

# CRITICAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

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Citation reference: Harvey, L., [1990] 2011, *Critical Social Research*, available at [qualityresearchinternational.com/csr](http://qualityresearchinternational.com/csr), last updated 9 May, 2011, originally published in London by Unwin Hyman, all rights revert to author.

## PART 2 CLASS

### 2.9 Will Wright—Six Guns and Society

#### 2.9.1 Introduction

In *Six Guns and Society*, Will Wright (1975) sets out to explain the popularity of the Western. The popularity might be attributed to interest in a ‘unique and colourful’ era of American history. However, the period of history in which Westerns are located only lasted from 1860 to 1890, which was much shorter than the settling of the Eastern seaboard that lasted 130 years.<sup>36</sup> For Wright, the key to understanding the popularity of the Western and for interpreting Westerns is to see it as a contemporary myth.<sup>37</sup> The appeal of the Western is that it encompasses a variety of ways of life with clear-cut conflicts of interest and values that are available as a vehicle for myth.

Most anthropologists and most literary critics draw a distinction between the ‘synthetic’ myths of ‘primitive society’ and the ‘analytic’ literature and history of ‘modern societies’. They argue that modern societies do not have myths in the sense of popular stories that serve to locate and interpret social experience. Modern societies may have folktales, fairytales and legends but they do not need myths for it is history and science that explains origins and nature and literature that ‘expresses the archetypes of the collective unconscious’ (Wright, 1975, p. 185). However, Wright suggests, that while history can explain the present using the past, it cannot provide an indication of how to act in the present based on the past since, by definition, the past is categorically different from the present. Myths can use the past to create and resolve the conflicts of the present, they tell us how to act in the present. In ‘tribal societies’ myths can stand for history.

In ‘modern societies’ myths are not history but present a model of social action based upon a mythical interpretation of the past. Modern America, Wright suggests, has myths that function in similar ways to myths in ‘primitive’ societies. These myths take the form of popular stories and the Western is one such form. The Western contains a conceptual analysis of society that provides a model of social action. *Six Guns and Society* is devoted to demonstrating not only that the Western is a myth but how it operates.

Wright’s study concentrates only on Western films, not novels, as the former reach a much larger audience. The detailed analysis is only of successful Westerns, because Wright (1975, p. 13) assumes that they ‘correspond most exactly to the expectations of the audience’. As such data of the study is available to all the readers, unlike most works of social science research.

The few attempts to analyse Westerns up to the mid-1970s were of rather rudimentary type. Sociological studies assume that the Westerns resolve a cultural conflict (Warshow, 1964; Kitses, 1969; Bazin, 1971; Cawelti, 1971) while psychological approaches attribute the popularity of the Western to universal and unconscious needs (Munden, 1958; Emery, 1959). Wright argues instead that the Western as myth is essentially about communication.<sup>37A</sup>

### 2.9.2 Analysis of myth

Wright's analysis of myth is directed to an examination of the assertion that: 'the social concepts and attitudes determined by the history and institutions of a society are communicated to its members through its myths' (Wright, 1975, p. 16).

He argues that within each period the structure of the myth corresponds to the 'conceptual needs of social and self understanding required by the dominant social institutions of that period' (Wright, 1975, p. 14). The structure of myth therefore changes over time in accordance with the changes in the structure of those dominant institutions. The popularity of myth thus depends on its ability 'to tell viewers about themselves and their society' (Wright, 1975, p. 2). To analyse myth it is therefore necessary to discover the meaning of myth and how a myth communicates its meaning.

Wright argues that myth consists of an abstract structure and a symbolic content. The structure of myth is assumed to be universal while the symbolic content is socially specific. If myth provides models of social action then it is necessary to analyse the structure, the symbolism and the narrative contained within myths. Wright proposes a four-part process for doing this based on Levi-Strauss's (1963, 1967, 1970) theory of the structure of myth, which he substantially transforms by drawing on Danto (1968), Propp (1968) and Burke (1969). The deconstruction then has to be located within a wider context. This results in five tasks. First, identify the binary oppositions operating in a myth. Second, provide a symbolic coding for the characters. Third, identify the functions of the plot. Fourth, determine narrative sequences. Fifth, locate the myth in the socioeconomic context.

