Egg-Sucking, Chicken-Stealing Gutter Trash: Sam Peckinpah’s Bad Men and Why We Love Them

by

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Introduction.

Nearly every academic appraisal of Sam Peckinpah's work begins with a nostalgic recollection of the first time that the writer saw a Peckinpah film. Most often it is The Wild Bunch's explosive montage and slow motion whooshes and whirs of bullets and blood-splattering squibs that they recall. For these scholars, their first exposure to Sam Peckinpah was in the context of a nascent period of formal experimentation in the 1960s and 70s; a decade earlier Kurosawa had utilized slow motion in action sequences for The Seven Samurai (1954), and Arthur Penn further innovated this approach to violence, mythologizing Bonnie and Clyde in their last living moments. Peckinpah elevated this strategy into a seemingly anarchic intercutting between slow- and fast-motion, horrifying some, entralling others, but quite resolutely pushing the boundaries of cinematic expression. I discovered the director in the era of Scorcese and Tarantino, Cronenberg and Verhoeven. I was not shaken by the number of Temperance Union-ers wantonly destroyed in the opening minutes
of *The Wild Bunch*, nor upset by Peckinpah's inversion of Ford's idealistic vision of the West. It was through *Straw Dogs*, possibly the director’s most viciously confrontational film, that I became intrigued by the director Sam Peckinpah. It was not the graphic nature of the violence that awed me, but rather the experience itself, being engrossed so completely that I found myself simultaneously excited and repulsed by David Sumner’s lunatic bloodlust during the film’s climax. I had been chewed up and spit out by a movie like I never had been before. Having known little about Peckinpah other than the mythology surrounding his studio feuds and drug use, I was astounded by the precisely calculated formal construction of *Straw Dogs*, and I set out to locate these strategies in his other works, in an attempt to determine precisely how the director enabled me to root for a pathetic man like David Sumner.

This thesis addresses what I have determined to be the mature period of Peckinpah's oeuvre:

- *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970)
- *Straw Dogs* (1971)
- *Junior Bonner* (1972)
- *The Getaway* (1972)
- *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* (1973) \(^1\)

The chief purpose of this thesis is to examine how Peckinpah uses the stylistic and structural elements that define these mature films to construct a viewing experience that encourages audience alignment with traditionally misbegotten, morally questionable, and villainous outsiders and renegades. As such, this is a Film Studies analysis in which the films themselves are the primary texts. During this mature period,

\(^1\) This thesis refers to the 1988 Turner Preview Version of *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* (122 minutes).
period, Peckinpah directed a series of pictures that are the best representation of his total vision as an artist, containing the complete range of his stylistic, narrative, and thematic preferences. Peckinpah’s films are united by a common approach to depth and range of knowledge, motif structure, and parallelism that subtly guides viewer expectations, encourages alignment, and ultimately indicates the deeply personal thematic crux of the director’s work: the plight of outsiders and loners due to changing historical tides and their inability to change with them. Nothing in the mature films can be attributed to his deteriorating lifestyle habits, as might be the case with his later works, and I see *The Wild Bunch* as the first true expression of Peckinpah's unique authorial style. While *Ride the High Country* (1962) and *Major Dundee* (1965) do address thematic concerns such as loyalty, the passage of time, and the ambiguous nature of morality, it is not until *The Wild Bunch* that these themes are reinforced by the director’s trademark visual style.

The abundance of literature that has cropped up since Peckinpah’s death and since the release of restored versions of *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* indicates that the director is still very much on the minds of critics and scholars. That there is a discussion of Peckinpah’s influence on directors such as Martin Scorsese and Kathryn Bigelow suggests his importance within the development of contemporary American cinema. A re-evaluation of Sam Peckinpah within a Film Studies context is crucial because the existing literature has largely made use of his films as textual evidence to advance claims in philosophical, sociological, and psychological arenas. For instance, *The Wild Bunch* is often cited as an index of the

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American public's evolving response to the Vietnam Conflict, and the director’s films have been used to explore everything from Sartre and Camus to Heraclitus and Freud. And when academics do consider the formal construction of Peckinpah’s films, their analysis is used most often to support claims that are tangential to a discussion of the function and effect of specific elements, and how they mold the viewer’s relationship to the films’ content.

The originality of this analysis lies in its film-as-film approach and in the recognition of this crucial relationship between viewer and content. The existing literature is overly concerned with description, explanation, and justification. Oftentimes, Peckinpah's biography is used to explain his predominant thematic concerns, or to qualify his lesser achievements in the context of a deteriorating social life and increased drug use. While such factors deserve acknowledgement as reasons for the decline of the director’s career, their consideration becomes an obstacle to understanding Peckinpah as a filmmaker. The eccentricities of his life and the mythology that surrounds his battles with studio executives has distracted from a consideration of Peckinpah's consummate craftsmanship and nuanced understanding of cinematic form. This thesis examines cinematic style, narrative structure, and genre as the primary tools with which Peckinpah shapes viewer alignment and espouses his thematic concerns, towards the goal of revealing his astute concern for the viewing experience that is constructed via a preferred set of formal norms.
A strictly formal academic appraisal of directorial style lends itself to a dismissal of the extremely personal nature of Sam Peckinpah’s work. It is important to recognize that the director’s treatment of certain characters, settings, and situations often had a strong source in his personal experiences. For example, the director spent a great majority of his youth splitting his time between a wealthy suburban estate and his grandfather’s ranch, which instilled in him a nostalgia for the Old West and a resentment towards its disappearance. A brief examination of Peckinpah’s extra-filmic life and career proves useful in contextualizing the framework from which the director drew his inspiration.

David Samuel Peckinpah was born on February 1st 1925 to a respected and successful attorney in Fresno, California. As such, he grew up comfortably despite the country’s economic instability during the 1930s. This is strikingly different than the image that Peckinpah crafted during his ascendance to stardom, in which he painted himself as a modern cowboy clinging to the last vestiges of a vanishing time, much like the characters in his films. However, Peckinpah’s upbringing does suggest why he may have been drawn to the Western as a narrative vehicle; he spent many of his summers at his grandfather Denver’s Dunlap Ranch, where the ranch hands would pass down their stories of the Old West to the young boy. Yet Peckinpah’s tenuous connection to this American mythology, regardless of how realistic or romanticized he imagined it to be, was tempered by a voracious intellectual appetite. As a child, he

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lost himself in everything from *Moby Dick* and *The Three Musketeers* to *Aladdin* and *Pecos Bill*.  

Critics often wrote off Sam Peckinpah as an anti-intellectual, embracing or dismissing him for what they saw as an approach to filmmaking that emphasized kinetic spectacle over emotional or intellectual exploration, and Peckinpah was only too eager to spin this into his own rugged frontier self-image. However, Peckinpah’s intellectual pursuits were as broad as they were insatiable, and after a brief and unexciting stint in the Marines that ended in 1946, he enrolled in Fresno State University, where he met his first wife Marie Selland and became involved in the theater. While at college, Peckinpah was drawn to Conrad, Hemingway, Thoreau, Faulkner, Dickens, the Greeks, Camus, Shakespeare, and Tennessee Williams. Peckinpah’s persona following the release of *The Wild Bunch* was predicated on his projection of himself as a crude, ill-tempered industry-outlaw, and the dominance of visceral emotion in his films distracts from the fact that his works were conceived by an extraordinarily inquisitive mind.

While at Fresno State, Peckinpah and Marie were married and he then enrolled in a Masters program in theater at the University of Southern California. The birth of their daughter Sharon in 1949 encouraged Peckinpah to earn a more stable living, and in 1951 he entered the burgeoning television industry as a stagehand. It was in the studio for KLAC-TV in Los Angeles that Peckinpah

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5 Ibid, 24.
6 Ibid, 66.
7 Ibid, 74.
9 Weddle, 97.
received his first real directing experience behind a camera, staging a production of Portrait of a Madonna for his Masters’ thesis. The young artist quickly absorbed the lessons of television and focused his energies on writing. He connected with the producer Walter Wanger through a mutual friend, who got Peckinpah a job as action-director Don Siegel’s personal assistant. Peckinpah learned valuable lessons from working with Siegel on films such as Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956), on which Peckinpah claims to have done significant re-writes, but he quickly returned to television when offered a writing position on the television Western Gunsmoke.

Gunsmoke quickly led to work on Broken Arrow and The Rifleman, and in 1959 Peckinpah was offered a series of his own, The Westerner, on which he acted as sole producer and had full creative control.

Sam Peckinpah successfully transitioned to features in 1961 when MGM offered him the chance to helm The Deadly Companions. He directed the picture under explicit instructions to remain faithful to the script, and the result was a straightforward film that adhered to conventional norms.

The Deadly Companions is a fairly generic story of a gunslinger and an ex-Civil War Yankee escorting a young woman through dangerous territory. This quickly led to his second film, Ride the High Country, shot from a script that was significantly altered to resonate closer to Peckinpah’s own experiences with the West. When Ride the High Country was released in 1962, it played the second half of a double bill and did poorly at the box office, but it received critical acclaim and solidified Peckinpah’s career as a motion-

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11 Ibid, 127.
12 Ibid, 168.
13 Ibid, 198.
picture director. *Ride the High Country*, following two elderly cowboys on their final adventure at the turn of the twentieth century, began a career-long examination of the decline of the Wild West.

Peckinpah signed on with independent producer Jerry Bressler and Columbia to direct *Major Dundee* in 1963, initiating the first in a series of feuds with production executives that would plague the director’s career. The feud began when the film’s budget was downgraded several days before shooting, a decision that Peckinpah took personally, and he reacted vindictively by wasting Columbia’s money with elaborate slow motion shots intended to expend extra film. *Major Dundee* completed photography $1.5 million over budget and was promptly taken away from the director, re-cut by Bressler following a poor preview reception, and dumped onto the market. *Major Dundee* is severely flawed in its plot development, almost elliptically following a Yankee officer on his obsessive hunt for a rebel Indian leader, which forces an alliance with the Confederate soldiers under his stewardship. Peckinpah’s feud with Bressler solidified his reputation as an “enfant terrible,” but this did not immediately prevent him from getting work. ¹⁴ Peckinpah’s next assignment was *The Cincinnati Kid*, and the director clashed with producer Martin Ransohoff over a scene in which the studio alleged that Peckinpah was spending the entire day photographing the actress nude. Peckinpah was kicked off the Columbia lot and blacklisted, as producers were afraid to hand him the reigns to another expensive feature.

During his exile, Peckinpah was eventually approached by producer Daniel Melnick to direct *Noon Wine* (1966), a made-for-television adaptation of a popular

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¹⁴ Ibid, 254.
Western novel. The film is a powerful character study, following the disruption of a family’s happiness upon the return of a man with a complicated past. The television-film initiated Peckinpah’s relationship with the actor Jason Robards and it was phenomenally well received. Melnick introduced Peckinpah to the executives at Warner Brothers, who promptly brought him onboard for a number of films. Such was the power of Noon Wine, which soon led to The Wild Bunch. The involvement of Phil Feldman, a producer who trusted Sam’s artistic intentions, made for a much more amicable experience than Major Dundee. As such, Peckinpah transformed The Wild Bunch into a blistering account of gunslingers who had reached the end of the line, waging total war as they retreat into Mexico, fleeing both the bounty hunters who pursue them and the encroaching tide of historical change. It was during the production of The Wild Bunch that Peckinpah honed the use of explosive squibs and special effects, and refined his trademark slow and fast motion photography. That the producers were on the director’s side during production proved instrumental in preserving Peckinpah’s vision for the film. Unfortunately, Ted Ashley, the new president of Warner Brothers at the time of The Wild Bunch’s release in 1969, reacted harshly to an initially disappointing box office run and ordered that ten minutes be cut from the film without consulting Peckinpah. Despite this studio recovery effort, the film was destroyed at the box office by the similarly-themed but far more benign Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969).

Before post-production had wrapped on The Wild Bunch, Peckinpah had

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15 Ibid, 281.
16 Ibid, 294.
17 Ibid, 305.
18 Ibid, 269-373.
filmed *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* as part of his contract with Warner Brothers. With the limited success of the former film, not much was spent on promoting the latter, and *Cable Hogue* was released as the second half of a double bill. This film departs from the confrontational violence of *The Wild Bunch*, gently treating the romance between a whore and a down-and-out wanderer who constructs a way station in the middle of the desert. Despite positive critical reception for the film, its poor box office performance convinced producers that perhaps Peckinpah was best suited to action films. But the director still had Daniel Melnick behind him and he was offered a chance to direct an adaptation of *The Siege at Trencher’s Farm*, which would become *Straw Dogs*. His first film in a contemporary setting, *Straw Dogs* details the disruption of a couple’s relationship as they are tormented by a group of aggressive village locals in rural England. The film wrapped only five days over schedule, the production having gone relatively smoothly, barring a slight delay due to an episode in which Peckinpah collapsed, possibly due to his nascent drinking problem. While *Straw Dogs* was being cut, Peckinpah shot *Junior Bonner* for Melnick. Both films performed poorly at the box office, the latter miscategorized by the studio as a Steve McQueen action vehicle. In fact, *Bonner* is quite the opposite, a lyrical character study of a rodeo star in the twilight of his career. McQueen enjoyed working with Peckinpah and brought him the material for *The Getaway*. The director understood that his career depended on a successful box office smash, and he delivered with a film that was similar to *The Wild Bunch* in its treatment of a professional criminal struggling to survive, now a contemporary bank robber on the
run from a traitorous accomplice. *The Getaway* was Peckinpah’s only film to date that reached the top of the box office charts, and the second highest grossing film he made in the United States.  

