

The Gunfighter

Frank Stewart

The American "renaissance" Westerns provided two story-forms which addressed the complex of ideological problems that we may call "social justice": What is the proper balance between the rights of the individual citizen and the interests or opinions of the majority? Between the ideal of justice and the practical operation of the laws? Between the property rights of the have and the legitimate needs of the have nots? The "town-tamer" Western, of which *Dodge City* (1939) and *My Darling Clementine* (1946) are classic examples, offered a "progressive" answer: social injustice is imposed by powerful criminals; the hero must defeat them and thus empower the "decent folks" who bring progress to the frontier. The "outlaw" Western proposes a critique of this model by locating the source of injustice in the powerful institutions (railroads) that are also the agents of "progress."

In the postwar decade two variations on the "town-tamer" and "outlaw" Western emerged: the "psychological" or *film noir* Western in which pathological elements in the hero's character are emphasized at the expense of his character as lawman or social rebel; and the "gunfighter" Western, in which professionalism in the arts of violence is the hero's defining characteristic. These new takes on the Western were shaped by the internal logic of genre development, which fostered a certain kind of *stylization* of the Western and its hero, and by the pressures and anxieties of the postwar/Cold War transition, which gave that stylization a particular kind of ideological significance. The consonance between the formal character of the gunfighter Western and its ideological content is a genuinely poetic achievement. It gave the gunfighter films ideological and cinematic resonance and made the heroic style of the gunfighter an important symbol of right and heroic action for filmmakers, the public, and the nation's political leadership. For that reason we need to review the pressures and trends that shaped the gunfighter Western and look closely at the three films that created the gunfighter as a character: *The Gunfighter* (1950), *High Noon* (1952), and *Shane* (1953).

Postwar filmmakers who returned to the Western had a more highly developed sense of the genre as genre than their predecessors during the “renaissance.” This awareness of the conventionality of their working language liberated them from the obligation to treat the Western as a historical script and encouraged them to take odd or innovative slants on the old stories. A late-genre film might be built around events marginal to more celebrated episodes — for example, the various films dealing with army units trying to warn Custer or dealing with the aftermath of his defeat.¹⁾ A familiar tale might be re-told from an unfamiliar or reverse angle, as in *I Shot Jesse James* (1949), where the outlaw’s story is seen from his assassin’s point of view.

Or one might take a “deeper” look into a mythic figure, emphasizing psychological analysis over “action.” The “psychological Western” was particularly appealing to filmmakers and critics who sought to make the mature genre a vehicle for works of a “literary” seriousness. If much of the “psychology” in these Westerns could be dismissed as the substitution of canned Freudianism for canned history, the same could be said of a good deal of the popular and even “serious” fiction during this period. For the general public, and even for some important critics, the use of recognizable psychological concepts and complexes had the desired effect of altering audience expectations and making the genre seem more “serious” and worthy of “adult” attention.

The common denominator in all these approaches is a particular kind of abstraction and stylization. A single element of the Western is isolated from its original context and made the subject of exaggerated attention and concern, even to the point of fetishization. The tendency is most obvious in a group of Westerns that fetishized particular kinds of weapons: *Colt. 45* (1950), *Springfield Rifle* (1952), *Winchester '73* (1953), and *The Gun That Won the West* (1955). The new figure of the “gunfighter” similarly exaggerates a skill that had been merely one of the standard attributes of all cowboy heroes. Jesse James used his quickness with a gun to avenge his mother and to rob trains; Ford’s Wyatt Earp shot it out with the Clantons in *My Darling Clementine*. But if we focus on the two figures purely as gunfighters, the ideological clichés of the historical Western give way to a new view of

the Western myth in which the difference between lawman and outlaw is obscured by their kindred gift for violence and is rendered problematic by their characterological difference or alienation from their communities.

