank.

And both are further linked to McBain. When Jill sees the piles of lumber her husband has ordered, she is mystified. Mystified, that is, until she sees the unpainted sign. Then she finally realizes the nature and extent of her late husband's plans: to build a town called Sweetwater around the water from his well, water that the future westward moving trains will require. A quick zoom into a close-up of Jill communicates the moment of her realization, and this is further supported by a cut to the toy station sign that she had previously held in puzzlement. Three shots later Jill is back at the house searching frantically for the miniature, which slowly comes into frame, suspended from Frank's extended hand. There follows Frank's rape of Jill. This sequence is interrupted, though, by a cut back to the piled lumber, which is now being surveyed by Harmonica and Cheyenne. In this way, parallel editing allows a close-up of Harmonica at the building site immediately to precede a close-up of Frank and Jill as his assault on her proceeds. In that shot the camera rotates ninety degrees in a counterclockwise direction and quickly pulls back out the window revealing, from that distance, the bars of the headboard that now frame Frank and Jill. At the end of the sequence comes the close-up of Harmonica referred to earlier, the one that precedes the auction scene.

Thus, not only is Frank's sexual assault on Jill fitted in between two close-ups of Harmonica looking, but the sequencing also forges a link between Harmonica's gaze at the lumber yard and his subsequent gaze through the window. Plotwise, Harmonica has no thought of marrying Jill to take possession of Sweetwater station. Editorially, though, the film's sequencing raises the stakes of sexual possession by anteing up economic issues. Harmonica is McBain.

Recall, though, that Harmonica is also Timmy. And these two premises lead to the crux of the matter. *Once Upon a Time in the West* pivots on two intergenerational pairs: (1) the good father and son, McBain and Timmy, and (2) the bad man and the good boy, Frank and Harmonica. The almost perfect interchangeability of these characters enables the violence of the Harmonica-Frank pair to bleed over onto the Timmy-McBain pair. Harmonica has his own reasons for wanting Frank dead. But if Frank takes McBain's place with Jill and the land, and Harmonica stands in for Timmy in the film's fantasy structure, then the violence of the primal scene in which the boy fears the father and wants him out of the way may be enacted covertly.

The supreme irony broached by the characteristic overtones of paternal violence in the familial succession western is that whereas the father's life can secure the son's dominion, it simultaneously blocks his succession. In other words, inheritance necessarily involves the death of the father. The option of mother-son incest may also be present (Ma Callum and Jeb, per Willemsen; Timmy and Jill per yours truly if *Once Upon a Time's* relations of looking were to be carried further), for that, too, allows intergenerational succession while keeping the estate in the family. Thus, for reasons of property as well as for reasons Freud described through the concepts of Oedipality and castration anxiety, the death of the good father is at the same time a fear and a wish. What we find here, then, are both Wexman's "odd incestuous aura" and an oddly patricidal impulse that these films are at pains to justify.

The larger argument that follows from the patterns I've set out is that violent conquest is as central to the paternal succession western as it is to the captivity narrative, and that the murderous father is as overdetermined a filmic creature as is the savage Indian. Both attract the brunt of the son's/settler's fears and both must be vanquished in the struggle for possession of the land. There are certain differences between the pattern of the captivity narrative and that of the familial succession narrative. In the captivity narrative the savage Indians serve as the projections of settler violence, whereas in the narrative of familial succession the bad man's badness (his infanticidal tendency) justifies the patricidal impulses of the son. There are also certain important differences in the historical bases for these respective narrative patterns and their function in the filmic imagination. Fathers are perennial in the sense that they return renewed, and in greater numbers even, with each

successive generation. Indians, on the other hand, while demonstrating a powerful centuries-long tenacity, have seen their various tribal ranks greatly diminished. Sons are always young. But America, for better and worse, has grown up. Nevertheless, the two groups of films evince a telling similarity in representing violent fathers and savage Indians, respectively, as the objects of the ambivalent memory of their heirs, and, specifically, as projections that serve to disavow but not to nullify the violence of the pioneer sons of America.