In his book, Weddle writes that Peckinpah’s drinking problem was growing with each subsequent project. *The Getaway* is a finely crafted film, bearing the stylistic trademarks that Peckinpah relied on to effectively deliver a story and condition viewer alignment, but it lacks the deeply personal contextualization that makes *The Wild Bunch* and *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* so powerful. Peckinpah’s divorce from his third wife almost certainly contributed to the director’s deepening alcoholism, to the point where, according to Weddle “he’d abandoned even token efforts to control his drinking. From the moment he opened his eyes each morning…until the small hours of the night…he was knocking back shots…”

But in Hollywood money talks, and despite Peckinpah’s personal shortcomings, he had a successful box office smash under his belt. James Aubrey, the head of production at MGM, offered the director a lucrative contract to direct *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*. It is difficult to say whether or not Peckinpah’s alcoholism inhibited his efficiency as a director, or if Aubrey simply didn’t trust Peckinpah as Melnick and Feldman had, but the challenging production of *Billy the Kid* was ultimately reminiscent of *Major Dundee*. Costs skyrocketed due to delays and reshoots, and eventually rumors began to circulate that Peckinpah was drinking on the set. As a result of budget overruns and poor preview reactions, the film was taken

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20 Ibid, 442.
21 Ibid, 437.
23 Ibid, 473.
away from Peckinpah and re-cut by the studio prior to release. Fortunately, a preview copy of the film was taken from a projection booth without the studio’s knowledge, and this is the source of the restored version we are privileged to see today. 24

Before the debacle of *Billy the Kid’s* production, Peckinpah secured financing for what would be the only film he directed with little to no studio intervention. *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* (1974), with its surreal genre-hopping and lugubrious pace, follows an American loner in Mexico on a mission to chop off the head of a dead man in order to collect a bounty. The film was poorly received by test audiences and dumped into second-run theaters by United Artists in August 1974. This effectively marked the end of Peckinpah’s ability to control the creative development of his films, and in order to keep what semblance of a career he still retained, he agreed to direct *The Killer Elite* (1975) for his next project, a spy thriller following a deadly competition between two rival hitmen. Weddle notes that it was on this project that Peckinpah began to abuse cocaine. 25 Ironically, despite Peckinpah’s apparent numbedness and the impenetrably labyrinthine nature of the source material, *The Killer Elite* opened to fantastic business in December 1975 and was the second and last US box office success of the director’s career.

Peckinpah followed this with *Cross of Iron* (1977), unsuccessfully funded by a German entrepreneur who ran out of money before principal photography was completed. The end result is a WWII combat film with several beautifully lyrical scenes that recall the best moments from Peckinpah’s earlier films. *Cross of Iron* did phenomenal business in Europe, becoming the biggest grossing picture in Germany

24 Ibid, 485.
25 Ibid, 499.
and Austria since *The Sound of Music* (1965), perhaps due to its modern, morally ambiguous treatment of combat on the Eastern Front. The same cannot be said for the US market, where *Cross of Iron* performed horribly. Interestingly enough, a then-elderly Orson Welles wrote Peckinpah that he greatly enjoyed the picture, inviting parallels between two directors whose artistic endeavors clashed with the Hollywood power brokers who enabled them.

Peckinpah moved on to *Convoy* (1978), a road-film that chronicles a group of truckers’ wanton disrespect for traffic laws, based on a popular country-western song of the same name. Weddle explains that “Peckinpah read the *Convoy* script through a fog of coke and booze,” and the film finished $5 million over budget but did remarkably well at the box office. This was not a victory for the director, however, as he allowed the studio edit the film without even putting up a fight. Following a heart attack on May 18th 1979, Peckinpah was tapped to direct *The Osterman Weekend*. Based on a Robert Ludlum novel, *The Osterman Weekend* stars Rutger Hauer and is about a group of international conspirators and a subsequent conspiracy to destroy them. The director was denied script-revision privileges and the resultant film bears little evidence of the loud yet refined cinematic storytelling that he was once capable of. In the last years of his life, Peckinpah provided second-unit direction for a Don Siegel action film and directed a music video for Julian Lennon. On December 28th 1984, Sam Peckinpah suffered a massive heart attack and passed away at the age of 59.

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26 Ibid, 512.
27 Ibid, 513.
28 Ibid, 514.
29 Ibid, 548.
Critique of Existing Literature

The existing literature on Peckinpah is limited in scope to a number of approaches. On one hand, there are those academics who examine Peckinpah’s themes as espoused by the films themselves. In this camp, scholars interpret character behavior, narrative development, setting, and perceived subtext in order to distill Peckinpah’s dominant thematic preferences or to place him within a tradition of seminal Western directors. On the other hand, there are academics who use Peckinpah’s films to advance extra-textual conclusions, philosophical or sociological extrapolations that bear little relevance to a Film Studies approach. All of these approaches are united by their lack of explicit formal analysis that explains the precise relationship between the viewer and the films’ content.

Paul Seydor provided the first intricate academic appraisal of Sam Peckinpah's films in 1980, before the director's death, but long after he had made any noteworthy Westerns. In Peckinpah: The Western Films, Seydor offers the best analysis of the prevailing themes that define Peckinpah's work, but there is little discussion of the narrative and formal structures that engage the viewer and reinforce these themes. Discussion of cinematic style is limited to how expressive violence and slow motion convey notions of realism and heroism within the Western tradition. Like most analyses of Peckinpah's work, the book abounds with lush descriptions of the director’s style, but Seydor does not analyze the how and why questions, the function and effect of such stylization in terms of how the viewing experience is affected. Seydor’s most convincing claim is that Peckinpah's style is inextricably
linked to his films’ content, that form serves meaning and that the two often develop organically from one another. At the heart of this is a core claim of Seydor's that Peckinpah's style is necessitated by his storytelling concerns. All too often in the literature, Peckinpah is written off as a simple storyteller, perhaps because of the ease with which his themes can be identified in individual films. Seydor is correct; style most certainly serves meaning, but the precision with which Peckinpah manipulates form to elicit specific reactions from the audience suggests a filmmaker extraordinarily in-tune with the implications of each cut, each exploding squib, and each reaction shot.

Seydor’s final chapter makes a compelling case for Peckinpah to be placed in a tradition of “masculine” American artists, in the company of Irving, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, Hemingway, and Mailer. This argument reveals another problem endemic to much of the Peckinpah literature. Often these authors come across as grand apologists for the deficiencies in Peckinpah's later work. It is important to recognize the mastery in a great many of his films, but to extend this admiration to films like Convoy and The Osterman Weekend is just as grand a blunder. Seydor does not explicitly apologize for these film, avoiding the necessity altogether by limiting himself to Peckinpah's Westerns, which as a whole were his greatest achievements. Yet this comparison to the great American literary giants of the 19th and 20th centuries walks a fine line between academic comparison and unworthy loyalist admiration. I agree that Peckinpah's finest works do enable him to bear the torch of the tormented American artist, but this must be tempered with a recognition of the deficiencies that

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mar his later films.

David Weddle's *If They Move...Kill 'Em* is considered the authoritative biography on Sam Peckinpah and he applies a narrative to the director’s life with remarkable clarity. The biography is primarily contextual and the author discusses why Peckinpah was attracted to the writings of Sartre, Camus, the Greeks, Shakespeare, and Tennessee Williams. The author digs extraordinarily deep to convey the tumultuous ups and downs that Peckinpah went through, but if there is one criticism to be made, it is that the author sometimes links elements in the formal construction of Peckinpah's films to formative moments in the director’s life. This approach comes across as somewhat reverse-engineered; he makes circumlocutious connections between filmic components and contextual details from Peckinpah's early life. For example, referring to *Straw Dogs*, Weddle notes that “Sam grounded the rage not only in hidden primitive instincts, but also in the accumulated resentments of a bad marriage.” 31 The parallels between life and work might better account for why Peckinpah was drawn towards cynical subject matter in the first place, rather than provide explanations of specific details in his work. Regardless, Weddle does not derail the biography with such musings. Ultimately, it doesn’t concern itself with an analysis of Peckinpah's films, but reveals a staggering amount about Peckinpah the man and it is necessary reading for anyone who truly wishes to be acquainted with Peckinpah the artist. *If They Move...Kill 'Em* makes a wonderful companion piece to Seydor's *The Western Films* because a comparison between the life of the director and the themes that drove his pictures reveals how incredibly personal these films

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31 Weddle, 397.
were for him.

Along with Weddle and Seydor's works, Michael Bliss's *Justified Lives: Morality and Narrative in the Films of Sam Peckinpah* rounds out a category of Peckinpah literature that approaches the entirety of his oeuvre in an attempt to distill the primary themes that guide his films. Like Seydor, Bliss uses the films as his primary texts, arguing that they are all essentially Westerns by detailing an evolution in the way that the director approached generic Western themes. Bliss's work straddles the line between the Seydor camp of narrative and thematic analysis and the second camp of examining these films within the context of the Western tradition. Within this framework, Bliss's analysis is much like Seydor's, explaining how characters' actions fit in-line with Peckinpah's thematic concerns, rather than how these themes are conveyed through structural or formal means.

With regards to this second camp, Richard Slotkin and Jim Kitses have contributed a great deal to the canonization of Sam Peckinpah within the tradition of seminal Western directors. Slotkin details the evolution of the Western genre and its direct relation to changing societal attitudes towards the American myth in *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in 20th Century America*. Slotkin uses *The Wild Bunch* as the primary indicator of a change in American attitudes towards the Vietnam conflict following the My Lai massacre. He cites precise formal elements in the film to support this claim, comparing the slow motion “blood ballet” of the film's gunfights to the infamous photographs of the massacre. Slotkin provides a well thought-out analysis of these parallels, placing Peckinpah in a

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32 Slotkin, 593
tradition of Western movie directors whose use of generic norms reflected societal
and historical attitudes. This pragmatic approach towards Peckinpah’s Westerns is
valuable in an American Studies context, but it bears little relevance to a film-as-film
analysis of how Peckinpah shapes the audience’s relationship to the characters
presented on screen.

Jim Kitses' *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint
Eastwood* bears similarities to Slotkin's work in its examination of Peckinpah's films
within the tradition of the Western genre, albeit with a diminished focus on American
historical patterns. Rather, Kitses adopts an auteur approach to generic analysis,
using dominant themes, characters, and settings to define the cinematic West of John
Ford, Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah, Sergio Leone, and Clint
Eastwood. In doing so, Kitses places Peckinpah alongside Leone as a generic
successor to John Ford, a conclusion that is grounded in theme rather than in form. 33

All of the aforementioned directors overlook formal construction, focusing
their arguments almost entirely on thematic interpretation. Stephen Prince offers the
most explicitly formal analysis of violence in Peckinpah’s films in *Savage Cinema:
Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies*. Prince takes the films
themselves as his primary texts in an effort to advance an understanding of how
violence operates in American culture. 34 Thus, this is primarily a sociological work,
using films like *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs* as case studies to explain a greater
social phenomenon: the American audience's fascination with violence. Though this
may seem tangential to a film-as-film analysis, there lies great value in Prince's

33 Kitses, 202.
34 Prince, xx.
identification of the specific ways in which Peckinpah constructs violence in his films, through the use of slow motion inserts, montage set-pieces, and intercutting. Prince makes an acknowledgement that is rare in the Peckinpah literature, that the director's stylization may not have been contributing to any interpretive, non-filmic meaning, but that it exists in service of visceral cinematic experience alone.  

Unfortunately, the remainder of this book lends itself to a discussion of the influence of Robert Ardrey, the theory of catharsis, and melancholia on Peckinpah's work. While thoughtful, this examination shares much with the irrelevant extrapolation that pollutes the remaining literature, an approach that is wholly tangential to a Film Studies analysis.

Prince's work, then, straddles another dichotomy in the academic approaches to Peckinpah's oeuvre: those who distill Peckinpah’s themes and generic foundations from the films themselves, and those who use the films to advance extra-textual conclusions. The release of Weddle’s biography appears to have marked a watershed moment in which access to details about Peckinpah's formative years yielded an abundance of critical and academic attention. Most works dedicated to a discussion of Sam Peckinpah's films have been published after this seminal biography. Gabrielle Murray’s This Wounded Cinema, This Wounded Life provides an examination of the philosophical implications of violence in Peckinpah's films. This book cites Heraclitus, Edgar Morin, Nietzsche, and Camus, which Weddle’s biography notes as early intellectual interests of Peckinpah’s. This suggests to me that the publication of Weddle’s biography resulted in an interpretive strain of Peckinpah literature that

argues a tenuous connection between his youthful interests and the thematics of his films. Murray writes that the purpose of her work is to explore how viewers experience these films intellectually and justifies these claims with a discussion of Camus and Nietzsche rather than an analysis of the films themselves. Offering no formal evidence from the primary texts, this study, and many others like it, are concerned solely with thematic and philosophical extrapolation.

Similarly, Bernard Dukore's Sam Peckinpah's Feature Films cites Sartre often, arguing that Ride the High Country is a remake of The Flies, based on the observation that both artists are obsessed with questionable heroes doomed by a tragic moment of kindness. Dukore bases much of his analysis on the unreliable assumption that Peckinpah was honest in his interviews. He quotes the director as saying that The Ballad of Cable Hogue is “a new version of Sartre's The Flies with a touch of Keystone Kops.” Dukore explicitly says that his analysis is based on taking this comment at face value, completely ignoring the fact that Peckinpah was unbelievably unreliable in his interviews, often contradicting himself and creating utter fabrications about his life and influences. Dukore's work is the type of interpretive analysis that this thesis strives to avoid. The author makes generalizations without evidence and detailed observations without coming to conclusions.

For a director who has been largely forgotten in the minds of contemporary moviegoers, there exists a surprisingly sizable literature on Peckinpah's work. This attests to the power of his films, which have galvanized a continued academic discussion for the entirety of the quarter-century since his death. But the literature

36 Murray, 1.
37 Dukore, 17.
38 Ibid, 29.
also reveals a severe deficiency in the examination of Peckinpah's works. The themes and moral underpinnings of his films have been analyzed ad infinitum by academics like Seydor and Bliss, and thanks to historians such as Slotkin and Kitses, Peckinpah can now be safely considered a seminal director of American Westerns. David Weddle's exhaustive biography has provided the source material for a second generation of academics to use Peckinpah's work as a means to examine the philosophies of innumerable intellectuals, from Heraclitus to Robert Ardrey. But what is missing from this discussion is a film-as-film analysis that examines the relationship of the viewer to Peckinpah’s works, with a focus on specific formal cause and effect. In their debates, most of these academics have become coolly detached in their approach to these films. These pictures exist within the context of the Hollywood industrial system, and as products of an industry concerned first and foremost with the production of entertainment, the paramount function of these movies is to provide an experience for the viewer. This thesis undertakes to illuminate how Peckinpah shapes an experience that encourages the viewer to root for morally questionable and violent men.