Below, the rationale for each stage and what is involved is outlined in principle and illustrated by a case study.

Like Lévi-Strauss, Wright adopts Jakobson's (1962) view that the structure of language is inherently dichotomous and symbolic meaning is determined only by differences: similarities are irrelevant. Wright argues that myths reflect this binary structure because it provides for ease of comprehension and does away with the fine distinctions necessary in interpreting stories in which three or more images/characters are structurally opposed. While literary works need more complexity and subtlety, myth depends on simple and recognisable meanings that reinforce (rather than challenge) social understanding. Of course, more than two characters appear in myths and in Westerns but when they do they are contrasting pairs rather than complex triads.

The first task is thus to determine the characters (or groups of characters) that are structurally opposed (for example, cowboys and Indians, gunslinger and sheriff, farmers and drovers).

Within the binary structure myth uses sensible, or secondary, qualities to develop conceptual differences. An image of something (a human) is structurally opposed in a myth to an image of something else (an animal). The sensible differences (like human/unlike human) become symbols of conceptual differences (culture/nature). Thus the image of a character (human) in a myth does not come to represent a concept (culture) because of any inherent properties of the image but because of *differences* between it and the image of the character (animal) it is opposed to. Each society has a system of such oppositions and it is through them that myths are (unconsciously) understood by members.

The second task is to provide a symbolic coding for the characters (for example, civilization/wilderness, good/bad, stable/transitory).

Structural anthropologists, such as Lévi-Strauss, tend to stop here because they are primarily concerned with the social symbolism in myth.<sup>38</sup> However, Wright sees myth as a guide to social action and argue that differences between *this* being and *that* being are differences between *this kind of* being and *that kind of* being (Burke, 1969). Thus the characters of a narrative represent social types acting out a drama of social order. Thus interaction between characters represents the social principles that the characters represent. To understand what the characters mean, and thus how myth presents a model of

appropriate social action, it is necessary to analyse the *narrative* because it is in what they do that the characters' meaning becomes clear.

Analysing narrative structure involves problems of 'temporal order, cause and effect, and explanation'. Wright deals with this, in analysing Westerns, by reducing the narrative to a single list of shared functions (Popp, 1968). A function is a one-sentence statement that describes a single attribute or action of a character (for example, 'the hero fights the villains').<sup>39</sup> Thus, the third task is to break the narrative down into a set of functions.

Wright argues that the narrative changes in accordance with the changing social actions and institutions, while the binary oppositions are fundamental to the consciousness of the society and any fundamental change in them would essentially mean a change in society and thus the need for a new myth. In terms of his study of the Western myth, he would expect the basic opposition to remain the same but the interaction between the symbolic characters to vary as American social institutions change.

Analysis of narrative structure needs to be descriptive and explanatory, that is, to *explain* how individuals in a society interpret the narrative actions in their myths. The narrative structure of a myth or story consists of one or more narrative sequences (Danto, 1968). A narrative *sequence* is an internally ordered sequence of narrative functions that is typically smaller than the entire list of functions but whose order is unchanged. Narrative sequences explain a change and thus provide an analytic connection between the functions (as a description of a myth) and the narrative structure (as a model and communication of social action). Most narratives are too complex for a single sequence, so narratives are composed of a number of sequences that may follow one after the other but are more likely to be embedded (nested) or overlap.

The fourth task is thus to determine the narrative sequences (for example, the hero fights the villains; the hero has exceptional ability; the hero defeats the villains).

The sequence ensures that the narrative 'makes sense', that is, tells a story rather than giving a listing of events. More specifically, the sequence provides rules by which characters are created and conflicts resolved. The receivers of the myth 'learn how to act by recognizing their own situation in it and observing how it is resolved (Wright, 1975, p. 186). If the recipients are to recognise their own situation then narrative structures most reflect the social relations 'necessitated by the basic social institutions within which they live'. Changes in these institutions brought about by technology, conflict, economic or social factors must be reflected in the narrative structure of myth. However, social types symbolised by the oppositional structure will generally remain the same, since they are fundamental to society's understanding of itself. Nonetheless, as the institutions change, the conceptual relationships between those types will change.