Virginia Wright Wexman draws on Patricia Limerick's paradigm-shifting conception of the frontier not as an "outpost of civilization" but as a "line of demarcation between different cultures" to argue that the western genre's emphasis on land goes hand in hand with issues of "cultural dominance" defined in terms of "racial privilege."⁶² Limerick notes that "Western history has been an ongoing competition for legitimacy—for the right to claim for oneself and sometimes for one's group the status of legitimate beneficiary of Western resources. This intersection of ethnic diversity with property allocation unified Western history."⁶³ A scene in *Red River* provides Wexman with a particularly good filmic application of this principle when John Wayne as Tom Dunson shoots the representatives of Hispanic landowner Don Diego and appropriates his land, saying, "That's too much land for one man to own."⁶⁴ And the sequence is even more racially charged, I would add, since, historically speaking, one assumes that the acreage a real counterpart of Tom Dunson would have wrested from a real counterpart of Don Diego would have been land previously occupied by Native Americans.

It seems to me that the formal elements of paternal succession and of captivity westerns exemplify in filmic terms this revised notion of the frontier in western history in no small part because their point of contact is the intersection of "ethnic diversity" and "property allocation." The two groups are part of the same historiographic project within the western imagination.

John Sayles's 1996 film *Lone Star* interweaves the trauma of paternal succession with that of the trauma of race in a way that makes the film an apt one with which to conclude this chapter. Like *Pursued*, *Lone Star* revolves around a son who seeks knowledge of his dead father as a means of gaining insight into his own life. In both films there are adults of the father's generation who refuse to divulge the knowledge the son desires. In particular, both films contain a female character who harbors a secret: her adulterous relationship with the son's father, which relationship affords our respective protagonists with sisters of sorts and the films with an aura of incest. In *Lone Star*, even more so than in *Pursued*, all of this is placed in the context of disputed individual, national, and racialized land rights.

All these similarities notwithstanding, the most important one of all for this discussion is the two films' comparable emphasis on memory as an avenue to past knowledge. Where Jeb Rand wracks his own brain for

the broken shards of memory, Sam Deeds (Chris Cooper) in *Lone Star* looks both within and to others, those who *will* speak, to piece together a record of his father's "deeds" and those of the father's contemporaries. As in *Pursued*, past events in *Lone Star* are rendered as subjective flashbacks.

These flashbacks are motivated by sheriff Sam Deeds's efforts to discover what role, if any, his father, the late sheriff Buddy Deeds played in the death of Charlie Wade, the corrupt sheriff of Frontera, Texas, whose job Buddy took over after Charlie's death. For reasons that are never fully explained, Sam's disrespect for his father is so great that he believes his father to have been capable of the murder of Charlie Wade, and the traumatic past events of the film mainly concern who killed Charlie Wade and why he deserved his fate.

But actually, of the seven flashback sequences in the film, three do not revolve around Wade and Deeds. Instead, they revolve around Sam's relationship with Pilar, a Mexican-American history teacher with whom he had a relationship when both were teenagers that is being reconsummated in the present. As it turns out, in seeking to know Buddy's past, Sam reveals an earth-shattering fact with major implications for his own life: Buddy had a long-term extramarital affair with Pilar's mother, Mercedes, a successful Latina restaurant owner; Buddy and Pilar are half brother and sister (as readers of this volume may well know from the film itself or from Tomás Sandoval's insightful chapter).

The revelation is handled, in a manner characteristic of the traumatic western, through the blurring of the boundary between past and present. Director Sayles's deliberate aesthetic choice, noticed by reviewers of the film, was to dispense with the convention of the editorial dissolve between past and present in this and other flashbacks in the film. In *Pursued*, for example, the pan right from the interior of the cabin at Bear Paw Butte to the boy Jeb hiding below the trap door is accompanied by a dissolve used to connote the spectator's backward time travel. In *Lone Star* the traditional dissolve has been replaced by a continuous pan that links two *contiguous* spaces but two *disparate* time frames. The result is a hybrid zone of memory.

In keeping with the film's revisionist impulse, the truth about the past is represented as being multifaceted, subject to competing interests, and contingent upon the memory and will of the teller—in this case the various narrators of flashbacks who include two African Americans, a Mexican man, and a Mexican American. Sam himself was not an actual witness to the events he seeks to retrieve. They happened during his childhood and are part of his father's life and identity. They are part of what Sam needs to know to mature. But these catastrophic events were lost to him even at the time of their occurrence.