Overview of Thesis Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis examines Peckinpah’s dominant stylistic preferences using an analysis of style that draws on examples from the breadth of his filmography. Three techniques are analyzed: point-of-view editing, emotional montage, and physical montage. A sequence from The Ballad of Cable Hogue is used
as an example of how Peckinpah uses point-of-view editing to condition the viewer’s understanding of the comedic cinematic universe, as well as the viewer’s response to Cable Hogue’s actions. In this case, the viewer’s investment in Cable Hogue is facilitated by our understanding that his sexual glares are not threatening, but comically endearing. The second sample scene demonstrates Peckinpah’s use of visceral, emotional montage to encourage alignment by providing the viewer with a direct cinematic representation of the protagonist’s prevailing emotional state. In the opening moments of *The Getaway*, aggressive intercutting between temporally and spatially non-synchronous locations suggests Doc McCoy’s intolerable frustration with prison life. The final sample scene is drawn from *Junior Bonner*. I’ve identified physical montage as the formal means with which Peckinpah constructs a moment of intense action or violence, in this case a bull ride at a rodeo. Here, physical montage is used in conjunction with subjective depth of narration to encourage a detached observation of JR’s actions while also indicating his sorrowful nostalgia for a bygone youthful glory.

The second half of this chapter analyzes *Straw Dogs* as the truest expression of Peckinpah’s visceral cinematic style. A close examination of the three aforementioned stylistic techniques is undertaken in an effort to discern how they operate and co-exist over the course of an entire film. This analysis of style examines how the viewer is encouraged to align with David and Amy Sumner, despite the questionable nature of their individual character and the fragility of their marriage. A secondary aim of this chapter is to clarify how Peckinpah’s stylistic choices are inextricably linked to the specific thematic concerns of each film. This chapter
explores how Peckinpah’s rigorous formal stylization encourages the viewer to understand the paranoia and suspicion that pervades the cinematic universe of Straw Dogs. Shot breakdowns that detail the specific function and effect of localized stylistic choices are included in the appendix, as well as a narrative segmentation so that we may discern how style operates over the entirety of the film. Additional narrative segmentations are provided for The Wild Bunch and Pat Garret and Billy the Kid.

The second chapter draws from the director’s mature works to discern his various methods of structuring narrative and narration. This chapter provides a careful examination of how Peckinpah shapes viewer alignment via structural devices such as parallels, repetition and variation, and motifs, as well as trends in range and depth of narration. I propose that Peckinpah’s films can be categorized as action films and emotion films, the stylistic variation of which is necessitated by the director’s multiplicitous thematic concerns. The action films are predominantly concerned with men who are unable to express themselves emotionally and whose lives are defined by the violence they commit and the repercussions of their actions. The emotion films chronicle a fleeting moment in the lives of men who are searching for some form of intimacy. Each group of films requires an altered set of narrative norms in order to facilitate understanding of and investment with the central protagonist. The action films are The Wild Bunch, The Getaway, and Straw Dogs. The emotion films are The Ballad of Cable Hogue and Junior Bonner.

The case study for chapter two examines how narrative structure and narration operate over the entirety of The Wild Bunch. Pike Bishop and his men are arguably
the most villainous and destructive characters with which Peckinpah asks his audience to invest. As such, the film requires an intricate structure of parallels and careful delivery of subjective information in order to preclude the audience’s alignment against these violent men. This case study is particularly useful because a synthesis of the techniques used in both the action and emotion films is used to condition viewer alignment in *The Wild Bunch*.

The third chapter identifies how Peckinpah uses established generic iconography in order to condition the viewer’s expectations. Jeanine Basinge’s model of generic development is applied to each of Peckinpah’s Westerns in an attempt to ground him within a specific period of Western filmmaking. Peckinpah was making Westerns at a time when generic visual shorthand could be used to convey narrative information economically and efficiently. By tracing how Peckinpah invokes Western iconography in his films, we can observe the evolution of his thematic concerns throughout the entirety of his mature period, as well as his attitude towards the position of his protagonists in the universe of each film. Peckinpah’s reliance on genre also grows more sophisticated as his career progresses. Thus, while he uses generic imagery to confirm the viewer’s expectation that the cowboy Gil Westrum is obsolete in *Ride the High Country*, he uses those same images to defy viewer expectations in *The Wild Bunch*, announcing a new breed of Western entirely, the Peckinpah Western.

The conclusion of this thesis places Peckinpah within a tradition of filmmakers who took advantage of the stylistic freedoms afforded by the decline of the studio system during the 1960s and 1970s. Tackling controversial subject matter,
many of these directors came to rely on increasingly experimental formal technique in
order to convey the subjectivity of their protagonists. Rather than discuss
Peckinpah’s legacy in terms of influence on later directors, I hope to suggest that he
belonged to a group of directors who aided in pushing the boundaries of cinematic
expression. The sophisticated formal techniques with which Peckinpah encourages
viewer alignment suggests that he was a director who was astutely aware of the
implications of style and narrative on the viewing experience, and it is my hope that
this thesis will advance a discussion of Peckinpah the filmmaker, rather than
Peckinpah the man.
Chapter 1.

Directorial Style

The formal aesthetic of Sam Peckinpah’s films is remarkably consistent throughout his mature period. The director’s formal preferences function to indicate character subjectivity in a number of methods, but the common effect of each strategy is the alignment of the viewer with Peckinpah’s traditional outsider protagonists: the illiterate wanderer in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, the pigeon-holed fugitive in *The Getaway*, the fading rodeo star in *Junior Bonner*, and the tragically obsolete cowboy-outlaws in *The Wild Bunch*. A crucial strategy that Peckinpah uses to condition audience alignment is point-of-view editing. By strategically sharing specific characters’ optical perspectives with the spectator, Peckinpah encourages a shared understanding of the filmic universe as the principal protagonist experiences it.
Visceral emotional montage is a second strategy that Peckinpah uses to encourage viewer alignment. In this case, alignment is based on sympathy with a character’s emotional state, rather than a shared mental perception of a physical event. The director uses temporally and spatially non-synchronous editing to present the cinematic equivalent of a dominant emotional attitude or psychological state. Additionally, Peckinpah uses physical montage to encourage audience alignment with his morally questionable protagonists, in which action set-pieces are constructed through the intercutting between non-synchronous time and space, and in and out of fast and slow motion. This stylization of violent spectacle provides a cinematic equivalent for how these men experience the violence that penetrates their lives. The visceral nature of these sequences invites the audience to invest in the principal characters by virtue of this shared experience.

Editing strategies distinguish the distinct formal approaches in Peckinpah’s films: those that construct static moments and those that construct sequences of intense violence. During stasis, analytical editing establishes a rhythm via the repetition of camera set-ups. Moments of violence are constructed from the dynamic intercutting between innumerable lines of action, in and out of fast and slow motion, but within a previously defined space that requires no clarification as the conflict progresses. The director’s aesthetic is dominated by montage, reliant on rhythm and composition to convey salient narrative information, characters’ emotional states, and the dominant mood of sequences. Peckinpah’s reputation as the director responsible for the blood baths that bookend The Wild Bunch and the controversial rape in Straw Dogs overshadows his accomplishments as a director of subtlety and formal finesse.
But this is not to say that action scenes are not crucial to the director’s body of work. All of Peckinpah’s mature works are concerned, some more directly than others, with the repercussions of violence. As with all of Peckinpah’s directorial choices, form reinforces theme. Peckinpah’s world-view is fundamentally concerned with violence, and these visceral action sequences aggressively confront the viewer with the simultaneous pleasure and horror that his protagonists accrue from this destruction.

Though Peckinpah has come to be recognized for his stylized treatment of violence, his films are marked by prolonged pauses between moments of intense spectacle. Peckinpah’s films are dominated by languorous conversations in which words and phrases are placed strategically to provide subtle exposition or reinforce mood and atmosphere, somewhat analogous to the split-second cuts that deliver visceral blows in the violent montage set pieces. These comparatively peaceful moments, such as Segment 2.b of *The Wild Bunch*, are dominated by a reliance on a range of medium-shots to extreme close-ups. Stopping to change horses in a Mexican border town, The Bunch comes to the realization that they were led into an ambush, having stolen a bag of valueless washers from the railroad. Contrary to convention, long-shots, sometimes as establishing shots, are used for emotional punctuation. A cut to a prolonged long-shot can indicate tension after a series of increasingly tight and short close-ups. This occurs in shots 2 and 7 of Segment 2.b in which Angel chastises Lyle and Tector Gorch. However, the long-shot can also provide an emotional détente after a tense exchange. In shot 20 of the same sequence, an extreme long-shot reinforces the cooling of tensions that occurs after Angel and the Gorch brothers come to terms with the failed heist.
In this manner, scenes are generally composed of a number of camera set-ups that provide a range of close-ups of principal characters and medium shots to highlight salient groupings of individuals. Shot duration is typically very short, with each camera set-up repeated and varied in scale numerous times throughout the scene. The extreme brevity of the shots makes a pause of one or two seconds particularly meaningful, and the accumulation of repeated camera set-ups enables a slight adjustment in scale to punctuate emotion effectively. Camera movement only occurs when motivated by character action, either the characters’ physical movement or via a point-of-view eye line, and unmotivated camera movement is almost entirely absent from the director’s stylistic palette. Point-of-view camera movement often takes the form of zooms, quick pans, and motivated tracks.

The dialectic between the formal construction of violent sequences and calmer sequences is discussed in-depth in the Straw Dogs case study in the latter half of this chapter. In the case study, an analysis of point-of-view editing indicates how Peckinpah conditions the viewer’s perception of the film’s dominant atmosphere of paranoia, jealousy, and sexual repression. The church social sequence in Straw Dogs provides an excellent example of how Peckinpah uses visceral, emotional montage, the increasingly rapid and aggressive intercutting that provides the viewer with a cinematic equivalent of Amy Sumner’s emotional trauma after she has been raped. Finally, the case study indicates how Peckinpah’s dominant methods of formal construction interact and reinforce one another. Amy’s rape sequence is analyzed in-depth in order to illustrate the combined usage of POV editing and visceral, emotional montage.
Stylistic Strategies for Audience Alignment

An analysis of sequences from the breadth of Peckinpah’s work displays his ability to provide character subjectivity via several stylistic strategies, effectively aligning the viewer with the director’s coterie of morally misbegotten heroes. As noted, the dominant approaches utilized by Peckinpah are point-of-view editing, visceral emotional montage, and violent physical montage. The net effect of this alignment is to condition the viewer to root for these men of violence, and in doing so, perhaps come to understand the tragedy of their existence at the margins of society. With regards to the West, the setting in which Peckinpah espoused his concerns most thoroughly, spectator alignment with the outlaws of The Wild Bunch and the outcasts of The Ballad of Cable Hogue is absolutely essential. Peckinpah’s fundamental thematic concern is a sorrowful nostalgia for the untamed West, and by aligning the viewer with traditionally vilified protagonists such as Pike Bishop, the director suggests that there is something extraordinarily valuable in these obsolete characters’ refusal to lie down and be swept away by the progression of history. Peckinpah carries this concern for the loners at the margins of society into his contemporary films. Form encourages alignment with Doc in The Getaway and JR in Junior Bonner precisely because Peckinpah places a premium on men who choose to die like they lived rather than to live at all.

The Ballad of Cable Hogue is marked by a distinct use of photographic effects such as fast-motion, split-screen, and even animation. These techniques draw stark attention to artifice and the construction of the film. Within this self-conscious
framework, Peckinpah uses Cable’s point-of-view to condition the spectator’s understanding of how this delightfully campy universe operates. A pseudo-Western, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* comedically chronicles the development of the romance between Cable Hogue, a vagabond who discovers water in the desert where no else could, and Hildy, a prostitute with ambitions beyond the whorehouse. The film is quite idiosyncratic in its structure and narrative development, and point-of-view editing facilitates our understanding of their romantic development within this artificial cinematic universe.

In the first sample scene, Cable has just arrived to town in order to make a claim on his newly discovered water hole, when he unexpectedly runs into Hildy on his way to the claims office. Peckinpah uses a direct eye line to provide the viewer with a cinematic representation of what the protagonist is gazing at, which indicates Hildy as an object of desire for Cable. This is used extensively throughout *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* to align the audience with Cable by encouraging the viewer to see what he sees, as he sees it, thus facilitating an understanding of the filmic universe that is linked to the protagonist’s experiences.

Beginning with shot 2, a series of point-of-view shots in which Cable ogles Hildy creates a shared expectation between Cable and the viewer that affects how the audience experiences the rest of the film. In shot 2, a long-shot of Hildy is punctuated by a quick zoom at its end, followed by a long-shot of Cable noticing her, indicating that the previous shot was his point-of-view. This pattern repeats until shot 10, with increasingly tight, alternating compositions that position Cable as a proxy for the viewer in the scene. As Hildy walks past him in shot 10, the viewer expects a
moment of significant exchange between the two. Cable begins to hope for a moment of intimacy with Hildy, and the point-of-view construction encourages the viewer to align with Cable by conditioning the spectator to root for the successful development of the romance.

Additional elements punctuate this brief, silent exchange. A zoom shot of Cable from medium close-up to close-up at the end of shot 5 heightens the indirect subjectivity by punctuating the significance of Cable’s reaction shot. The musical motif that begins in shot 5 functions similarly to suggest Cable’s romantic intentions, further conditioning the viewer to expect a relationship between the two. Both the directly subjective point-of-view shots and indirectly subjective reaction shots are marked by Peckinpah’s penchant for the zoom. The zoom has long functioned as a means of illustrating a direct point-of-view, perhaps in a more utilitarian manner, so as to suggest a character’s gaze through a pair of binoculars or a rifle’s scope.

Peckinpah uses this in-camera effect throughout his oeuvre, and in Cable Hogue it enhances viewer alignment with the protagonist by underscoring those point-of-view shots that are most important. Shot 14 brusquely indicates Cable’s preoccupation with Hildy’s breasts. In this point-of-view shot, a tilt and zoom fixates Cable’s (and the viewer’s) gaze on Hildy’s provocative cleavage. Two factors converge here that prevent this moment from appearing erotically indulgent or sexually threatening. First, the zoom functions similarly to the abundance of camera effects used throughout the film. These effects create a margin of safety, a distance between the content of the film and the viewing experience in which Cable’s gaze is understood to be played for comedy, not cruelty. It calls attention to the artifice of
the film’s construction, and much like the fast motion cinematography and split-screen do, it indicates Peckinpah’s intention of creating a mood of capriciousness and camp, rather than asking the viewer to consider the potentially threatening consequences of Cable’s inappropriate glaring. Secondly, the marriage of POV editing between shots 1 and 10 with the lyrical musical motif suggests romantic inclinations, rather than lewd or predatory instincts. As such, the zoom in shot 14 contributes to a safe margin that reinforces the viewer’s perception of Cable as our well-intended, albeit slightly primitive hero, which is the viewer’s dominant perception of him throughout the film, and generally the attitude that Peckinpah adopts towards his protagonists throughout his body of work.