Identifying the narrative sequences leads on to the final stage of analysis; the location of myth in the socioeconomic context. Wright argues that the interaction of individuals is structured more or less directly by the major institutions of society. To relate the Western plot to social context requires an independent analysis of social institutions of America (Wright uses Polanyi, 1965; Galbraith, 1968; Habermas, 1970) and the demonstration of the correlation between the structure of the Western and the structure of these institutions. Furthermore, it is necessary to show that structure of institutions changes in accordance with, but slightly prior to, changes in the structure of the Western. The intention is not to show how myths create institutions or *vice versa* but that the structure of myth symbolically reflects the structure of social actions 'as those actions are patterned and constrained by the central institutions of society' (Wright, 1975, p. 131).

The final task, then, is that of myth-reader (Barthes, 1957). It involves showing how the meaning of the narrative structure represents dominant ideological forms grounded in existing social structures.

### 2.9.3 *The classical Western*

Wright undertook an empirical analysis of the Western myth by examining 54 of the 63 'top grossing' films.<sup>40</sup>

Wright's analysis of the narrative structure of the Western leads him to propose a basic myth and three variants. The basic myth is embodied in the 'classical' Western in which a hero saves 'society' from oppressive villains. The three variants Wright identifies are the 'professional', the 'vengeance' and the 'transitional' Western. Of the 54 films, 24 are classical, 17 are professional, 9 are vengeance and 3 are transitional. Wright's approach is illustrated by focusing on his analysis of the classical Western. Wright has developed and tested his structural analysis by applying it to actual movies, as he shows in the book.<sup>41</sup> The approach he adopts in reporting his research to avoid undue repetition is to select five classic Westerns and analyse them in detail, referring to the other nineteen in passing. The selection is based on 'distribution over the period of time involved, differences in plot, and popularity' with the aim of providing a representative cross section (Wright, 1975, p. 33).<sup>42</sup> Wright provides an outline of the plot and then shows how the functions and oppositions are manifested.

In the classical Western there are three characters, the hero, the villains, and the society. Although, the villains and the society are made up of a number of people they are composites with no basic internal conflicts and are treated as a single unit.

Wright identifies sixteen functions of the classic plot (and these are illustrated using his example of the classical Western *Shane*).

1. The hero enters a social group. Shane rides into the valley and meets the farmer, specifically, Joe and Marion Starret<sup>43</sup> and their son Joey.
2. The hero is unknown to the society. Shane has no past and no last name.
3. The hero is revealed to have an exceptional ability. Shane is a gunfighter and demonstrates his skill.
4. The society recognises a difference between themselves and the hero; the hero is given a special status. The farmers are unsure of Shane because, although a gunfighter, he refuses an offer of more money from the villain Riker.
5. The society does not completely accept the hero. Shane is initially distrusted following his refusal to get involved in a fight with one of Riker's men.
6. There is a conflict of interest between the villains and the society. Riker wants the land for cattle and the farmers want it for farms.
7. The villains are stronger than the society; the society is weak. Riker is an old Indian-fighter, supported by Wilson is a professional killer. The farmers are mainly middle-aged and afraid of violence.
8. There is a strong friendship or respect between the hero and a villain. This function does not apply to *Shane*.
9. The villains threaten the society. Riker kills one farmer and almost succeeds in driving all of them out of the valley.
10. The hero avoids involvement in the conflict. Shane does not initially interfere in Starret's plan to go and see Riker.
11. The villains endanger a friend of the hero. Shane only fights after he is told of the impending trap set for Starret.
12. The hero fights the villains. Shane goes to town alone to fight.
13. The hero defeats the villain. Shane kills the villains in gunfights.
14. The society is safe. Shane wins the valley for the farmers.

15. The society accepts the hero. Shane leaves the valley to avoid the gratitude and acceptance of the farmers.
16. The hero loses or gives up his special status. Shane thus forfeits his special status as the deadliest man in the valley, instead prefers the dark night and the cold mountains.