In an aesthetic view, the shift to a psychodynamic perspective was both necessary and productive, since it opened the genre to a more searching and complex engagement with characterization. But it was accompanied by the de-emphasis (and for a while the virtual abandonment) of those social/historical formulas of motivation that had previously shaped Western scenarios. Characterizations of Jesse James are an index to this change in the myth of the populist outlaw. *Kansas Raiders* (1950) treated Jesse as a troubled young man warped by his oedipal engagement with the charismatic father-figure of Quantrill; in *The Great Missouri Raid* (1951) and Nicholas Ray's *The True Story of Jesse James* (1957), Jesse is played as the historical ancestor of the 1950s juvenile delinquent — a “rebel without a cause” other than his emotional response to the twisted values of his mother.²⁾

By rooting their explanation of the hero's actions in his own psychology or in the dynamics of his family during his childhood, these films lifted the burden of responsibility for outlawry from the shoulders of an unjust society. The emphasis on psychology is achieved by the dismissal of politics, social criticism, and the idea of revolution from the field of mythological. This shift of emphasis was perhaps a self-protective gesture at a time when the postwar “Red Scare” in Hollywood made political statements of any kind potentially dangerous. But it is worth nothing that this way of constructing myth-historical narrative gained favor at the same time that American intellectuals and historians were turning away from radical forms of social analysis and heralding the “end of ideology.”³⁾

The substitution of psychology for theories of social causation is more marked in a newly refurbished Western formula that might be called the “revenger” plot. The new revenger Western differ from the Zane Grey and W. S. Hart models in their emphasis on the neurotic element in the hero's make-up and in the highly stylized *film noir* atmosphere with which the action is invested — deep shadows, claustrophobic settings, and grim and hostile landscape embodying a dim view of human nature and human

possibilities. "Historical" characters and settings are rarely important. The West is abstracted even further from the historical frame than was the west in the psychologized outlaw film.⁴⁾

The psychology of the revenger has its roots in the outlaw Western. Passionate anger and desire to avenge a murdered parent had also been part of the complex of motives that drove the hero of *Jesse James* into outlawry. Indulgence of that passion and satisfaction of that desire finally obsessed Jesse and turned him into a "wolf." But the turns of Jesse's psychology are always given value by the way in which they affect his society. Avenging his mother is inseparable from his determination to fight the railroad on behalf of the farmers; his moral decline is linked with the separation from society that the outlaw's life requires; his death is seen as a sacrifice which teaches the virtues of skill, courage, and resistance to oppression. The revenger Western isolates this passion and privatized it. Mann's *Winchester '73* is the tale of a "good" brother's obsessive search for revenge against his evil sibling, who shot their father in the back and stole the perfect rifle that the hero had won in a shooting match. But the film's central questions concern the psychology of the avenger, not the parricide (whose badness is a given). His obsession with revenge and the fetishization of the rifle that is its symbol suggest that he may be driven by a madness akin to his brother's malice and that only by slaying his dark brother can he be free of it.⁵⁾

In such a tale, the redemption of the hero from the darker side of his own nature has little or no meaning for a larger society. Where the outlaw Western sets the adventure amid strong and persistent visualizations of social life, the revenger Western gives us a landscape that mirrors the hero's introvert psychology. Often it is a desert landscape through which the hero, the enemy, and a small group of supporting players must journey, driven by some pressure of time, pursuit, or desire. The revenger always faces a world in which social authority and community support are lacking; he must rely on himself, and perhaps one other person, for the fulfillment of his obsessional quest and/or redemption. Thus the revenger Western also fetishizes "psychology," isolating the private dimension of the original story and replacing social with exclusively personal motives, insisting (in effect)

that the private dimension determines the whole significance of the story.

The gunfighter Western adopts the the *noir*-ist sensibility of the revenger and its concern with character; but it also addresses the outlaw film's task of providing social commentary. It therefore offers an opening for assertive ideological statements. Like the revenger, the gunfighter is psychically troubled and isolated from normal society by something "dark" in his nature or in his past. But that "darkness" is bound up with and expressed by his highly specialized social function: he is a killer by profession, usually for pay. The existence of his profession is in itself an implicitly hard-boiled commentary on the nature of American society; and the psychic isolation his profession begets gives the gunfighter the alienated perspective he needs to articulate such a critique: What sort of society is it in which those who have money can hire a killer? And what kind of people are we, that our strong men find such work to their liking? But more important than his critical function is the gunfighter's embodiment of the central paradox of America's self-image in the era of the Cold War, "subversion," and the thermonuclear balance of terror: our sense then of being at once supremely powerful and utterly vulnerable, politically dominant and yet helpless to shape the course of critical events.