This use of self-conscious cinematographic effects to advance this attitude is unique to *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* amongst Peckinpah’s films, which begs the question of why this film has been overlooked, and why its formal construction hasn’t been taken into greater consideration. Since *Cable Hogue* is stylistically idiosyncratic amidst Peckinpah’s greater body of work, it is difficult to discuss within a generalized framework that distills the director’s preferences to several key elements. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* betrays a more tender, optimistic world-view that runs counter to the director’s other works. The comedic romanticism of the film requires an alternate approach to formal construction that facilitates the viewer’s understanding of this bizarre genre-bender. As such, overt photographic effects distance the viewer from the film and create a margin of safety that facilitates alignment with Cable. However, the analysis of *Straw Dogs* indicates that POV editing patterns in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* do carry into the director’s more stylistically and thematically coherent works,
which are concerned with violence and tragedy more than romance and optimistic sacrifice.

The conversation between Hildy and Cable that follows is presented in a fairly conventional shot-reverse-shot. Reaction shots of Hildy disarm those point-of-view shots in which Cable is staring at her breasts. Hildy reacts with an assured calm and wit befitting of a prostitute who is used to men ogling her, but her amused reaction to Cable in shots 14, 16, 18, and 22 suggests that Cable’s childish naivety is somewhat charming to her. In shot 18, as Cable stares at Hildy’s cleavage and asks where the land office is, she responds, “Well, you’re lookin’ right at it.” Peckinpah constructs a series of visual jokes such as this one. The point-of-view shots call attention to Cable’s inappropriate glare, but within the context of the dominantly campy mood and dialogue of the film, they further suggest Cable’s endearing ineptitude to the viewer, and Hildy’s appreciative reaction to Cable reinforces this understanding.

The entire conversation between Hildy and Cable is predicated on the fact that he cannot read, which requires him to ask her for directions to the Land Office. Shot 20 provides a visual confirmation of Cable’s illiteracy; a very quick point-of-view whip-pan makes it impossible for the viewer to read the signs of various buildings, a stylized cinematic representation that mirrors Cable’s own perception. Within the context of the film’s other pictorial effects (fast motion, split-screen), it would seem that Peckinpah’s goal is to preclude the possibility of a negative perception of Cable’s illiteracy by clarifying our understanding of it in terms of the comic confines of the film’s presentation. Just like the development of his relationship with Hildy, his illiteracy is a source of comedy and pleasure, not pathos and pity.
In shot 38, there is a POV extreme close-up of Hildy’s cleavage that is very similar to shots 14 and 18. At this point in the sequence, Hildy and Cable’s conversation has ended and she has moved into the far background of the composition, making it unlikely that this extremely close shot is an accurate representation of Cable’s optical perspective. This framing repeats in shot 40, amidst a sequence of shots in which Hildy is moving farther and farther away from Cable and he is staring at her in his reaction shots. Shots 38 and 40 are extremely brief and appear to be spatially and temporally non-synchronous within the diegetic chronology of the scene. The viewer is cued to assume that shots 38 and 40 must be instantaneous flashbacks from several moments before, directly subjective visualizations of what is on Cable’s mind. This repetition of shots emphasizes Cable’s obsession with Hildy’s overt sexuality, reinforcing the viewer’s perception of Cable as an adorably uncivilized vagabond, while also conditioning the spectator to expect some sort of relationship to form between the two.

In this sample scene from The Ballad of Cable Hogue, point-of-view editing aligns the viewer with Cable by conditioning our expectations to be the same as his. Due to the initial point-of-view shots, expressive zooms, and reaction shots, the audience understands Cable’s desire for Hildy and we are cued to expect the formation of a sexual or romantic relationship between them. Peckinpah uses self-conscious techniques throughout the film to establish a margin of safety from which the viewer can consider Cable’s subjectivity within the director’s comedic, playful universe. By tying the audience’s expectations to Cable’s subjective point-of-view shots within a comically self-aware film, Peckinpah encourages a sympathetic
consideration of our hero, rather than an adverse reaction to his lack of propriety. In part, the spectator is able to align with Cable and root for him because we understand that he is harmless, that his lust is not threatening towards Hildy. As the film progresses, the viewer’s romantic expectations are confirmed and a truly affectionate, loving relationship develops between them. That such a fulfilling romance can develop out of sexual objectification, as indicated by the POV shots, suggests Peckinpah’s attitude that there lies something valuable even in society’s outcasts, such as the wanderer Cable Hogue and the prostitute Hildy.

Where *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* uses subjective optical perspective to condition viewer expectations within a comedic framework, a varied palette of formal tools is used in *The Getaway* to efficiently convey a dominant emotional state. Steve McQueen plays Doc McCoy, a recently paroled ex-con who is on the run with his wife Carol after a failed bank robbery. The couple is not only running from the law, but from the henchmen of an influential crime boss who Carol murdered, as well as Rudy, Doc’s accomplice in the failed heist. The opening sequence of *The Getaway* uses temporally and spatially non-synchronous editing to provide a cinematic representation of Doc McCoy’s frustration with prison life. Peckinpah uses emotional montage to construct an experience that is shared by both Doc and the viewer. Within the large-scale structure of the narrative, this sequence aligns the viewer with Doc by indicating that this miserable tedium is what pushes him to re-enter a life of crime in order to gain parole, and the reason for his increasingly desperate lengths to avoid going back.
The sample-scene is the final portion of a larger montage in which temporally and spatially non-synchronous intercutting, sound-bridge and volume adjustment, and flashback encourage viewer sympathy and alignment. In this sequence, intercutting makes it difficult to define precisely what is past and present. For the purposes of this analysis, it will be assumed that Doc is sitting in his jail cell in the present, constructing a toothpick bridge. Around this central sequence, Peckinpah cuts to previous events in which Doc bathes in the prison shower, works in the chain gang, as well as Doc’s flashbacks of his wife Carol.

The average shot-length in Sample 3.1 is 1 second, and in its 22-second duration, the sequence cuts between five locations. These locations are clarified in the montage sequence that builds up to our sample, and the sum-effect of this extremely rapid intercutting is a stunningly clear indication of Doc’s frustration with prison life and his motivation to leave. The five locations in this sequence correspond to the five scenes that are being intercut: Doc in the prison shower, Doc sitting complacently in his cell, Doc and Carol making love in their home, Doc working in the prison machine room, and his labor in a chain gang. The intercutting of these scenes illustrates the droll, tedious monotony of his routine. Shot 1 presents the prison shower. The sound of running faucets and prisoner chatter carries throughout the entire 22-second sequence, which distorts the spectator’s sense of temporal and spatial relations, enhancing our perception of Doc’s exasperation. Shot 2 introduces Doc in his cell, where he constructs a toothpick model bridge. This cues the viewer to conclude that he is bored with prison life. The return to the shower in shot 3 suggests that shots 1 and 3 are continuous in time, as are all the subsequent shots in
the showers. Similarly, shots within a shared location proceed without ellipsis, but the passage of time is extended indefinitely by the intercutting of shots from different times and spaces, and the viewer’s sense of how much time has elapsed in each location is utterly distorted. A single afternoon in the machine shop appears endlessly tedious, and a brief moment of reprieve in Doc’s cell becomes an unbearable infinity. This pattern is repeated with each of the five locations, indicating to the viewer that all aspects of Doc’s prison life share this fundamental tedium.

Shot 4 introduces the only non-prison location in this sequence. Unlike the others, this shot of Carol and Doc in bed together is bathed in luxurious light and sensuous tones that suggests a space completely different than the antiseptic prison. Unlike the other scenes, which act singularly as objective presentations of Doc’s prison life, shot 4 introduces a subjective imagining or flashback. At less than one second in length, shot 4 is markedly shorter than the preceding shots of Doc in the shower and in his cell, leading us to conclude that his fantasies are but a fleeting reprieve from his incarceration. Shot 4 initiates an intensified portion of the montage in which the subsequent shots have an average length of less than one second. The actions in each location remain the same, such as Doc staring at the model bridge in shot 5, or his machine-room laboring in shot 9, but the increasingly rapid rhythm of the editing suggests that he is reaching a breaking point. This succession of shots with shorter and shorter duration functions as a cinematic representation of Doc’s subjective state, which enhances the viewer’s understanding of the increasingly aggressive, painstaking monotony of prison life. However, in shot 6 the viewer is cued to understand that there does exists some solace for Doc outside of the prison
walls. Shot 6 is a close-up insert of his wife’s photograph on the cell wall, and it is the only analytical cut-in within any of these larger spaces. The cut-in to a picture of Carol links Doc’s sexual fantasy (the flashback to the couple in bed in shot 4) to his sterile life inside the prison. The juxtaposition between the sensuously stylized flashback of Carol in shot 4 and her insipid, static picture in shot 6 calls attention to the couple’s separation, and further cues the viewer to understand Doc’s desperation to leave the prison.

After the introduction of Carol into the sequence, changes in sound design and shot-scale intensify the effect of the rapid editing, namely the viewer’s perception that prison life is becoming increasingly unbearable. Shot 9 introduces the machine room location, and in shot 11 the rhythmic buzzing and whirring of various mechanisms begins. This added layer of sound continues as a sound-bridge above the images of other locations and increases in volume along with the sound of the shower. This cacophony of noise functions similarly to the decreased shot length that began in shot 4, another cinematic representation that cues the viewer’s understanding of Doc’s frustration. As the sequence progresses, shot-scale becomes tighter and tighter. Compositions in the shower room steadily progress in scale from a medium long-shot in shot 4 to a medium close-up in shot 20. The abrasive tone of the sequence is heightened by shots 13, 15, and 16, in which close-up inserts of rapidly spinning insect-like mechanisms assault the viewer with their incessant humming. This visual and sonic assault is irritating and overwhelming, and the viewer desires a release just as Doc pines for a means to be freed from incarceration.
The formal intensification of the scene comes to a fore at the beginning of shot 22, in Doc’s cell. This shot holds for six seconds, markedly longer than anything after shot 4, and Doc destroys his toothpick bridge in an act of desperate vexation. The repetition of shots and intensification of form in shots 1 through 22 depict the tedium of prison life, positioning the viewer to sympathize with Doc and fully understand the trauma that he has undergone. The destruction of the toothpick bridge is a visual expression of his frustration, which leads to his decision that he will rob a bank in exchange for parole approval from the corrupt politician. Form reinforces content, enabling the spectator to understand Doc’s exasperation, and the slight variation in the formal pattern in shot 22 assumes importance as a profound release and realization for both the viewer and for Doc. For the viewer, shot 22 functions as a reprieve from the increasingly aggressive, repetitive formal construction of the scene, aligning the audience with Doc by tying the viewer’s perception of the scene with his prison experience.

Like point-of-view editing in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, emotional montage in *The Getaway* is a means of encouraging alignment by indicating the protagonist’s perception of an experience, which cues spectator sympathy. In the former, a shared eye line encourages alignment predicated on an understanding of Cable Hogue’s desires within a rigorously well-defined cinematic universe. In the latter film, a cinematic representation of Doc’s suffering encourages sympathy based on the viewer’s shared perception of his life in prison.

Physical montage is Peckinpah’s third strategy for encouraging audience alignment and it is salient in *Junior Bonner* as a means of revealing the subjectivity of
a man who is hesitant to betray his emotions publicly. At first glance, *Junior Bonner* appears to be a film that is fundamentally different than a violent picture such as *The Wild Bunch*. *Junior Bonner* is a slice-of-life story following a few days in the life of a former rodeo champion, JR Bonner, as he attempts to regain some of his former glory by participating in his hometown’s annual rodeo. Though violence in *Junior Bonner* is not as destructive or lethal as in *The Wild Bunch*, it is constructed using the same formal techniques, the same cutting in and out of fast and slow motion, using a great number of optical zooms, and rapid intercutting between various positions within a larger space. In our sample scene, JR gets a second chance at riding the maverick bull Sunshine. JR envisions this moment as a chance to prove that he is still the best at what he does. The film is characterized by an emotional suppression that inhibits the clarification of characters’ feelings towards themselves and others. JR’s nostalgia for the old times and his reticence to settle down are not indicated by performance style or dialogue, but through cinematic style, namely the intercutting of physical spectacle and subjective flashback. The viewer is made aware of characters’ repressed, perhaps subconscious, emotional states via the stylistic construction of scenes. The strategy in *Junior Bonner* is different from *The Getaway* because the viewer’s position is far more distanced in the former. *The Getaway* is a Steve McQueen action vehicle, and the success of the film is predicated on the viewer’s visceral investment in the spectacle. The emotional montage during the prison sequence immediately and economically encourages viewer sympathy with Doc via this access to his mental perception of prison life. Subsequently, the film can proceed unhindered by emotional exposition, and our prior access to Doc’s subjective state
invites investment in Doc’s struggle to survive the bank robberies and car chases and shoot-outs.

This vicarious sense of participation is absent from *Junior Bonner* because Peckinpah does not position the viewer on top of the bull with JR, but in the stands with the spectators. Rather than becoming viscerally engrossed in the thrills of violence, as is the case in the final scenes of *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*, the audience remains a distanced observer. In *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*, Peckinpah’s concern during the final conflicts is to confront the viewer with the simultaneous horror and excitement of violence. But in *Junior Bonner*, the director’s thematic concerns are fundamentally different, and this requires a varied formal approach. In this film, Peckinpah encourages an observational viewing position for the spectator, in which JR’s obsolescence is underscored by our intellectual understanding of his tragedy, rather than by our emotional investment in it.