The majority of these functions are present in all classical Westerns, although functions, 2, 8, 10 and 11 are optional. The functions do not have to appear in the exact order above in the classical plot, although the general pattern is maintained and the narrative sequences are consistent. The classical Western operates through an oppositional structure that is clearly identified in the codes that distinguish villains from society and the hero. There are ‘three basic oppositions, each differentiating between at least two of the characters, plus a fourth opposition which is less important structurally’.

The first opposition is inside/outside. The hero is contrasted with society and is clearly outside society. The villains may be inside or outside. (In *Shane* this is coded by the contrast between Shanes’ wandering unsettled life and the settled life of the farmers and the villains who are ranchers.)

The second opposition is good/bad. The hero and the society are good and contrasted with the villains who are bad. (Two codings are used for this opposition in *Shane*. The first is the opposition of social against selfish values, with the farmers wanting community progress while the Rikers want individual exploitation of the land. The second coding differentiates those who are kind and pleasant (Shane and the farmers) from those who are not (the Rikers). This permits the hero, who has no particular interest in settlement to be classified as good.)

The third major opposition is strong/weak with the hero and the villains being strong and contrasted with the weak society. (Shane and the Rikers while the farmers who are virtually helpless in the face of violence. They constantly complain that the only law is three days ride away.

The fourth much less important opposition is wilderness/ civilization. The hero is associated with the wilderness and contrasted with both society and the villains. (This operates in *Shane* in an entirely visual way. The film opens with Shane riding down from the mountains and he leaves the valley at the end by riding into the mountains. Shane is the only character filmed alone against the spectacular Teton Mountains, just as he is the only one to wear buckskins. The mountains are used in *Shane* to reinforce an association of the wilderness with strength and goodness; and the mountains are never in shot at the same time as the villains.)

Thus the classical coding is:

<i>society</i>	<i>hero</i>	<i>villain</i>
inside	outside	(inside)
good	good	bad
weak	strong	strong
civilisation	wilderness	civilisation

Wright identifies the following narrative sequences of the classical Western. The *status* sequence (functions 2, 3, 4) that begins with the hero being unknown, revealing an exceptional ability and ends by being accorded a special status. This sequence itself is the middle sequence of the *outside* sequence (functions 1, 5 and *status* sequence) that begins with the hero entering the group and ends with not being completely accepted as a result of the *status* sequence, which projects the hero as different. And so on, through the *weakness* sequence (functions 6, 7, 9); the optional *friendship* sequence (functions 2, some combination of 3 and 7, 8); *commitment* sequence (functions 10, 11, 12) again optional but prevalent; the crucial *fight* sequence (functions 12, 3, 13); the *safe* sequence (function 9, the *fight* sequence,

function 14); the *acceptance* sequence (function 5, the *safe* sequence, function 15); and finally the *equality* sequence (function 4, the *acceptance* sequence, function 16).

#### **2.9.4 Oppositions, narrative and socioeconomic context**

To complete the analysis of the classical Western it is necessary to locate the oppositions and narrative structure within the socioeconomic context. The theoretical problem of individual and society becomes a practical problem in the myth. The inside/outside opposition reflects the distinction evident in American society of the individual striving to be autonomous in the market but wanting to belong to a social group.

The hero is separated by society by the strong/weak opposition. Independence derives from the hero's strength while weakness makes the society dependent on each other and the hero. This notion of strength (or independence) reflects the attributes of the possessive individualist and becomes shorthand for 'those who can look after themselves'.

The good/bad opposition in the classical plot is almost always coded in economic terms between those whose motivations in making money are good against those whose motivations are bad. The villains represent possessive individualism, are exploitative and selfish. The society represents social values, a concern with others and (some) communal objectives such as establishing the infrastructure of a community. The individual–social distinction is necessary for a market economy. In short, the oppositions in the classical Western reflect differences between individual and society in a market economy.

Wright then addresses the way in which the narrative of the classical Western structures the interaction between the different kinds of people defined by these oppositions. The meaning of the narrative is not contained in the list of sixteen functions but in the structure of the functions, that is, in the narrative sequences. The structure of the classical Western reflects the conflict between institutional constraints and the cultural values of a market economy. For example, the following paraphrase shows how the *fight* sequence is instrumental in saving society.