Fittingly, the seminal film in the development of this new subgenre was *The Gunfighter*, written and directed by the same team that had produced *Jesse James* — Nunnally Johnson and Harry King. The project was shaped from the first by a deliberate intension to make a film that would express and surprise critics and audiences with innovations in style and subject matter. Darryl F. Zanuck, the head of 20th Century Fox, was looking for a "prestige" Western with the same claims to "seriousness" as the studio's critically acclaimed *Ox-Bow Incident* (1943) or Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946), but with broader popular appeal.⁶ He assigned the project to Andre De Toth, noted for his work in the *noir* style. De Toth went to history for his story, but to a source and subject that were distinctly marginal. Eugene Cunningham's *Triggernometry: A Gallery of Gunfighters* (1934) was a collection of brief biographies of Westerners noted for their skill with weapons. These same figures — Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Jesse James, Wyatt Earp, and the like — had been treated in similar compilations

in the past, under the rubric of “plainsmen,” “border outlaws,” noted guerrillas,” frontier scouts,” heroes of the plains,” and so on.⁷⁾ Rather than repeat those formulas, Cunningham focused on the single attribute of their skill with a pistol. He added his own “technical notes on leather slapping as a fine art, gathered from many a loose-holstered expert over the years” — a device that emphasized and exaggerated this aspect of their lives, suggesting that “gunfighting” was a kind of art or profession. In fact, the “classic” model of the gunfighter portrayed by De Toth was an artifact of Cunningham’s intense and specialized focus on the technique of the fast-draw. Cunningham’s subjects were not (for the most part) professional killers. But they pursued a variety of trades — peace officer, gambler, robber, saloon-keeper — that often engaged them in violence.⁸⁾ Some of the men who served as “hired guns” in Western range wars, like Frank Canton and Tom Horn, were professional assassins who killed from ambush or under cover of a vigilante expedition. But most — like the “army” that invaded Johnson County — were working cowboys, no more than usually proficient with weapons, or outlaws like the Evans gang in the Lincoln County War, whose willingness to kill was at the service of merchants and ranchers who fenced their stolen goods or otherwise profited from their criminal labors. Such men were not called “gunfighters.” They were variously (and properly) described as “mercenaries” and “banditti” or as “regulators” and vigilantes,” depending on the politics of the writer. The image of the gunfighter as a professional of violence, for whom formalized killing was a calling and even an art, is the invention of movies like *The Gunfighter*, the reflection of Cold War-era ideas about professionalism and violence and not of the mores of the Old West.⁹⁾

De Toth chose his subject “Johnny Ringo,” one of the most obscure figures in Cunningham’s book, a member of the Clanton gang which opposed Wyatt Earp and his brothers in the “Gunfight at O. K. Corral” in 1881. The national fame of that incident was itself an artifact of Hollywood culture. Neither Earp nor the gunfight had enjoyed great notoriety outside Arizona until 1920, when the aged Wyatt appeared on a movie lot in Pasadena hoping to cash in on the enthusiasm for “authentic” Western figures. The belated spotlight cast on this event found little record of

Ringo beyond the name, accounts of a few vicious murders, a reputation for heavy drinking, and a couple of intriguing mysteries. He was said to have had a cultured manner (evidenced by an ability to quote Shakespeare) and to have been the scion of an aristocratic southern family ruined in the Civil War. He also died mysteriously, murdered by someone who gave him no chance to draw, and his reputation was such that the chief suspect bragged that he had done it.¹⁰⁾