In the end Sam finds out that it was not Buddy Deeds who killed Wade, but rather Deeds's deputy, Hollis, who pulled the trigger on Wade before Wade could slaughter an African-American barkeeper as he previously had a Mexican workingman. And yet a certain ambivalence

about the father abides throughout the body of the film, covertly, as in *Pursued*. Buddy Deeds the good (?) sheriff/father is linked to his predecessor in various ways. For one thing, the Rio County sheriff's badge identifies Wade (both when it is unearthed at the start of the film and when we see it on the door of his sheriff's car), but it also identifies Buddy Deeds. It is prominent on his chest on many occasions in the flashbacks, and also when Sam uses a magnifying glass to examine old photos of Buddy (in one of the film's several photo memoir sequences that are accompanied only by the nondiegetic sound of a wailing guitar). In fact, it is only when Buddy is shirtless in a photo, posed waist deep in water on a pleasure outing with his mistress Mercedes, that he is without his badge. Ironically, it is this image of Buddy, and not the incarnation of Buddy-as-sheriff, that does Sam the most damage, for this is the image Sam shows Pilar as evidence that they are half brother and sister. It is this photo that will force Sam to break off the romance with Pilar or to sleep with her ever after with the knowledge that theirs is an incestuous coupling. Thoughts of the past will not be banished from their union.

Sam's patrilineal researches in *Lone Star* backfire all around. That Buddy is not after all Wade's killer renders Sam's longtime animosity misguided. That the townspeople admire Buddy all the more because of their mistaken belief that he *is* Wade's killer is simply more of the same old elitist disregard for truth that has galled Sam all along.⁶⁵ That Buddy had to have Mercedes before Sam could have Pilar must be the last straw. The trauma of succession in *Lone Star* lies in its impossibility. Sam can't have Pilar because Buddy had her mother. Or can he? As with *Pursued* and *Once Upon a Time in the West*, here too in *Lone Star* a series of substitutions simultaneously mask and reveal the violence of the father-son relationship and the salience of generational conflict. Fathers: can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

Poised on the border between the fictional narratives they inhabit and the real history of American settlement, traumatic representations such as those discussed here are best read through a vernier attuned to memory and history both—they *cannot be taken at face value*. Sometimes the best evidence that a traumatic event really did occur is the impossibility of its overt expression. This is true for the pioneer sons in westerns where succession and/or land acquisition form the wrenching problem of the narrative. Past events are intransigent and ungraspable. They cannot be worked through, but only reexperienced as "distressing recollections," "recurrent dreams," "hallucinations, and dissociative episodes." This is also true for spectators for whom "distressing recollections" and the lot become a traumatic *mise en scène*. Thematized catastrophic past events are only partially perceptible—they happened before the plot got underway, they are revealed only later, in flashback, their particulars are obscured by the rising smoke of half-burned homesteads. And for the spectators, all of this is magnified both by the shifting character

identifications that typify the traumatic westerns—the spectator's trauma is pervasive and inchoate—and by the actual relationships that inhere among what was, what is, and what is being shown. The trauma these fictions embody is also profoundly historical.

Here I want to affirm that even where they are fictional or inauthentic, westerns still elicit a reading practice based on historical and generic understanding. Captivity narratives are compelling because the fantasy structures they entail veil at the same time that they express another, even grislier, trauma—that of Native-American genocide. The same goes for familial succession westerns. The Oedipal conflicts that mark these narratives abide at the intersection of characters and spectators, and personal and public history. The trauma they depict expresses and also hides the inevitable ambivalence of inheritance. This is not to say that in the future American land holdings cannot be more equitably distributed, but rather to say that the traumatic western embeds a narrativized version of history contextualized by familial and/or racial difference as its originary trauma. This is the blood-wet ground of history that seeps up through traumatic westerns, creating sodden patches for the spectator to traverse.

notes

Thanks are due to Edward Branigan and Chuck Wolfe for their insightful comments on this essay. I dedicate the essay to the memory of my inspiring teacher from many years ago, Andrew Britton.

1. Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 200, 203.
2. Neither is authentically historical. Moreover, films are much more emphatic than literary sources in presenting captivity as the white man's tale in that they foreground the thoughts and actions of the rescuer rather than the captive. If films were to show the position of the captive (and in those exceptional cases where they do [*Little Big Man*, for example]), then issues such as adaptation to Native-American life would come more to the fore and captivity wouldn't so thoroughly justify genocide. See Barbara Mortimer, "From Monument Valley to Vietnam: Revisions of the American Captivity Narrative in Hollywood Film," Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1990 (Ann Arbor: U.M.I., 1991); the dissertation includes a historical discussion of American captivity narratives as well as chapters on *The Searchers*, *The Unforgiven*, *Two Rode Together*, and *Comanche Station*.
3. Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (New York: Routledge, 1989).
4. I'm relying on Robert Burgoyne's discussion of "generic memory" in *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7–8.
5. Ward Churchill, "Lawrence of South Dakota," in his *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1992), 245.
6. Steven Spielberg, quoted in Brian Henderson, "The Searchers: An American Dilemma," *Film Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1980–81): 9, from an article by Stuart Byron, "The Searchers: Cult Movie of the New Hollywood," *New York*, March 5, 1979, 45–48.