Upon first viewing, the scene in which JR gets his second chance to ride Sunshine appears to be constructed similarly to the sequence discussed from *The Getaway*. In both, a temporally non-synchronous event is inserted within a larger chronological progression. This is executed in a much simpler manner in *Junior Bonner*, in which the rodeo event in the present is cut with brief subjective glimpses of a rodeo event in the past. The subjective flashback is differentiated by extreme stylistic self-consciousness. Shots 2, 5, and 24 present the flashback of a rodeo event in gritty monochrome black and white photography and graceful slow motion. This stylization makes it stand out within the greater construction of the scene, the effect of which is to call attention to it as a particularly significant moment in JR’s past. As
is the case in all of his mature films, the use of slow motion and temporally non-synchronous intercutting reflects Peckinpah’s concern with society’s anachronistic loners who can’t outrun the march of history. Peckinpah uses this device often in his films, most notably in *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, in which he cuts between Pat’s death in the future and his friendship with Billy in the past. In cutting across great lengths of time, Peckinpah suggests that these men can’t escape the past and are victims of their own inability to move beyond it. In *Junior Bonner*, intercutting between the rodeo event in the present and Doc’s memories of a rodeo event in the past underscores his preoccupation with regaining his glory and the importance of doing so atop a dangerous beast.

Shots 13 and 14 introduce several nameless spectators, and shot 15 suggests their points-of-view. Composed with a slight high-angle and from a distance, shot 15 is framed as if it were an eye line from the bleachers surrounding the rodeo.

Peckinpah cuts to principal characters from the film and provides their points-of-view as they watch JR riding the bull. The angle and framing of shots 16 and 17 suggest the point-of-view of the rodeo organizer Buck Roan, who is standing at ground level. Shots 18 and 19 similarly suggest the POV of JR’s love interest. Throughout this scene, the dominant camera set-ups place the viewer amongst the crowd. This is a marked variation from *The Getaway* in which the viewer is provided with a directly cinematic, visceral representation of Doc’s psychological state, and far different from *Cable Hogue*, in which the viewer is quite explicitly given the principal character’s point-of-view. In *Junior Bonner*, point-of-view shots encourage an observation of JR as he rides Sunshine, while the flashbacks in shots 2, 5, and 24 reinforce the
significance of this moment for him by indicating JR’s mental reconstruction of his former glory. Peckinpah is altering the viewer’s interaction with JR by quite literally placing the viewer as a spectator who observes the rodeo. As such, Peckinpah calls attention to the relationship between JR’s emotional experience (as indicated by the flashback) and the experience of being watched. POV editing in this sequence cues the viewer to understand that JR’s feelings of obsolescence are very much linked to how these people perceive him, and a successful rodeo ride is the means by which he can alter their perception.

The construction of this rodeo sequence indicates how Peckinpah wishes the viewer to experience the film. The viewer is not aligned with the spectators although we share their experience of watching the rodeo. These spectator POV shots establish a distance between the viewer and JR, and Peckinpah carefully counter-acts this distance with the subjective flashback shots, as well as with slightly more visceral moments such as shots 23 and 25, in which the camera is placed on the bull with JR. Through flashback, Peckinpah encourages an understanding of JR’s emotional state throughout the film. This is one of Peckinpah’s more distanced pictures, in which the viewer is placed in an observational position rather than a participatory or sympathetic one. But like all of Peckinpah’s films, *Junior Bonner* espouses the director’s concern for how individuals cope with the past, in this case indicated by the intercutting between a physical event in the present and a stylized flashback to the rodeo event earlier in time.

These three formal strategies, point-of-view editing, emotional montage, and physical montage, are the primary methods that Sam Peckinpah uses to encourage
audience alignment with his protagonists. In an interview compiled for the 1992 TV-documentary on the director’s life and career, Jim Silke said of the Peckinpah’s films, “these are frightening people that he’s making movies about...these are bad men, and you love ‘em.”  

Silke, a frequent collaborator and friend of Peckinpah’s, voices a sentiment that is often repeated by critics and scholars. In Straw Dogs, the viewer is conditioned to align with David Sumner, whose indirect culpability in his wife’s rape and the subsequent massacre that he commits certainly classifies him as one of Peckinpah’s bad men. In the next section of this chapter, a close analysis of Straw Dogs details precisely how these three strategies operate and interact over the course of an entire film to invite viewer alignment with David and Amy Sumner.

Case Study – Straw Dogs

Straw Dogs provides an optimal case study for Peckinpah’s stylistic tendencies because the director utilizes his entire range of formal strategies in order to carefully shape the audience’s understanding of the paranoia and suspicion that marks the primary characters, as well as encourage our alignment with David Sumner and our investment in his violent outburst at the end of the film. All three formal strategies are put to use in this film, albeit altered to accommodate its drastically different tone. Straw Dogs espouses Peckinpah’s thematic interest in how men cope with violence, and our understanding of this dominant theme is predicated on the lens through which we view the action of the film. These strategies function primarily to

encourage an understanding of violence on Peckinpah’s terms, namely its horror and brutality, and ultimately our inability to move past it. Form functions to underscore the savagery of rape and violence by aggressively confronting the viewer with an extraordinarily visceral, cinematic representation of how Amy experiences it. This is similar to the gunfights in *The Wild Bunch*, in which the hyper-realistic treatment of death allows the viewer to experience the conflict vicariously through Pike Bishop and his Bunch. In *Straw Dogs*, the director is much more rigorous in his application of formal techniques, and the film represents the truest expression and sophistication of the stylistic strategies present throughout his body of work.

As in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, point-of-view editing is used in *Straw Dogs* to condition viewer expectations and establish the boundaries of the cinematic universe that the director is crafting. In *Cable Hogue*, point-of-view shots of Hildy’s breasts successfully communicate Cable’s desires within the context of his naïve and child-like character-type, but also within the confines of the campy, comedic film universe. *Straw Dogs* uses a similar pattern of point-of-view montage to indicate sexual desire, but these directly subjective shots assume markedly different significance in *Straw Dogs*, espousing a viciously pessimistic world-view. *Straw Dogs* presents cinematic universe in which the central romantic relationship between David and Amy is doomed by impulsive sexual desire that leads to uncontrollable violence. In *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, Cable and Hildy’s romance is first presented in the sample scene via a POV shot-reverse-shot, which ultimately suggests a triumph of individuality and genuine romance despite the savagery of the Wild West and the technological mechanization of the frontier. What Peckinpah celebrates
in the earlier film, he scathingly condemns in the latter, but despite the evolution of his thematic preferences, he uses the same set of formal devices to communicate his concerns.

Segment 1 contains the first *Straw Dogs* sample scene, in which the seeds of the contentious relationship between Amy, David, and Charlie Venner are established. Amy and David have just moved to this village from America and are trying to get settled down. The scenario for this scene is quite similar to that from *Cable Hogue*. In both, the viewer is introduced to a romantic couple, whose first exchange in the film occurs in the center of a village street. Again, point-of-view shots and eye line matches condition the viewer’s expectations regarding the nature of the romantic relationship. These two scenes also share a formal focus on the female protagonist’s breasts. Whereas these provocative shots in *Cable Hogue* identify Cable’s naivety and endearing childishness, shots 6 and 8 in the *Straw Dogs* sample scene clarify the spectator’s understanding of the predatory world in which Amy’s sexuality is a catalyst for the violent disruption of the central romantic unit. The effectiveness of shots 6 and 8 is entirely predicated on the editing pattern within which they are presented, and a close analysis of this scene’s construction suggests how point-of-view editing is used to economically communicate Peckinpah’s concerns.

The director uses subjective optical perspective in the opening sequence of *Straw Dogs* in order to concisely communicate that David Sumner is an outsider in this village. Shot 1 is a medium shot of two children who peer off-screen as if their attention has been called to something exciting. Shot 2 is a long-shot of David,
walking down the street with a box of supplies. The low height of this composition and the pan that keeps David in the frame suggests the direct eye line of the children from shot 1. The shot was also filmed using a telephoto lens, the long focal length of which compresses space and distorts the viewer’s perception of David’s movement towards the camera. David is walking forward, but he appears to be making extremely little progress. This spatial distortion distinguishes him from the other figures in the scene, who are filmed with lenses that present a naturalistic depiction of space and movement. When Amy walks through the street towards the camera in shot 8, for example, she is filmed with a wider lens that does not distort her movement through the space. The point-of-view and eye line shots of David throughout the scene present him as an outsider. Shots 4, 11, and 14 repeat this pattern in which David walks down the street and in which the use of a telephoto lens distorts his movement forward through the space. Before the narrative reveals that David is an American and has only just moved to this small Cornish village, form indicates that he is in foreign territory by virtue of point-of-view editing and the compressed depth of field. These formal elements cue the spectator to understand that everyone around him is watching him, which underscores the disparity between David and the natives.

In shot 3, a little girl glances off-screen as she walks across the street, and a long-shot of David in shot 4 suggests her point-of-view. Again, the low angle of the composition indicates the eye line of a child, and the repeated use of the telephoto lens in shots 4 and 11 confirm the viewer’s perception of David’s alienation as he walks through this unfamiliar village. The composition of these POV shots recalls
the staging of Cable and Hildy at the beginning of the sample scene from *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, in which a high-angle suggests Cable’s eye line from atop a horse, and a low-angle suggests Hildy’s from the ground. In *Cable Hogue*, these shots encourage the viewer to expect a connection between Hildy and Cable, whereas in *Straw Dogs*, editing functions to separate him from his surroundings and convey his status as an outsider at the periphery of this extremely insular community.

Shots 5 and 6 initiate a pattern in which the viewer is conditioned to understand Amy as an object of desire for the townsfolk, regardless of their age and social status. In shot 5, three young boys peer off-screen similarly to the two youngsters in shot 1 and the girl in shot 3. The pattern is broken in shot 6, a low-angle close-up of Amy’s breasts, as if a POV shot from the young boys in shot 5. Close framing and low-angle position Amy’s nipples as the dominant focus of the audience’s attention in the frame, simultaneously conditioning our perception of Amy as an object of sexual desire, and an object of childish sexual fantasy for the children. Shot 7 introduces Charlie Venner, whose sexual interest in Amy is immediately established by the POV in shot 8, in which a backwards track and low-angle once again position Amy’s breasts as the focus of the viewer’s attention. Charlie Venner is a tall, classically handsome male who with whom Amy has a romantic past, and he is strikingly virile when compared to Dustin Hoffman’s David Sumner. Given the disparity in traditional attractiveness between these two men, the shot-reverse-shot in 7 and 8 prompts the viewer to expect the development of a sexual or romantic relationship between Charlie and Amy. This is quite similar to the strategy used in *Cable Hogue*, in which the viewer is cued to expect Hildy and Cable’s romance via a
series of POV shots and later instantaneous flashbacks. However, the sentimentality of *Cable Hogue* is utterly absent from *Straw Dogs* due to the continued objectification of Amy from a number of sources. In shot 8, a close-up of an elderly shopkeeper is followed by the object of his gaze in shot 10, a high angle long-shot of Amy walking down the street. The construction of this scene differs from the *Cable Hogue* sample in that POV shots of Amy are occurring from a variety of sources, suggesting a universally erotic objectification of her rather than encouraging the viewer to form the expectation that a wholesome, fulfilling relationship will develop.

The multiplicitous origins of this sexual desire also punctuates the prevailing atmosphere of the film, one in which suspicion and repressed urges constitute a threat to the physical and emotional well-being of David and Amy Sumner.

The final shot of the sequence is markedly longer than those that precede it, and it is consistent with Peckinpah’s use of long takes/long-shots as emotional punctuation. In this long-shot of the Sumners’ car, all of the primary narrative characters converge, clarifying the importance of the relationship between David, Amy, and Charlie. Now, the viewer’s expectations are loaded by the formal cues from the sequence that have indicated David as an outsider, Amy as a universally desired sexual object, and Charlie as a red-blooded alternative to David. Peckinpah has used form alone to convey the primary relationships and character emotional states at the beginning of the film. In *Straw Dogs*, form defines the film’s Cornish village as a predatory environment in which sex, rather than romance, is the modus operandi.
Peckinpah strategically places point-of-view sequences throughout the film in order to reinforce the predatory atmosphere in which Amy’s childish displays of sexuality are ultimately exploited. In Segments 1.a, 1.b, 1.c, and 2.a, there are POV sequences that are framed as if the character is looking through a window, a formal construction that punctuates the suspicion and paranoia that is endemic to these characters’ psychology. In Segment 1.a., there is a POV sequence in which David stares through the window as Amy talks to Charlie Venner’s friend, Norman Scutt. Eye line matches concisely indicate David’s suspicion regarding the workers and his unease regarding the implications of his wife’s past with Charlie. As the film progresses, the viewer is also privileged to point-of-view sequences from characters with whom the viewer is not intended to align. For example, in Segment 1.b, Peckinpah provides Janice and Bobby Hedden’s point-of-view as they peep on the Sumners through a bedroom window. Through dialogue and shot-reverse-shot, Peckinpah clearly establishes that the Heddens are outside the Sumners’ bedroom window, suggesting that those shots that are framed through the window are the Heddens’ direct points-of-view. Since these are peripheral characters, the POV shots in Segment 1.b do not function to align the viewer with Janice and Bobby, but these shots do reinforce our understanding of this filmic universe, one in which these townsfolk do not have healthy sexual experiences, but indulge in their sexual fantasies vicariously by observing others. Form places the viewer in a position similar to that of Janice and Bobby, positioning the audience to watch David and Amy Sumner from afar, who are somewhat like specimens in a misanthropic experiment. In this context, the multiple instances of violence throughout the film
(Janice’s death, Amy’s rape, David’s massacre) suggest that this suppression of healthy sexual and romantic relationships yields uncontrollable aggression.

Similarly, in Segment 1.c, the viewer is privileged to a POV sequence from the perspective of Charlie and his crew of workers, indicating their sexual desires. As Amy arrives home and gets out of her car, there is a shot-reverse-shot in which Charlie peers up Amy’s skirt. While demonstrating Charlie’s continued sexual objectification of Amy, this editing pattern also reinforces the film’s attitude towards romance, which is doomed by repressed sexual urges that ultimately yield horrific violence. Later in this same segment, as Amy is preparing to take a shower, she pauses in front of a window and allows Charlie to see her exposed breasts. In this shot-reverse-shot, the viewer is privileged to Amy’s point-of-view as she looks through the window at Charlie, who is staring back at her. This POV sequence underscores Amy’s agency at this moment. The reaction shots of Amy, who displays her sexuality deliberately and overtly, are an indirectly subjective expression of her displeasure with David’s passivity, but they also cue the viewer to consider her as somewhat culpable in the ensuing violence (the rape, the massacre).