De Toth was intrigued by the idea that Ringo's killer could gain stature by claiming to be "the man who killed Johnny Ringo," celebrity of that kind had been part of frontier culture and its fictional representation from a very early date. Mark Twain, in *Roughing It* (1872), says that to become a notable personage in frontier Nevada it was good to have it known that you had "killed your man." But De Toth — following Cunningham's suggestion — imagines a different and more stringent system for according reputation, drawn from the contemporary worlds of sports and movie celebrity. Cunningham's book suggested that gunfighting was a profession like modern prize-fighting, a highly technical game or "gentle art" with distinct rules; it followed that one could gain a reputation by defeating a higher-ranked opponent. To be a champion was therefore to become the mark of perpetual challenges, not only from fellow professionals but from the random and spiteful aggression of ambitious amateurs. De Toth counted heavyweight champion Joe Louis and the actors Humphrey Bogart and Errol Flynn among his friends; and he noticed that whenever these men appeared in public, they were likely to be challenged by a drunken citizen who needed to show how much tougher he was. In this regard champions and movie stars were alike: centers of a public fantasy-life so powerful that those in its spell had to seek somehow to become — and failing that, to destroy — the idealized figure. De Toth's gunfighter was therefore not only a formal abstraction from the conventions of the outlaw hero, but a self-conscious reflection on the nature and meaning of "the star" as an element in both cinematic form and public life. De Toth envisions the gunfighter as a killer-celebrity who finds himself trapped in the role and reputation he has spent his life seeking. That mood of entrapment was to shape the narrative and the landscape through which the gunfighter would move, seeking refuge or

escape from his special history and failing to find it.

Although Zanuck appreciated the originality of De Toth's idea, he disagreed with his innovative design for the production, which called for the use of the expensive Technicolor process but aimed at a somber, almost colorless look. He gave the project to King and Johnson who reworked De Toth's script, preserving most of its essential features.¹¹⁾

The movie opens with a title that echoes the conventions of the historical Western. But the historical allusions here are deliberately vague and devoid of "progressive" associations. The place is no more specific than "the Southwest," the time is "the 1880s," and there is no issue of national progress at stake. We are simply told that "the difference between death and glory was often but the fraction of a second," and that familiar figures like Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, and Billy the Kid were "champions" in that line. We are told that "the fastest man with a gun who ever lived, by many contemporary accounts, was a long, lean Texan named Ringo," (renamed "Jimmy" Ringo for the film). Though we are not expected to recognize him as a historical personage, we may remember the fictional "Ringo Kid" of *Stagecoach* (1939).

Before we learn anything about Ringo we are presented with the essentials of his identity as a "gunfighter": his loneliness, his skill, his fatal celebrity. He enters a town, alone and at night, to get a drink at a saloon. The bartender immediately hails him as "Jimmy" and begs recognition, which Ringo grants with a quick, false grin and an expression of terrible weariness — he is the "star," sick of recognition but wise enough to know that it is useless to resist. The reason for his distaste is immediately revealed. No sooner is his name uttered than a smart-aleck kid has to challenge him to draw, playing to the audience in the bar and rejecting every attempt by Ringo to evade the inevitable killing.

Ringo arrives in Cayenne and once again goes straight to the saloon, where there is a repetition of the recognition scene with the bartender. Ringo establishes himself at a corner table, and this single interior becomes the center of the movie. The enclosed, finally claustrophobic space of the saloon takes the place of the normally open space of the Western. Like the jungle clearing in the war film, the saloon is a space we leave only when

danger threatens, or to accompany some brief mission. And like the jungle clearing, the saloon's enclosure is threatened by powerful forces. Though these are most obviously indicated by the brother's progress across the desert, they are embodied as well in the passage of time and Ringo's continual references to the clock. Time and space are thus equated, and both are closing in on the gunfighter. Ringo's seat in the corner of the saloon is beneath the Budweiser lithograph of Custer's Last Stand.