7. Janet Place, "The Searchers," in *The Western Films of John Ford* (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1974), 163.
8. See Peter Lehman's discussion of this look in relation to *The Searchers*' use of offscreen space in "An Absence Which Becomes a Legendary Presence: John Ford's Structured Use of Off-Screen Space," *Wide Angle* 2, no. 4 (1978): 36–42, and in "Texas 1868/American 1956: *The Searchers*," in *Close Viewings: An Anthology of New Film Criticism* (Tallahassee: The Florida State University Press, 1990). For recent discussions of the passage in terms of its use of a musical theme see Kathryn Kalinak, "Music and the West: John Ford, Max Steiner, and *The Searchers*," unpublished paper delivered at the Society for Cinema Studies Conference, San Diego, April 4–8, 1998, and Arthur M. Eckstein, "Darkening Ethan: John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) from Novel to Screenplay to Screen," *Cinema Journal* 38, no. 1 (1998), 3–24. Both scholars identify the nondiegetic music we hear while we see Ethan looking back toward home as the Civil War song "Lorena."
9. John Ford reputedly said of John Wayne's performance in Howard Hawks's *Red River*, "I didn't know the sonofabitch could act."
10. Alan LeMay, *The Searchers* (Boston: Gregg Press, 1978; 1954), 21.
11. This poster may be found in a press book for *The Searchers* in the Warner Brothers Collection, Doheny Library, University of Southern California.
12. Mortimer, "Monument Valley," 38, also makes this point that the audience is not subjected to a view of Martha's body, nor of Lucy's.
13. The phrase is borrowed from Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).
14. LeMay, *The Searchers*, 13–14.
15. Ibid., 13.
16. Ibid., 6.
17. Ibid., 5–6.
18. Though not with specific regard to trauma, others before me have written about the importance in the western of real and imagined landscapes, and about the landscape as a projection for characters' thoughts. See, for example, Leonard Engel, ed., *The Big Empty: Essays on Western Landscapes as Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994). The volume contains Richard Hutson's essay "Sermons in Stone: Monument Valley in *The Searchers*," in which he writes that "landscape projects the human drama as a silhouetting effect of its presence. But it is also true that Monument Valley is itself a silhouette produced by the human narrative" (188). Or, as Jim Kitses writes (in a subsection, "Landscape") about the shoot-out among the crags that ends *Winchester '73*, "The terrain is so coloured by the action that it finally seems an inner landscape, the unnatural world of a disturbed mind." Kitses, "Anthony Mann: The Overreacher," in *Horizons West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 72.
19. Cathy Caruth, introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4–5.
20. Entry on "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (DSM-IV) (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994), 428.
21. Judith Herman, M.D., "Crime and Memory," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry Law*, 23, no. 1 (1995): 7. Thanks are due to Dr. Herman for answering my query about perpetrator narratives with a copy of her article.
22. Ibid., 7.
23. Ibid., 11.
24. Janet Walker, "The Traumatic Paradox: Documentary Films, Historical Fictions, and Cataclysmic Past Events," *Signs* 22, no. 4 (1997): 803–25.
25. See, for example, Lenore Terr, *Unchained Memories: The True Stories of*

Traumatic Memories, Lost and Found (New York: Basic Books, 1994); and Elizabeth Waites, *Trauma and Survival: Post-Traumatic and Dissociative Disorders in Women* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993). Thanks are due to Dr. Terr for allowing me to consult with her by phone about perpetrator narratives.