Peckinpah is carefully balancing the audience’s investment so as not to completely vilify Charlie, who is somewhat taunted by Amy’s juvenile sexual display. This POV sequence reinforces Peckinpah’s attitude towards morality in this film and throughout his works, in which good and evil are not discreet polar opposites, but rather exist as shades of gray in which no one is irrevocably innocent. Of course, Amy is not responsible for the sexual assault later in the film, but this POV sequence underscores the pervasive nature of these characters’ inability to take action
or communicate their desires, which marks everyone in this film, not just those who might be considered the villains. Peckinpah is espousing a pessimistic world-view in which acts of violence such as the rape and the final massacre stem from these characters’ inability to express their emotional and sexual desires. POV sequences are constructed in lieu of dialogue or constructive action, in which distant, suspicious, and sometimes eroticized glances and gazes stand in for healthy emotional expression.

As such, there is a shot in Segment 2.a that mirrors the shot in Segment 1.a. In the earlier sequence, the director indicates David’s concerns by presenting his point-of-view. In Segment 2.a, Peckinpah provides Amy’s point-of-view as she watches through a window David’s failed attempt to confront the workers about the strangled cat. Again, Peckinpah uses form to carefully balance the viewer’s understanding and sympathy with each character’s paranoia. Just as Peckinpah clarifies David’s suspicion regarding Amy’s relationship with Charlie in Segment 1.a, he communicates Amy’s unhappiness with David’s inability to take action in Segment 2.a. Directly subjective POV shots present Amy’s optical perspective and indicate precisely what she is thinking about. Amy watches through the window as David attempts and fails to confront Charlie and his crew and the spectator understands that she is upset with her husband. The director also provides indirectly subjective reaction shots of Amy as she looks through the window. The combination of direct and indirect subjectivity in this sequence functions to suggest Amy’s dismay at David’s inability to take action regarding the strangled cat. This emphasizes the increasingly contentious tone of the relationship between Amy and David, the source
of which is Charlie Venner and the sexual/emotional baggage that he carries with him.

Throughout the film, point-of-view editing has conditioned the viewer to understand this universe on these tragic characters’ terms, in which careful diplomacy and thoughtful conversation are entirely overwhelmed by sexual impulse and animal violence. It is notable that all of the aforementioned examples of point-of-view editing take place before Amy’s rape in Segment 2.b. These subjective POV sequences prior to the rape function primarily to reinforce the paranoid atmosphere and suggest desires that characters are hesitant to act upon. As such, the viewer is encouraged to consider the explosive sexual violence in 2.b as the only possible outcome to these brewing tensions. The director presents no alternatives to this sudden violent outburst. In both *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Straw Dogs*, point-of-view editing is used to clarify the viewer’s understanding of the salient traits of the primary characters. In the former, the viewer delights in Cable’s naïve appreciation of Hildy’s breasts, while in the latter, point-of-view editing suggests an inescapable escalation of repressed urges that can end only in bloodshed.

Segment 2.b marks a major transition in *Straw Dogs*. It is only during and after the rape sequence that Peckinpah utilizes the extremely stylized emotional and physical montage that are prevalent in *The Wild Bunch* and *The Getaway*. Amy’s rape is a violent, physical expression of the sexual urges that Charlie Venner and his coterie have been repressing throughout the film. The viewer is assaulted both by the brutality of the violence inflicted upon Amy and the stylistically subjective treatment of her trauma. Before Segment 2.b, there is no intercutting between past and present,
and analytical editing presents a realistic, chronological construction of time and space. Prior to the rape, Peckinpah subtly builds tension by indicating character desires and emotional states indirectly. For example, the analysis of point-of-view editing in this film illustrates how the director clarifies the viewer’s understanding of David’s paranoia by providing his optical perspective as David gazes at Charlie and his gang through a window.

In Segment 3.a, after the rape, Peckinpah uses visceral emotional montage to indicate the devastating toll it has taken on Amy’s psychological state. David and Amy attend a church social where all of the villagers have gathered. As Amy walks into the church, she passes Charlie Venner, Norman Scutt, and the other accomplices in her rape. As the scene progresses, Amy experiences several flashbacks to the rape, and the construction of the scene encourages the viewer to understand and sympathize with her emotional trauma. Peckinpah uses Amy’s subjectivity within a sequence of increasingly aggressive montage to provide the spectator with an overt cinematic representation of Amy’s deteriorating ability to repress the trauma of her rape as she attends the social, just as the director uses form to encourage sympathy with Doc McCoy in *The Getaway*. In both films, rapid editing between past and present and between multiple locations encourages the viewer to viscerally understand the protagonist’s emotional state, in this case the severe sexual trauma inflicted upon Amy Sumner. Like the sample scene from *The Getaway*, this sequence from *Straw Dogs* is a small section of a longer sequence, and in twenty-five shots the director economically indicates his attitude towards viewer placement in the latter half of the film.
Shot 1 immediately establishes Amy’s emotional state as she enters the church. As Amy walks through the crowd, a brief moment from her rape is superimposed on the frame. Shot 1.b is Amy’s POV as Charlie slaps her across the face, indicating Amy’s relentless anguish. Shots 1 and 1.b encourage the viewer to understand the rape as the source of Amy’s discomfort. The rest of the sequence functions to align us with her and against her assailants by virtue of the audience’s shared mental perception of her emotional state. The remainder of the scene must now also be considered in the context of Amy’s rape, and the emotional clarity established by shot 1.b allows objective shots of Charlie and Scutt to trigger a response in the audience similar to what Amy is feeling herself. As Amy walks through the church and the viewer sees Charlie and Scutt staring at her in shot 2, the viewer reacts with revulsion towards these two men, as well as with sympathy for Amy. Peckinpah has used the subjective flashback in 1.b to load these objective shots with emotional meaning, quite similar to the construction of the sample scene in *The Getaway*. In the latter film, Peckinpah indicates the importance of Doc’s wife in an instantaneous flashback. Later in the sequence, Peckinpah directs the viewer’s attention to a photograph of Carol McCoy. Repeatedly then, Peckinpah uses subjectivity to establish the emotional significance of characters or events, which enhances audience alignment by encouraging the viewer to consider all subsequent appearances of these loaded characters in the same way that the protagonist does.

As the church sequence in *Straw Dogs* progresses, objective shots that establish the space become increasingly aggressive in their construction. In shot 3, the entire church hall is established in a high-angle long-shot. This establishing shot
functions less to orient the viewer and clarify the spatial relations of characters than it does to indicate that something is slightly off-kilter. The framing of this high-angle shot is far more expressive than any composition elsewhere in the film, cueing the viewer to understand its idiosyncrasy as an indirectly subjective expression of the claustrophobic nightmare that Amy is experiencing. What on the surface may appear to be a benign community gathering appears to contain something far more sinister. Like the sequence in *The Getaway*, sound functions here to assault the viewer and suggest Amy’s increasing discomfort. Beginning in shot 2, the young children in the crowd begin to play with abrasive party horns. The nasal quality of this sound becomes increasingly loud throughout the scene. This disconcerting noise is compounded by the increasingly complex and rapid editing that constructs the space. In shot 4, Peckinpah cuts to one of several children that are introduced in the scene. After shot 4, the cutting becomes extraordinarily rapid, with multiple shot durations under one second. The increasingly aggressive nature of the sound design and editing pattern enhances the viewer’s understanding of Amy’s profound suffering, similarly to the prison machine-room humming in *The Getaway*.

Shots 1 through 17 introduce the primary elements in the church social sequence and establish the spatial relations relatively clearly so that the viewer can focus on Amy’s emotional state rather than inferring the construction of the space. The spatial clarity of the scene is established by a number of eye line matches. As Amy and David walk through the church to their seats, Charlie and Scutt follow them with their eyes. In shots 2, 5, 13, and 15, Charlie and Scutt look off to their right, their eye lines establishing the spatial relationship between these two and the
Sumners. In shot 12, David looks off-screen to his back-left, confirming this spatial relationship. Again, the viewer is assaulted by the increasingly quick intercutting of Charlie and Scutt, David and Amy, and the children. The aggressive rapidity of this montage is a cinematic representation of Amy’s emotional discomfort with the situation.

While editing functions to clarify space and indicate emotional trauma, Peckinpah also relies on montage to espouse his ambiguous attitude towards morality. Shot 18 returns to Amy’s flashback. In a brief, rapidly cut sequence, shots 18 through 22 provide a significant juxtaposition between Amy’s rape and the children at the church social. Peckinpah quickly cuts between rambunctious children and Amy’s rape flashback. This is similar to *The Getaway*, in which the juxtaposition of several events and time periods invites a total consideration of Doc’s frustration with prison-life and the necessity of returning to crime. In *Straw Dogs*, Peckinpah is inviting the viewer to question traditional generic notions of polar morality. Perhaps Amy is somewhat responsible for her suffering because, like a child, she does not understand the repercussions of her actions, such as when she bears her breast to Charlie Venner in Segment 1.c.

Truly no one is innocent in *Straw Dogs*, and as these children gorge themselves on cake and Jell-O, Amy sits paralyzed with trauma, fixated on their blissful ignorance while she relives the torment of her rape. This sequence is not as formally complicated as the sample scene in *The Getaway*, but it indicates how Peckinpah uses similar strategies across his body of work to espouse the changing thematic concerns that define each individual film. In *The Getaway*, emotional
montage is used to align the viewer with Doc McCoy in order to construct a
viscerally thrilling action film in which the viewer sits along side Doc each step of the
way. In *Straw Dogs*, the spectator’s shared perception of Amy’s experience at the
church social encourages audience alignment because we re-live her trauma with her.
During the final siege in Segment 04, in which David single-handedly kills Charlie
Venner and his gang, the viewer’s response to David’s indulgence in the violent
defense of his home is conditioned by our knowledge of the psychological
consequences that violence can wreak. The audience simultaneously delights in
David’s savage revenge and cowers with their knowledge of the traumatic emotional
aftermath.

The church social sequence illustrates that the formal construction of *Straw
Dogs* after the rape in Segment 2.b.i is marked by increasingly overt editing patterns
that communicate trauma and encourage audience alignment. The rape sequence
itself is constructed via a sophisticated amalgam of emotional montage, which cuts
across time and space, and confrontational point-of-view editing from both the optical
perspectives of Charlie and Amy, which assaults the viewer with the brutal intimacy
of this violent act. Peckinpah draws on the full range of his formal preferences in
constructing this scene. The rape is the emotional and formal apex of an extended
sequence that includes a slow, deliberate build-up to the event. The second portion of
the rape, when Norman Scutt sodomizes Amy, is not included simply because its
presentation does not warrant a detailed discussion of its formal construction, given
that it is assembled via relatively straightforward analytical editing. This selection
was made based on the sophistication of the editing pattern that the first portion of the scene indicates, not the severity of its violence or the controversy of its content.

With regards to the tense build-up before the sample scene, it is significant that Peckinpah uses slow motion to clarify the brutality with which Charlie hits Amy. Up until Segment 2.b, the aesthetic of Straw Dogs is largely realistic. The director avoids overtly self-conscious editing patterns and photographic effects that are a hallmark of other films like The Wild Bunch and The Ballad of Cable, such as slow and fast motion, split-screen, and temporally non-synchronous intercutting. In Straw Dogs, there is no margin of safety because distancing stylistic elements are omitted in favor of a realistic aesthetic, in which analytical conventions and point-of-view editing are utilized to draw the viewer into this world of suspicion, sexual desire, and alienation. The conventional construction of the film prior to Segment 2.b reinforces the characters’ inability to pursue their desires. The sudden use of overt style in Segment 2.b.i underscores this extremely significant moment in the narrative, providing a physically and emotionally visceral cinematic equivalent of Amy’s suffering and Charlie’s violent sexual release. The shift in formal construction from conventional to overtly stylistic is jarring for the viewer, who is quite abruptly confronted with the visceral horror of Amy’s rape. This sudden stylistic divergence mirrors Charlie’s inability to control his sexual urges and his propensity for violence.

In the build-up to the rape sequence, Charlie Venner enters Amy’s home and attempts to seduce her. When it becomes clear that Amy is not interested in his advances, Charlie begins to smack her around. Eventually, he drags her onto the couch, at which point the rape occurs. The build-up has a relatively long average
shot-length. The long shot duration, combined with the use of slow motion when Charlie slaps Amy, clarifies the brutality with which he forces himself on her and slowly rips her clothes off. The viewer is not disoriented in space and time and our attention is focused solely on Charlie’s assault and Amy’s resistance. Shot 1 is a medium long-shot, in which Charlie has pinned Amy to the couch and begins to rip off her underwear. At 12 seconds, this is the longest shot in the sequence, clarifying the calm deliberation with which Charlie prepares to commit this transgression.

Likewise, shot 2 has a 7-second duration and is a conventional, analytical cut-in to Charlie, who continues to remove Amy’s underwear. Shot 3 is the first in a series of camera set-ups that are repeated throughout the scene. This is in line with Peckinpah’s dominant method of constructing scenes, in which he cuts to repeated camera-set ups of increasingly tight shot scales, and then to a long-shot which punctuates emotion or mood.

Beginning with shot 4, the director carefully privileges the viewer to both Amy and Charlie’s point-of-view. Charlie’s POV is presented in shot 4 as an extremely evocative high-angle image of Amy’s breasts. By providing Charlie’s optical perspective while he rapes Amy, Peckinpah enhances the visceral nature of the scene, and this is the first in a series of POV shots that alternate between Amy and Charlie’s optical perspectives. Shots 4 through 30 have shot lengths of one second or less, and the speed of the shots increases with the emotional and physical intensity of the sequence. Peckinpah is playing with point-of-view editing throughout this scene in order to create two proxies through which the viewer experiences Amy’s rape.

Shot 7 introduces Amy’s point-of-view which is returned to throughout the sequence,
suggested by the extremely low-angle and direct frontality of Charlie. An entirely objective cinematic representation of the rape would likely be enough to encourage viewer alignment with the victim. However, by sharing Charlie’s subjective point-of-view with the audience, Peckinpah confronts us with the twisted irony that this scene is simultaneously a visceral thrill for Charlie and a horrific transgression against Amy.