Ringo is passive for much of the narrative, sitting or pacing the saloon like a caged tiger, waiting for something to happen. The sense of suppressed violent energy is the essence of Gregory Peck's characterization of Ringo, and King emphasized it by continually prolonging that suppression, promising release and frustrating that promise. As the narrative proceeds, we see that this mood is more than just a symptom of the occasion. Ringo lives in an atmosphere in which the expectation of violence is never absent; his character has been deformed by his response to the demands of his violent world. His movements are slow but efficient. He is always watchful, eyes always moving — even when he seems to be staring fixedly at his hand we see that his peripheral vision misses nothing. He always sits in the corner, never with his back exposed. He lives according to a discipline of watchfulness, preparedness, and restraint — the marks of his professionalism and signs of his isolation.

The saloon enclosure is also a theater. Its open board floor suggests a stage, and the action that occurs there could easily be transferred to a proscenium setting. Thus even when Ringo is just sitting at his table waiting for something to happen, he is still a celebrity, still "on stage." The townspeople, especially the children, press their faces hungrily to the windows for a look at him, hoping "something will happen," that they'll get to see a killing. Their attitude mirrors our own conventional expectations about what will occur on screen, and through this device the film construes our expectation as desire: the wish to see Ringo kill and/or be killed. Although there will be talk of motives and reasons here, we know that in some sense motives are rationalizations. There is a necessity or fatality at work that cannot be controlled by the conventional and historicist rationales of the "renaissance" Western and it has something to do with an almost ab-

stract will to violence.

The most perverse representative of that will is the local "fast kid," whose arrogant sneer is carried on a most unappealing late-adolescent face, with the barest smear of mustache dirtying the upper lip. Though he is quite particularly nasty, he is also a social symptom: a vile boy given license to bully by the admiration that any capacity for or disposition to violence evokes in the town's menfolk. He is the dazzled spectator who can't see the difference between the play and the real world, who persistently invades the stage to threaten, insult, and finally assault the actors in an attempt to become a star in his own right.

Ringo's character and history are revealed slowly, through a series of encounters with people from his past. These include the town's old marshall, Mark Strett; the widow of Ringo's best friend Bucky Harris, now reduced to working as a saloon singer; a local version of the generic Petticoat Brigade, led by Mrs. Pennyfeather; a crazed avenger of a father, who believes (erroneously) that Ringo killed his son; and his estranged wife and son. Each of these encounters is based on some more or less traditional element of the genre, some of them as old as *The Virginian*. But King emphasizes the conventionality deliberately, and sometimes comically. The stylization of these encounters suggests the artificiality of the hope of redemption that they seem to promise Ringo.

The marshal is the first and most important of these stock characters. Mark Strett had ridden with Ringo years before, apparently in an outlaw gang that robbed banks, but he abandoned that life after a raid (which sounds like the James Gang's Northfield fiasco) in which a little girl is killed. This classic image of evil — the assault on innocent children — fills Mark with self-disgust (it wasn't his bullet, but it could have been), and compels him to go straight. That same disgust and weariness now will fill Ringo: he is sick of his life and wants to change it; he has come to Cayenne to reconcile with his wife and start over. But he doesn't know what name she is using, and Mark refuses to tell him. Like Will Wright in *Jesse James*, this sympathetic lawman is in love with the outlaw's woman. But his motive is not jealousy. Rather, he has promised to keep the woman's secret, especially from Ringo; and in any case he does not believe Ringo can start

over — Mark Strett could disappear only because he was never famous.

That Ringo is famous is clear enough, but just that kind of work he did to achieve fame is not clear. Although he robbed banks, he was not a Jesse James. He seems also to have worked as a “big, tough gunny,” but we are never told exactly what that work entails. At some point his skill with a gun became more important than the tasks for which he nominally used it. The tool and its use became ends in themselves, and he has spent most of his time defending (and so extending) his reputation in a series of unremunerative encounters like the one we witnessed earlier. As he tells Bucky’s widow, they may have gotten into the gunfighting trade for fame and money, but the fame is a burden and “the truth is it don’t pay very well... I ain’t even got a decent watch.”