The strong hero acts alone to save society from the villains. This demonstrates the critical importance of the individual to society. Society produces individuals but that they are selfish villains against whom society is powerless. Society needs the help of an independent strong outsider. Yet it cannot produce such an individual for his or her strength comes from relying only on him/herself, not on others or social institutions. The existence of society and the happiness of the individual depend upon a negotiation between the two positions or sets of values: independence and self-reliance against love, law, friendship and family. This negotiation centres on the threat of the villains, for it is this threat that disturbs the separation and makes the interaction both possible and necessary.

In this way Wright addresses the various sequences and shows that the values and goals of the bourgeois society reflect the market principle of 'just exchange' but are also grounded in the idea of the 'good life', the 'achievement of equality, work, community and mutual respect'. The market values possessive individualism (MacPherson, 1962) as the means by which individuals increase wealth and thereby their control over their own labour.<sup>44</sup> This is in conflict with the moral order based on social interaction.

As a myth, the classical Western addresses this conflict and provides a resolution. The myth asks 'how do we, as autonomous, self-reliant individuals, relate to the society of others, a society of morality and love?' The myth thus asks how the dilemma of independence from, but integration into, the society can be achieved. The analysis of the Western 'should tell us how it establishes the context of this problem—what are the components of a society in which this problem is both significant and capable of solution?—and, of course, what is the solution' (Wright, 1975, pp. 137–138).<sup>6</sup>

Wright argues that in this way a 'structural grid' in which the actions and relations of the characters are given 'conceptual meaning' can be compiled for each of the narrative structures of the Western myth. These narrative structures change with time, creating new ideas of society and of the individual's relation to it. Thus right, for example, analyses the 'professional' plot that, he argues, reflects the more recent development of corporate economy. The ideas in the myth reveal to the members of society what their society is like and how they as individuals should act in it.

### ***2.9.5 The Western as a meaningful experience***

Wright argues that seeing a Western is a *meaningful* experience. Empirical claims can be made, and rested, about the experience. It is possible for observers to agree on the story, dialogue, length and components of the imagery. A framework of analysis can be tested empirically. None of this, however, provides any understanding of how the Western is experienced as meaningful. The problem for Wright is to determine which of these aspects makes it meaningful.

Meaning is not something that can be pointed to or hit with a hammer; it must be communicated—that is, meaning does not exist in the world; it exists in relationships between things in the world and a person or group of people. Meaning cannot be observed; it can only be interpreted. (Wright, 1975, p. 196)

Locating meaning is not an empirical problem. Empirical elements can be identified but cannot be used to arbitrate meaning. 'Facts' cannot 'prove' the correctness of an interpretation. This means that there is no empirical grounds for asserting whether it is the structure of the Western or some other aspect (such as the ever present (threat of) violence) which gives it social meaning. However, a lack of 'empirical proof' does not disable the analysis. The meaning is located socially; the same empirical information can be interpreted in different ways. New interpretations are not the result of additional evidence but of new ways of seeing—a 'Gestalt switch' (Wright, 1975, p. 197).

I was quite conscious as I did the study that I was selecting some aspects of each film and ignoring others. But this selection has enabled me to reinterpret the Western myth. Instead of a series of films that repeats 'near-juvenile formulas' (Smith), 'a serious orientation to the problem of violence' (Warshow), or 'the contrasting images of garden and desert' (Kitses), I have suggested that the Westerns, as I see it, represent a conceptual model for social action. To support this suggestion, I have in effect *reconstituted the Western myth, taking it apart and putting it back together again* in a special way. (Wright, 1975, p. 198 (emphasis added)).

Wright argues that in this sense he has recreated the Western and altered its meaning because people who read his book will see Westerns in a new way. Until now, no one has argued systematically that the Western represents forms of action and understanding that are inherent in the changing economic institutions of America. He argues that he must, therefore, make explicit and justify the effects of his work. He maintains that it is not sufficient to suppose that a scientific work is its own justification; that somehow knowledge exists for its own sake. His position is that to increase the possibility of a meaningful life people need to understand the empirical conditions of their lives. The only just and liveable society is one in which, through science and social myths, people are aware of the real conditions that structure their life. 'I assume that the only studies that can be scientifically justified are those that contribute to a better world—studies that will not decrease but only increase the understanding and control people have over their own lives' (Wright, 1975, p. 200). The basis of the

claim of validity of his study, then, is not empirical but political. The research, in recreating the Western, is itself political, as interpretations of the meaning of the empirical world are the basis for social and political action.