26. For the sake of scholarship I should indicate that the research I'm describing is part of a polemic; other memory researchers including Elizabeth Loftus and Richard Ofshe believe that memories cannot be "lost and found" but that they can be "induced," and that incest memories are being induced in the minds of misused daughters.
27. Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 250.
28. Herman, "Crime and Memory," 13.
29. Previous authors have noted the doubling of hero and "savage" in the western. See, for example, Janey Place's identification, in the chapter cited above, of similarities in the portrayals of Ethan and Scar in *The Searchers*.
30. Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 250.
31. Robert Burgoyne, "Native America, *Thunderheart*, and the National Imaginary," in his *Film Nation*.
32. Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).
33. Virginia Wright Wexman, "Star and Genre: John Wayne, the Western, and the American Dream of the Family on the Land," in her *Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).
34. Ibid., 88.
35. Ibid., especially 75–89.
36. Ibid., 75.
37. Ibid., 82.
38. Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 55. Quoted in Wexman, "Star and Genre," 76.
39. Ibid., 82–83.
40. Ibid., 108.
41. Ibid., 105. Wexman then proceeds with a psychoanalytically informed discussion of male and female bodies in the western landscape that includes a critical application of Klaus Theweleit's study of the fascist "soldier-male" figure (*Male Fantasies*, vol. 2: *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Erica Carter et al. [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989]). Soldier-males, according to Wexman's account of Theweleit's ideas, are "not yet fully born" and they face as their "central psychic issue" "the necessity of separating from the mother and preserving their body integrity in the face of fears of dissolution" (105). This trauma is played out in the western, Wexman argues, by the male assumption of the western costume as body armor and of the gun as the perfect weapon because the gun "can discharge and still remain whole" (112, quoting Theweleit). The female and especially the mother, on the other hand, is embodied by the simultaneously seductive and inhospitable landscape of the west. Given this situation, the shoot-out "constitutes the most significant violent response to the frustration caused by the vision of the cold mother" and it "assuages" the male anxiety represented in the western without ever really transcending the trauma of male psychic life (111–12).
42. Paul Willeman, "The Fugitive Subject," in *Raoul Walsh*, ed. Phil Hardy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival/Vineyard Press, 1974), 63–89; Andrew Britton, "Pursued: A Reply to Paul Willeman," *Framework* 11, no. 4 (1976), reprinted in *The Book of Westerns*, ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye (New York: Continuum, 1996), 196–205.

43. Britton, "A Reply," 13.
44. Willeman discusses the gap that opens up between the film's omniscient narration and Jeb's supposed role as narrator as evidence that the film problematizes the ideal of the unified subject.
45. Willeman, "The Fugitive Subject," 68.
46. Ibid., 83; emphasis added.
47. Jean LaPlanche and J.-B. Pontalis (*The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: W. W. Norton, 1973). Quoted in Willeman, "The Fugitive Subject," 77.
48. Willeman, "The Fugitive Subject," 82.
49. Ibid., 78.
50. Ibid.
51. This lends credence to Britton's insight that Jeb is "predicting," since in the end Callum does indeed appear accompanied by a lynch mob in search of Jeb.
52. LaPlanche and Pontalis, *Language*, quoted in Willeman, "The Fugitive Subject," 77. With this quote and other passages Willeman provides evidence for the point he ends up disavowing.
53. Precisely because this is a limited Freudian reading, one could argue, as Britton does, that if the boy character can be shown *not* to desire the mother, then the psychoanalytic import is thereby nullified.
54. Caruth, introduction, 9.
55. Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 194.
56. Ibid., 153.
57. Frayling indicates that the scene is loosely based on an actual historical occurrence; *ibid.*, 125–26.
58. If we were to psychologize a character, we might also say that Harmonica is dead in the sense that he is stuck on an incident from childhood and cannot, therefore, develop into a sexually mature man. He tells Jill McBain he might return "sometime," but this is an even more dubious promise than that which Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) makes to Clementine in *My Darling Clementine*.
59. Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 200.
60. Ibid., 202.
61. When Britton denies any Oedipal undertones in the Ma Callum/Jeb Rand relationship, saying that the young Jeb pulls away when Ma goes to embrace him, he fails to consider the potential feelings from the parental side (the mother's desire for the son) as well as the role of fantasy structures in general. Does Ma Callum literally desire to have intercourse with Jeb? We have no reason to think so. Does the film interpose Thorley as an appropriate love object between Jeb and Ma's desire? I believe it does. When Ma carries Jeb off in place of her dead lover she plunks him down next to Thorley in Thorley's bed. And when Jeb is about to be hanged Ma shoots Grant Callum, thus simultaneously saving her daughter's lover and avenging the death of her lover.
62. Wexman, "Star and Genre," 70, 76.
63. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *A Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 27, quoted in Wexman, "Star and Genre," 76.
64. Wexman, "Star and Genre," 91.
65. Buddy Deeds is "the man who shot [but didn't really] Charlie Wade." In the comparison between *Lone Star* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, it is as if Ranse Stoddard had lived his whole life in Shinbone.