Ringo’s wife is a highly conventional take on the “redemptive woman.” Like Molly Wood in *The Virginian*, she is a “schoolmarm.” Like Zee in *Jesse James*, she leaves her husband after the birth of their son when he refuses to change his way of life. Of course (like Zee) she still loves her outlaw, but she is more skeptical than Zee of his ability to change, even though she is moved by the sincerity of Ringo’s self-disgust and desire for a new start. In the outlaw Western, such a change of heart would have earned Ringo at least a figurative redemption, though it might not save him from Jesse’s tragic fate. But the gunfighter’s sincerity is beside the point. His desire to change is rendered meaningless by the completeness with which his identity and his imagination have become merged in his role and profession.

While Ringo waits for his wife to arrive, a young rancher enters the saloon, orders a drink, and buys one for Ringo. The rancher’s innocence is marked by his hayseed dress, but more importantly by the fact that he alone does not recognize Ringo. We learn that he was formerly a wild cowboy, but a good woman has domesticated him, and now (like the lovers at the end of *Stagecoach*) they’ve got a little ranch with a few head of cattle and some horses. Until this moment, Ringo has not said what he plans to do to “start over”; but in the next scene he will tell his wife that he has an idea, it just “come over” him. His wife believes that this is a sign of his change of heart, and in a way it is. But we know that the idea is not really his own;

and we recognize the dream itself as a movie-formula, not a solution suited to the harsh "reality" of Ringo's world.

In the end, space and time close down and run out. Hunt Bromley shoots Ringo in the back, as Robert Ford shot Jesse James. But instead of a eulogy and a monument that would translate tragedy into a legend of heroism, *Gunfighter* ends with a curse. The dying Ringo declares that Hunt outdrew him, thus insuring that Hunt will live the kind of life Ringo himself has led — a life he now sees as a terrible doom. At Ringo's funeral — a celebrity's send-off in a packed church — his wife takes her place as a chief mourner, acknowledging her relation to Ringo and offering a kind of post-humous reconciliation. But its meaning is personal rather than social; it is not clear how the town will respond. The final image, of a lone rider disappearing into the sunset, suggests a passage into immortality, perhaps that of legend. But this is not as ideologically specific as the final passage of *Jesse James*, which shows the hero's reconciliation with the myth of progressive history.

Ringo's relation to that myth is fundamentally ironic. His career, like that of the gangster-hero in the 1930s, is a darkened mirror-image of progressivism, but now with a distinct postwar emphasis. His fate is not primarily a critique of capitalist excess, but of power and world preeminence. Ringo has striven to rise in the world by the development of his skill; he has become a leader in his profession, the best at what he does and renowned for doing it. Having achieved the pinnacle of success and power, he discovers that the achievement is meaningless, even poisonous. The disciplined self-restraint that is the essence of his professionalism has become an imprisoning shell that cuts him off from human connections. Despite his discipline and skill he is still vulnerable, the target of every man and boy with a gun. His fame and power are profitless, unless he is willing to accept them as values in themselves. In the past he has done so, but the cost has been a steady dehumanization of his own life, which has finally become unbearable. He would like to transform his role and values, but he can't see how to do that. He is trapped by his history and his identity.¹²⁾

This sense of entrapment makes the gunfighter a resonant figure on several levels. One should not underestimate the appeal of the homely

analogy between Ringo's situation and that of the 1950s archetypal "man in the Gray Flannel Suit." Ringo renders as heroic tragedy the malaise of the middle-class man grown weary of the "rat race" through which he has prospered. But Ringo's situation is also a parody of Cold War, nuclear garrison-state psychology; he is at once the most powerful and the most vulnerable man in the world. He realizes the disillusionment of the transition from postwar to Cold War — the sense that all our accumulation of power and great wartime victories had somehow failed to produce the world we expected, or even to give us the assurance that we, as a political society, could control our own destiny.