Wright argues that his analysis of the Western, although incomplete, is far better than any previous ones because it locates it firmly in its economic and social setting, addresses the ideology in the myth and its relation to objective social conditions. In so doing it does not simply provide an understanding of part of society (the Western film) but makes the whole of society more understandable.

## NOTES

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<sup>36</sup> The Indian wars with the Cheyenne began in 1861 and the Homestead Act was passed in 1862. By 1890 the American Indian had been exterminated or placed on reservations and the last 'unoccupied' territory, Oklahoma, had been settled. The rise and fall of cattle empires took place between these dates and the great cattle drives lasted only from 1866 to 1885. If Western settlement is extended to include the 'California gold rush and the first wagon trains to Oregon', the entire period of Western settlement lasted less than fifty years. Wright thinks that the appeal of the Western is more likely to have been that for a few years there was a rich mix of ways of life available, each having its element of adventure. There were farmers, cowboys, cavalrymen, miners, Indian fighters, gamblers, gunfighters and railroad builders all contemporary with one another. Though these different types may have had little contact with each other, as a source of narrative inspiration the variety of livelihoods allows for clear-cut conflicts of interest and values. There have been other frontiers, but probably none as rich in different and conflicting activities within a remarkably compressed period. The East could never match the West as a context for fiction, and more precisely, as a ground for myth.

<sup>37</sup> Wright side steps the possibility that American tastes are moulded by the media, including Westerns rather than reflect them. The Western myth, he claims, remains independent of stars and publicity. 'A clear pattern of change and development in the structure of the Western is apparent in a list of successful films of the last forty years'. This suggests that within a given period, films with only a specific structure were popular, irrespective of stars or publicity.

<sup>37A</sup> Bazin (1971, p. 145) saw the Western as a conflict between law and morality, while Warshaw (1964, p. 103) saw the Western offering a 'serious orientation to the problem of violence' and Cawelti (1971, p. 80) argued that Westerns resolve the conflict 'between key American values', such as progress and success, and 'lost virtues of individual honor, heroism and natural freedom'. Kitses (1969, p. 12) sees the Western reflecting the Puritan obsession 'with the cosmic struggle of good and evil'. Psychological approaches attribute the popularity of the Western to universal and unconscious needs. Emery (1959, p. 11) sees the Western fitting the unconscious inner needs and tensions of viewers, while Munden (1958, p. 144) believes they symbolise the central conflicts of the Oedipus complex. Both types of explanation, Wright argues, are elliptical. Both assume that a myth reflects shared concern with a specific conflict in attitudes or desires. Further, they assume that if this conflict is not somehow displaced or resolved, an emotional tension or disturbance will result. Circumstances create a specific and widespread incompatibility of needs, and the myth is popular and successful insofar as it contributes to the satisfaction of those needs and the circumvention of the associated emotional tensions. From this perspective, the myth can only be understood as one overriding emotional dynamic (Wright, 1975, p. 8).

<sup>38</sup> Lévi-Strauss was principally to show how myth reveals a universal autonomous mental structure rather than any particular concern with analysing the meaning of myths. He asserts that the mind is structured as oppositions. Lévi-Strauss claims that if myth exhibits the same binary structure as phonetics, this structure must be derived from the human mind. In *Mythologiques* he demonstrates the



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existence of binary oppositions in tribal myths from which he imputes that the conceptual meaning of tribal myths is expressed through this binary structure. For Lévi-Strauss, this implies that myths signify the mind that evolves them. Wright argues that even though Lévi-Strauss argues meticulously that the myths of totemistic societies serve to resolve conceptual contradictions inherent in those societies his concentration on the conceptual dimension of myths is at the expense of their function as a model of social action.