Charlie’s point-of-view in shots 11, 15, 18, 22, 25, and 28 indicate his direct eye line as well as his rapacious sexual desire, but they do not function to align us with him. In providing Charlie’s optical perspective of Amy’s face, these shots also provide an indirectly subjective expression of Amy’s inescapable suffering. In conjunction with Amy’s POV shots (introduced in shot 5), Charlie’s underscore the horrific violence of the act and Amy’s inability to affect any change whatsoever. Just as the viewer is positioned to confront the rape by virtue of our shared subjectivity with both Charlie and Amy, so is Amy forced to endure this act of violence. Our mutual confrontation with the rape also reinforces Peckinpah’s pessimistic attitude towards this cinematic world, in which David Sumner is humiliated by this act of sexual violence and his only avenue for redemption is an equally brutal act of revenge.

Intercutting between time and space also creates a significant juxtaposition that contributes to the viewer’s alignment against Charlie. Peckinpah diverges from classical analytical conventions between shots 5 and 6 in order to focus the viewer’s attention to the comparison between the two men. In shot 5, Charlie begins to take his shirt off. Within a typical analytical construction, shot 6 would present this action
from another angle. Rather, Peckinpah cuts to what might either be Amy’s flashback or her imagining of an intimate moment with her husband. As David takes his shirt off in this subjective flashback, he is bathed in soothing, sensuous light. This illusory match-on-action confronts the viewer with a fundamental difference between Amy’s relationship with Charlie and that with David. The cut between shots 5 and 6 suggests Charlie’s uncontrollably impulsive urge for Amy, while David’s sexual relationship with his wife might be rooted in love and affection. This juxtaposition is reinforced by shots 12 and 23, which are continuations of this flashback.

In addition to cutting between objective reality and Amy’s subjective flashback, Peckinpah also cuts between locations and actions occurring simultaneously in time. In shots 9, 19, and 26, the director cuts to the neighboring forest, where Charlie and his gang have lured David in order to be alone with Amy. These shots co-exist in time with the rape sequence, and the juxtaposition of David’s complacency in the forest and Charlie’s aggressive domination suggests a great amount about the attitude that Peckinpah encourages the viewer to adopt towards these men. David is a man whose passivity has doomed his wife to this traumatic experience. Meanwhile, Peckinpah questions traditional notions of masculinity by linking Charlie’s agency and sexual desire with rape and violence.

The stylistic treatment of the actions taking place in different locations reinforces David’s utter ignorance of the transgression being committed against his wife, further linking him with passivity and emasculation. All of the shots of David in this sequence, both in flashback and in the present, are static long shots at a straight angle. The relatively straightforward stylistic treatment of David in these shots is
markedly different from how Amy and Charlie are portrayed. Overt stylization imbes those scenes in the Sumner living room with a kineticism that is absent from those moments when David is hunting in the forest. And like *The Getaway* sample scene, framing and composition of Amy and Charlie becomes increasingly tight and stylized as the scene progresses, mirroring the intensification of Amy’s emotional and physical anguish as she is raped. In shots 24, 28, and 30, after Charlie has presumably begun to have intercourse with Amy, a wide-angle lens creates fish-eye distortion, functioning as a pictorial effect that cues the viewer’s understanding of Charlie’s sexual assault and its affect on Amy. Like sound and editing, the increasingly overt distortion of the image mirrors the increasingly traumatic experience. Unlike the use of fast motion or split-screen in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, overt style in *Straw Dogs* functions within an extremely realistic aesthetic that attempts to present a cinematic equivalent for the severe physical and emotional trauma that is associated with rape.

And like the prison sequence in *The Getaway*, uninterrupted sound design facilitates the viewer’s recognition of this juxtaposition of Charlie and David. Throughout the entire rape, the somber score and Amy’s cries are constant even when Peckinpah cuts to other locations and time periods. This extended sound-bridge encourages a consideration of the flashbacks and the cuts to the forest in the context of her torment. Peckinpah’s use of intercutting also function to extend time in a fashion similar to *The Getaway*. The flashback in the rape sequence progresses chronologically, despite the cutting back to the present. Shots 12 and 13 are chronological continuations of shot 6, in which David takes off his shirt and prepares
to make love to Amy. The increasingly rapid intercutting between flashbacks and the present indefinitely extends Amy’s torment beyond the actual duration of the rape, underscoring the traumatic nature of this violent act and placing an emphasis on Amy’s experience rather than Charlie’s.

This comparison between David and Charlie invites a consideration of each man’s actions in light of his character traits. David’s tenderness and childish affection for Amy, displayed in the flashbacks, is linked to his failure as a husband and his inability to protect his wife by the intercutting between the living room and the forest. Meanwhile, Charlie’s failure to control his sexual impulses during the rape defines his masculine virility in terms of violence and savagery, dooming him to a painful and horrific death. At the end of the initial rape sequence, shot 31 presents Amy becoming somewhat resigned to her fate, even expressing some pleasure as she caresses Charlie, kisses him, and embraces him. This six-second shot is particularly long compared to the rapid cutting that preceded it, suggesting an emotional detente that affords the viewer a temporary reprieve from the violence. After Charlie has finished with Amy, the focus of the segment shifts to David and his embarrassing attempts to kill a pheasant, underscoring his ignorance and inability to affect any change in his wife’s fate.

In the rape sequence, Peckinpah refines and combines several strategies for inviting audience investment and encouraging an understanding of the filmic universe in *Straw Dogs*. Point-of-view editing positions the viewer to share in Amy’s trauma via a viscerally cinematic representation of the rape. This is an aggressive departure from the subtle use of subjective POV editing throughout the film, which had
functioned to indicate the passive, suspicious, and predatory nature of the Sumners and Charlie’s cadre. If *Straw Dogs* shared the same thematic concerns as *The Wild Bunch*, in which Peckinpah demonstrates that violence is the only means for his obsolete cowboys to survive and redeem themselves, the director might encourage the viewer to align with Charlie Venner, whose reliance on violence suggests his inability to express himself emotionally and tactfully. However, in the rape scene, the viewer is invited to align with Amy by virtue of the intensely subjective emotional montage that indicates her trauma. The point-of-view shots that express Charlie’s subjectivity enhance the power of the sequence by confronting the viewer with the visceral horror of rape, but our emotional response is certainly tied to Amy’s suffering.

*Conclusion*

In Segment 04, David is forced to protect his home when Charlie Venner and his gang assault Trencher Farm in their attempt to capture Henry Niles, whom they suspect has killed Janice Hedden. The power of this sequence is predicated on the audience’s privileged knowledge of Amy’s suffering as well as our investment in David’s paranoid suspicions. The siege in Segment 04 is presented relatively objectively, with little of the anarchic intercutting that marks the violent sequences that bookend *The Wild Bunch*. Rather, the emotional effectiveness of the siege lies in the viewer’s understanding of the rules by which violence operates in *Straw Dogs*. The immense visceral physical and emotional brutality illustrated in Segment 2.b.i, compounded by the viewer’s knowledge of the emotional aftermath that paralyzes
Amy in Segment 3.a, reinforces the viewer’s understanding of the tremendously negative consequences of violence in *Straw Dogs*. In the film’s final sequence, the viewer understands the necessity of David’s lethal protection of his home, because the rape has indicated the lengths that these drunken villagers will go to in order to satisfy their violent urges. The final exchange between Henry Niles and David Sumner also cues the viewer to understand that David and Amy will bear deeply troubling emotional scars, despite having physically survived this ordeal. As David drives Henry away from the massacre, they remark:

*Henry: I don’t know my way home.*
*David: It’s okay...I don’t either.*

During the siege on his home in Segment 04, David has been forced to utilize the violence with which he has been tormented by Charlie and his gang. The siege’s tremendous emotional impact on the viewer is tied to this paradoxical realization for both audience and protagonist, that this violence is a necessary and inevitable resolution for David’s physical well being and conception of himself as a proper husband, though it will yield horrific psychological consequences. The failure associated with both characters reinforces the extremely pessimistic world-view that Peckinpah is suggesting in this film, a drastic divergence from *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *The Getaway*, in which our principal characters find some solace in love and death, or *Junior Bonner* and *The Wild Bunch*, in which they ride off into the iconic sunset to start anew.

*Straw Dogs* illustrates the refinement of Sam Peckinpah’s three principal strategies for encouraging audience alignment with his morally reprehensible
protagonists. When Amy and Charlie walk down the village’s main street in Segment 01, point-of-view editing indicates the world-view within which this film takes place. Immediately, David is identified as an outsider and Amy is marked as an object of sexual desire for the townsfolk, and throughout the film, strategically placed point-of-view sequences reinforce this predatory, suspicious atmosphere. Like *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, POV editing allows the viewer to understand the rules by which this world operates. In *Straw Dogs*, as opposed to the overtly whimsical nature of *Cable Hogue*, emotional and sexual repression, passive-aggression, and childish flirtation yield tremendous physical and emotional trauma. Emotional montage enhances the viewer’s understanding of Amy’s psychological trauma at the church social, and during the rape sequence this strategy is compounded by POV editing that aligns the viewer with Amy by virtue of our shared mental perception of her suffering, similar to our sympathy with Doc McCoy’s isolation in *The Getaway*. The strategies that are isolated in the three sample studies are utilized strategically throughout *Straw Dogs* in order to invite viewer investment with David Sumner, which imbues the climactic massacre with immense emotional impact. Peckinpah returns to these strategies throughout his body of work in order to tie the viewer’s emotional response to the tragic fate of his principal characters. Likewise, Peckinpah uses a preferred set of structural devices to espouse his primary concerns regarding violence and outcasts at the margins of society. In the next chapter, discreet elements of narrative structure are analyzed from throughout Peckinpah’s mature works, operating in accordance with Peckinpah’s dominant concern of aligning the viewer with his morally ambiguous, marginalized protagonists.
Chapter 2.  

Narrative Construction

The chief concern of this chapter is to analyze how Peckinpah delivers information to the audience and to what extent this affects our alignment with characters and our investment in the action. The director varies the formal structures of his narratives in accordance with the dominant thematics of each film. I have identified two large-scale categories that Peckinpah’s films fall into. The action films are fundamentally concerned violence and its repercussions on the principal characters. These are The Wild Bunch, The Getaway, Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia, The Killer Elite, and Convoy. In Junior Bonner and The Ballad of Cable Hogue, Peckinpah’s thematic focus shifts to the individual’s desire for intimacy, community, and self-exploration. These are Peckinpah’s emotion films. Form is inextricably linked to content in Peckinpah’s
cinema, and the degree to which he alters his formal approach in accordance with the variation in his thematic concerns demonstrates his considerable finesse as a filmmaker.

Peckinpah returns to and varies a number of techniques regarding range and depth of narration, repetition and variation, parallels, and motifs, among other elements. The predator-prey narrative is the dominant means by which the director encourages comparisons in his action films, a device that conditions the spectator to recognize parallels between men who are hunted and their hunters. The director generally positions the audience to know more than any single character at a given point in time and in the predator-prey structure, Peckinpah expands the viewer’s range of knowledge by cutting between two discreet yet interdependent narrative arcs. This can serve numerous functions, including suspense and narrative pacing, but the primary importance of the expanded range of narration is the creation of parallels. This construction encourages the formation of parallels that invite a comparison between the principal characters in each narrative arc, which advances Peckinpah’s thematic concerns towards violence, individual responsibility, loyalty, etc.

In more idiosyncratic films such as *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner*, this structural pattern is altered to espouse the director’s somewhat less bloody and more optimistic thematic concerns. In the emotion films, depth and range of narration are complimented by structural elements such as repetition and variation, parallelism, and motifs. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner* subordinate action to emotion, thus requiring an altered set of formal norms than the action films. The aforementioned structural elements become necessary to pace these films in lieu
of traditional goal-oriented characters. Films such as *Straw Dogs* and *Junior Bonner* indicate wildly different thematic concerns, the former with paranoia and the consequences of sexual repression, the latter focusing on loneliness and a somewhat optimistic attitude towards domesticity. The formal construction of each film reflects divergent thematic concerns that are befitting of a director who was at once incredibly prone to rage and manic outbursts, but who also longed for emotional intimacy and was appreciative of natural beauty.

The success of Peckinpah’s films is predicated on the notion that he conditions the viewer to love these morally questionable characters. Within the broader narrative construction of his films, depth of narration assumes paramount importance alongside editing patterns as a means of investing the viewer in men like Pike Bishop and David Sumner. Not only is it significant how subjectivity is presented stylistically, but when. Given the hesitance and inability of these men to express their emotions, subjectivity becomes a necessary formal cue for indicating characters’ psychological states, and this conditions the viewer’s response to their actions throughout the remainder of each film.

In the first section of this chapter, narrative construction in Peckinpah’s mature works is analyzed, the focus being on how the director’s techniques are varied between his action films and his emotion films. Range and depth of narration are necessary components that Peckinpah utilizes to invite viewer alignment and investment with his morally ambiguous principal characters. This chapter’s analysis indicates how changing attitudes towards his characters requires altered approaches towards depth of narration. In all of Peckinpah’s films, the inability of characters to
express themselves directly requires subjective flashbacks that illustrate emotional desires or formative experiences, but in those films in which characters are able to communicate their emotions, such as *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, such flashbacks are not necessary. The second section of this chapter considers *The Wild Bunch* in its entirety. While this seminal film does not contain every element that is discussed in part one, it is significant as a case study because it exhibits careful attention to viewer participation and character alignment that conditions the spectator to root for Pike Bishop and his Bunch despite their savage acts of violence. The power of *The Wild Bunch* lies in how the audience is invested in Pike Bishop and his band of murderous outlaws, which is predicated on the interplay between range and depth of narration.

*Overview of Narrative Strategies*

In Peckinpah’s action films, emotion is subordinated entirely to violent outbursts, allowing the director to explore the implications of man’s propensity for violence. Films such as *The Wild Bunch* stand in stark contrast to Peckinpah’s emotion films, which concern themselves with tender expressions of love and desire and self-exploration. This dichotomy in Peckinpah’s oeuvre reflects the duality in his psychology, what many friends of the director noted as a simultaneous effeminacy and Wild West masculinity in the man Sam Peckinpah. While the director’s works can be divided into the action films and emotion films, this is not to say that those films that are primarily concerned with violence and spectacle are not emotional. All of Peckinpah’s works are clearly grounded in fundamental thematic concerns
regarding the ability or inability of men to express their emotions. The evolving construction of his mature works indicates how Peckinpah’s optimism in the ability of men to overcome their violent tendencies waxed and waned throughout his career. In the action films, men are often doomed by their reliance on gunmanship and masculine bravado, while Peckinpah celebrates delicate emotional expression and domesticity in the emotion films. This polarity in the underlying thematics of the director’s works has been analyzed, scrutinized, and picked apart ad infinitum by the existing literature, but in their focus on interpretation, these works have overlooked formal construction as a primary means by which Peckinpah conveys his thematic concerns, relying on an intrinsic set of narrative norms that is varied from film to film.