In a larger ideological view, the gunfighter Western entertains the idea that the "progressive" rationale for both political action and violence may in fact be a chimera. The gunfighter enters the narrative already knowing that the Wild West's promise of fame and power (or of redemption) is an illusion; that the vision of the Frontier as limitless in its possibilities for personal and social perfection is a mirage; and that he himself has been rendered isolated and vulnerable by the very things that have made him victorious in the past.

NOTES

- 1) For example, *Little Big Horn and Warpath* (1951).
- 2) The oedipal theme is so strong in Billy the Kid movies, especially *Parson and the Outlaw* (1957); *Left-Handed Gun* (1958); *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961); and *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973). The first two *Billy The Kids* (1931 and 1941) show him as a noble innocent rather than a crazed juvenile.
- 3) *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), a story of alienated teenagers which starred James Dean, was Ray's most famous film, and the basis of both a new genre and major star-cult. The postwar "James canon" includes: *The Outriders* (1950); *The Return of Jesse James* (1950); *Kansas Raiders* (1950); *Red Mountain* (1951); *Best of the Badmen and Great Missouri Raid* (1951); *Montana Belle* (1952); *San Antone* (1953); *The Stranger Wore a Gun* (1953); *The Woman They Almost Lynched* (1953); *Jesse James vs. the Daltons* (1954); *Jesse James' Women* (1953); *Dalton Girls* (1957); *The Lonely Man* (1957); *True Story of Jesse James* (1957); *Cole Younger, Gunfighter* (1958); *Quantrill's Raiders* (1958); *Young Jesse James* (1960); *Arizona Raiders* (1965); *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* (1966); *Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* (1975); and *Long Raiders* (1981). The last two portray Jesse as a psychopath. To this group might be added those

that draw on Jesse James motifs to characterize *The Outlaw as a Social Bandit: Al Jennings of Oklahoma* (1951); *The Lawless Breed* (1952); *Way of a Gaucho* (1952); *Vanquished* (1953); *The Outcast* (1954); and *Seven Angry Men* (1955).

- 4) *The Pursued* and *Track of the Cat* were early essays in this form, but the possibilities of this approach were most strikingly developed during the 1950s in the Western (mainly "small" productions) of Budd Boetticher and Anthony Mann.
- 5) The self-conscious sense of genre convention shows in Mann's organizing each episode of the quest around the theme or setting of a different subtype of Western, including the "town-tamer," the stagecoach journey, the outlaw Western, and the Cavalry/Indian Western.
- 6) Coppedge, *Henry King's America*, p. 117.
- 7) Eugene Cunningham, *Triggernometry: A Gallery of Gunfighters*, esp. pp.1-11, ch. 18. Compare earlier thematic compilations, for ex. Appler, *Lives of the Guerrillas...*; Buel, *Border Outlaws and Heroes of the Plains*. When Siringo was forced to suppress half of his memoirs in *Riata and Spurs*, he was able to replace it with biographies of famous outlaws.
- 8) Coppedge, *King*, pp. 115-7; Ramon F. Adams, *Six-Guns and Saddle Leather: A Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets on Western Outlaws and Gunmen*, pp. 66-7, 111, 317.
- 9) Brown, *No Duty to Retreat*, ch. 2, distinguishes "incorporation" gunfighters, hired by landowners and employers to kill or intimidate tenants and employees, and "grassroots" or "resister" gunfighters, who took up arms to defend themselves, their land, or their communities. However, neither type was identified in contemporary accounts as a "gunfighter," in the movies' sense of that term. See also Joseph G. Rosa, *The Gunfighter: Man or Myth?*, pp. V-vii, 5, 11, chs. 3-5, 13; Utley, *High Noon*, ch. 5; Mercer, *Banditti*; Peter Watts, *A Dictionary of the Old West*, p. 153.
- 10) C. L. Sonnichsen, *From Hopalong to Hud: Thoughts on Western Fiction*, pp.41, 44. 54-5.
- 11) Coppedge, *King*, pp. 117-20.
- 12) The association of Ringo with the icon of the "Custer's Last Stand" lithograph extends the irony by suggesting a parallel between the gunfighter and the hero of the cavalry Western as symbols of American virtue and power.