<sup>39</sup> Propp (1968) analysed Russian folk tales and showed that the actions (functions) characterising a set of stories occur in a rigid unchangeable order. In each tale, every function appears in exactly the same order. Wright, unlike Propp, includes attributes as well as actions in his functions and is also less concerned about the rigidity of ordering, arguing that in the more complex Western film similar stories have slightly different ordering of events.

<sup>40</sup> Top grossing films are those that the *Motion Picture Herald* identifies as having rental receipts in the United States and Canada in excess of four million dollars. Wright identified 63 Westerns that fell into this category between 1930 and 1971. Nine were excluded from Wright's analysis because he was unable to see four of them recently (*Colt 45* (1950); *Hondo* (1954) *Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957) *Cheyenne Autumn* (1965)), four others were hybrids (*Fort Apache* (1948); *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1950); *Chisum* (1970) and *Little Big Man* (1971)) and 'The Charge at Feather River is an awful Western, which I refuse to consider since its commercial success was solely due to its big release as a three-dimensional film at a time when this gimmick was new and exciting' (Wright, 1975, p. 30). Wright actually discusses 64 films as he includes *The Cowboys* (1972) which he expects to be a top grossing picture but which has not appeared as such in his source journal. It has been excluded from this review.

The films are as follows. Classical Plot: *Cimarron* (1931); *The Plainsmen* (1937); *Wells Fargo* (1938); *Union Pacific* (1939); *Dodge City* (1939); *Destry Rides Again* (1940); *Northwest Mounted Police* (1941); *Along Came Jones* (1945)\*; *Canyon Passage* (1946); *San Antonio* (1946); *Duel in the Sun* (1947); *California* (1947); *Whispering Smith* (1949); *Yellow Sky* (1949); *Bend of the River* (1952); *Shane* (1953); *Saskatchewan* (1954); *The Far Country* (1955) *Vera Cruz* (1955); *How the West Was Won* (1964); *Cat Ballou* (1965)\*; *Texas Across the River* (1967)\*; *Hombre* (1967); *Support Your Local Sherriff* (1969)\*

Vengeance Variation: *Stagecoach* (1939); *Red River* (1949); *Winchester '73* (1950); *The Naked Spur* (1953); *Apache* (1954); *The Man From Laramie* (1955); *The Searchers* (1956); *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961); *Nevada Smith* (1966); *Hang 'Em High* (1968).

Transition Theme: *Broken Arrow* (1950); *High Noon* (1952); *Johnny Guitar* (1954).

Professional Plot: *Rio Bravo* (1959); *The Alamo* (1961); *North to Alaska* (1961); *The Comancheros* (1962); *Four for Texas* (1964); *Sons of Katie Elder* (1965); *The Professionals* (1966); *The War Wagon* (1967); *El Dorado* (1967); *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1968); *The Wild Bunch* (1969); *True Grit* (1969); *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1970); *Cheyenne Social Club* (1970)\*; *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1970); *Big Jake* (1971); *Rio Lobo* (1971).

\*These were self-conscious parodies of their respective plots.

<sup>41</sup> 'I found that, in the forty-year period from 1930 to 1970, there were four significantly different forms of the relationship, which seemed to change with time, particularly after the war. Concentrating on this relationship, it was not difficult to discover that each of the four forms appeared in a series of films that—for all their differences in content—had essentially the same plot structure. Furthermore, I found that the characterization of the heroes, society, and villains was essentially the same within any one plot structure, but was often quite different across the structures. After this, all that remained was to reveal,

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through investigation, the details of each plot structure and the conceptual meaning of the characterization within each.' (Wright, 1975, p. 33)

<sup>42</sup> The five he selects are *Dodge City* (1939), *Canyon Passage* (1946), *Duel in the Sun* (1947) *Shane* (1953) and *The Far Country* (1954).

<sup>43</sup> Wright spells the farmer's name Starret on page 34 when first mentioned, and Starrett later in the book.

<sup>44</sup> MacPherson (1962) lists the attributes of the possessive individualist as freedom from dependence on the wills of other, freedom from any relations with others except those entered into voluntarily and self-proprietorship that owes nothing to society.