Considering just the mature works, the action films are *The Wild Bunch*, *Straw Dogs*, and *The Getaway*. The emotion films are *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner*. *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* chronicles the sheriff Pat Garret’s decision to become a lawman and hunt down his former friend, Billy the Kid. This picture presents a significant synthesis of the themes from both the action and emotion films, and the narrative construction of this final mature work reinforces the film’s focus on one man’s subtle emotional progression against the backdrop of the dying West. It is befitting that Peckinpah’s final mature work and his last Western blends his concerns with the death of the West and man’s propensity for violence with the tender self-exploration and personal growth that mark the emotion films. Peckinpah’s directorial swan song and his most elegiac ode to the Old West is discussed in greater detail in chapter three, but it provides a crucial example of the
sophistication with which the director constructed his films, even as he lost control
over his physical health and the reigns of production towards the end of his career.

The action films are typically characterized by the predator-prey relationship.
In all of Peckinpah’s films, the viewer is generally privileged to more knowledge than
any individual character at any one time, most often enabled by Peckinpah’s
intercutting between two dominant storylines. This parallel structure affords the
opportunity to make explicit thematic comparisons, such as the predator’s reluctance
to pursue his prey, and the prey’s hesitation to give up his way of life. That the
audience understands more than any principal character enhances our perception that
these men are doomed by external forces beyond their control, even though they may
not be aware of them. This predator-prey relationship deviates from classical
Hollywood norms in that the B-narrative in Peckinpah’s action films does not follow
the development of a romance. Rather, Peckinpah focuses on a parallel group of
men who are reactive and reflective. In The Getaway, Peckinpah cuts between Doc
and Carol McCoy, who are attempting to evade capture and escape into Mexico, and
the hitman Rudy, who has kidnapped a veterinarian and his wife in order to pursue
Doc. In Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, the narrative intercuts between Pat’s attempt to
assassinate Billy, and Billy’s lackadaisical and seemingly nihilistic response. Like
expanded range of knowledge, the passivity and reactivity of Peckinpah’s
protagonists suggests that these characters are desperately holding on to a way of life
that is quickly becoming obsolete.

Given that The Getaway was conceived as a Steve McQueen action vehicle, it
is not surprising that a crucial function of the intercutting between the dominant
plotlines is the generation of thrilling suspense. This somewhat modern Western chronicles an outlaw on the run, like *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garret*, and the film certainly espouses Peckinpah’s affinity for loners and outsiders trying to survive. The range of knowledge is expanded so that the viewer knows vastly more than Doc and Carol McCoy. The audience knows that Rudy is alive and is pursuing Doc, in addition to the corrupt politician Jack Beynon’s henchmen who plan on ambushing the McCoys in El Paso. The expanded range of knowledge implicates the audience in the action of the drama by encouraging us to actively worry about Doc and Carol. The intercutting to Rudy creates dangerous stakes, the viewer’s perception that the principal characters are in danger. The viewer’s alignment with Doc and Carol is strengthened by the fact that they are unaware that Rudy pursues them, although the viewer is fully aware of the stakes involved. If Rudy succeeds in catching up to Doc and Carol, he will almost certainly kill them, and this danger aligns the audience with Doc and Carol by encouraging us to hope for their successful escape.

Throughout Peckinpah’s action films, subjectivity is used to concisely indicate character psychological states so that the narrative can focus on spectacle or causal progression without the need for emotional exposition. The initial credits sequence in *The Getaway*, which was analyzed in chapter one, is one of few moments of direct subjectivity in the film, but it is a powerful and economical use of intercutting and subjective flashback that indicates Doc’s incessant frustration with prison life. Additionally, this subjective sequence illustrates Doc’s love for Carol, which is a motivation for him to leave prison and accept the bank job. This initial subjectivity conditions the viewer to consider all of Doc’s actions for the remainder of the film in
light of his love for Carol and his hesitance to return to prison. There is a brief moment of subjectivity shortly after Doc is released on parole, when point-of-view editing suggests a hallucination in which Doc imagines swimming in a lake with Carol, reinforcing Doc’s abiding love for his wife. Within the first few sequence of *The Getaway*, Peckinpah has economically suggested the couple’s mutual affection as Doc’s primary motivation for staying out of prison, which allows the film to move forward and focus on visceral spectacle rather than emotional exposition.

Peckinpah’s contemporary take on the predator-prey relationship espouses his concern for intimacy through this initial point-of-view editing and subjective hallucination, but this tenderness is countered by visceral spectacles such as the tense bank robbery and bloody final gunfight, which reinforce the Peckinpah action film’s traditional concern for violence and its repercussions.

In *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, Peckinpah returns to the archetypal Western trope of the outlaw and his pursuer. Like *The Getaway*, intercutting privileges the viewer to far more information than any individual character. However, initial depth of narration functions to reduce the stakes and focus the viewer’s attention on subtle emotional progressions and Pat’s psychological motivation. In the opening minutes of the film, intercutting privileges the viewer to information regarding Pat’s death in 1909, twenty years after the dominant plot events of the film. Peckinpah intercuts between past and present in a beautifully constructed sequence that presents both Pat’s assassination at the hands of the people he worked with to kill Billy decades earlier, as well as the reunion between Pat and Billy in the 1880s, suggesting a long history between the former friends. At once, range and depth of narration are
expanded to provide the viewer with a tremendous amount of information. The viewer’s knowledge of Pat’s inevitable death frames the 1880 plotline as flashback. Like *The Getaway*, a brief moment of subjectivity and expanded range in the initial segments of the film conditions the subsequent viewing experience. The formal premonition at the beginning of *Billy the Kid* encourages the audience to consider all of Pat’s actions in the context of his premature death in 1909.

A defining hallmark of Peckinpah’s action films is that the viewer’s investment in the character’s journey supersedes observation of their emotional progression. *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* diverges from this action film convention by encouraging a distanced observation. In *The Wild Bunch* and *The Getaway*, the viewer’s lack of knowledge about the future aligns the audience with the principal characters. Both the viewer and the protagonists are uncertain as to how the narrative conflicts will be resolved, which encourages viewer investment in Pike and Doc’s escape and contributes to the visceral power of these films. The expanded range of knowledge at the beginning of *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* dramatically alters the viewer’s perception of the picture. Rather than invest in the visceral action of the pursuit, the viewer observes the plot events with a cool detachment. The spectator’s knowledge of Pat’s death reduces stakes and positions the audience to observe all of Pat’s actions with this foreknowledge in mind. Pat appears to languorously and unwillingly participate in the motions of the generic Western, in which he must sacrifice the Old West tenets of loyalty and camaraderie in order to survive the changing tide of history. This narrative device yields a film that most strongly espouses Peckinpah’s obsession with the death of the Old West, and Pat’s self-
destructive journey is the most powerful and personal expression of Peckinpah’s pessimistic world-view. The remainder of *Pat Garret* is presented relatively objectively, and only at the end of the film does Peckinpah reintroduce the intercutting between past and present. In this final sequence, which recalls the initial credits montage, the link between past and present is reinforced and the viewer is invited to consider Pat’s assassination of Billy as the primary causal factor in his own death.

Peckinpah’s common strategy of cutting between two dominant plot lines also serves the significant function of encouraging the viewer to identify parallels between characters. This occurs to great effect in *The Wild Bunch, The Getaway, Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, and also in *Straw Dogs*, in which the predator-prey relationship is somewhat subverted. As was noted earlier, Peckinpah’s principal characters are most often men who cannot express their emotions. In *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, Pike Bishop and Pat Garret are Wild West outlaws on the verge of anachronism, who by virtue of their masculinity cannot express their reticence to give up their way of life. In the former film, a subjective flashback plays a major role in privileging the viewer to information about Pike’s motivation and obstinacy. Likewise, in *Billy the Kid*, the subjective frame story indicates Pat’s inability to move beyond the past in lieu of more traditional exposition via dialogue or voice-over. The viewer is directly encouraged to form links between past and present, and more significantly, between Billy and Pat via the initial intercutting and the episodic, elliptical nature of the narrative. Given the viewer’s knowledge of Pat’s eventual death, focus is shifted away from the causal narrative progression and towards those
links that Peckinpah points out. As the director cuts from Billy’s narrative to Pat’s, the viewer recognizes that two alternatives are being presented to dealing with obsolescence. Pat Garret struggles to cope with historical change by abandoning his morals and participating in the pacification of the Wild West. Billy the Kid goes about his business as if change is non-existent, preferring to die like he lived rather than to live at all.

Parallels are also presented by range of narration in The Getaway, in which they function to highlight the disparity between Rudy and Doc, underscoring the authenticity of the love between Doc and his wife. After Carol and Doc are on the road to El Paso, Peckinpah cuts back and forth to sequences in which Rudy sits in the back seat of the veterinarian’s car in pursuit. As was discussed earlier, the expanded range of narration created by this intercutting creates stakes and generates suspense. However, as the intensity and peril with which Doc and Carol evade capture increases, so too does the insanity of Rudy’s behavior. Doc and Carol do not have time for moments of tenderness due to the rapidly changing nature of life as fugitives, but the juxtaposition against Rudy’s savagery cues the viewer to appreciate the McCoy’s emotional intimacy. After Doc and Carol drive towards Mexico, Peckinpah cuts to a similar scene in which Rudy pursues in the veterinarian’s car. Rudy inanely throws fried chicken at the veterinarian from the back seat. Later, after Doc and Carol share a bite to eat in a drive-through, Peckinpah cuts to a sequence in which Rudy and the captive veterinarian’s wife eat room service and taunt the bound man. The repetition and variation of these sequences, in which both sets of characters are performing the same actions (driving and eating), encourages the spectator to
recognize the difference between these groups of characters. In the context of Rudy’s inappropriate behavior, Doc and Carol appear to genuinely love one another. Parallelism affords Peckinpah the opportunity to clarify these relationships economically, without weighing down the action-oriented narrative with exposition or sentimentality.

*Straw Dogs,* though categorized as one of the director’s action films, diverges from the predator-prey structure. However, as in all of Peckinpah’s films, the viewer knows considerably more than any single character. Unlike the action films, the narrative is largely static, owing to characters that are not particularly goal-oriented. In *The Wild Bunch,* *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid,* and *The Getaway,* the principal characters have clear, albeit shortsighted motivations. Pike and the Bunch, Billy the Kid, and Doc and Carol struggle to survive long enough in order to evade capture. Along the way, these characters encounter obstacles that they must overcome. Pike and The Bunch must deliver US Army rifles to General Mapache in order to make enough money to continue their outlaw way of life. Doc and Carol have to evade Rudy and defeat Beynon’s henchmen so they can live unbothered in Mexico, and Pat Garret is required to assassinate Billy the Kid by the Governor of the New Mexico territories.

In *Straw Dogs,* the focus is on psychological states and relationships rather than taut causal action, and Peckinpah alters the predator-prey structure in order to reflect his concerns with brooding emotions and psychological breaking points. This film has been included as an action film because the rape and the climactic siege on Trencher Farm play pivotal roles in espousing Peckinpah’s thematic concerns.
regarding the individual’s propensity for violence and his inability to escape it.

Nonetheless, *Straw Dogs* shares with *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner* a focus on emotion. The narrative of *Straw Dogs* is marked by slow, deliberate, and brooding psychological progression rather than a tightly woven chain of cause-and-effect. Expanded range of narration is crucial in clarifying the emotional desires and psychological states of all the characters. Thus, the viewer is privileged to point-of-view shots of Charlie Venner and his workers ogling Amy’s underwear, just as we are privy to David’s POV of Amy’s flirtatious advances towards the workers, and Amy’s POV of David’s inability to confront the workers about the strangled cat. The stylistic implications of point-of-view editing were discussed in chapter one, but it is crucial that Peckinpah privileges the viewer to the emotional states of everyone involved. That character desires are expressed through subtle point-of-view sequences rather than through traditional exposition such as dialogue emphasizes the repressed nature of these people, who are unable to properly communicate their desires to one another.

The placement of the dominant subjective exposition in *Straw Dogs* also reveals the director’s attitude towards the viewing experience. In *The Getaway*, the primary exposition regarding Doc’s emotional state is presented in the opening prison sequence of the film, so that the film’s visceral spectacle can continue non-stop without pauses for emotional exposition. In *Straw Dogs*, Peckinpah focuses viewer’s attention on the subtle escalation of paranoia and sexual desire that ultimately leads to sudden, catastrophic violence. As such, subjectivity is limited to discreet point-of-view sequences until Amy is raped in the second segment of the film. The overtly
stylistic and directly subjective construction of the rape sequence and the subsequent
church social sequence indicate a shift in viewer placement. Whereas the viewer’s
placement with the protagonist in *The Getaway* is consistent throughout, in *Straw
Dogs* the audience is abruptly positioned to share in both the visceral experience of
Amy’s victimization and Charlie’s aggression, which confronts the viewer with the
trauma of this violent act and the dubious morality of the characters in this film.

In addition, given the lack of truly goal-oriented characters in *Straw Dogs*, the
subjective POV sequences assume importance as formal cues that help pace the
narrative by indicating character desires. The repetition and variation of the act of
gazing through windows and at others offers an expanded range and depth of
knowledge that engages the viewer in lieu of a traditional causal narrative chain.
Until the rape sequence in *Straw Dogs*, characters are not defined by their actions, as
the narrative is relatively static and action-less. Rather, these POV sequences indicate
David’s suspicion of Amy’s flirtation with the workers, Amy’s worries that her
husband is unable to confront Charlie Venner, and the workers’ eroticization and
sexual attraction towards Amy. Despite the relative stasis of the narrative, subjective
POV sequences provide an optical perspective that effectively indicates dominant
desires and emotional states.

However, after the rape and church social sequences, in which our characters’
relationships with one another are irrevocably altered, the narrative structure shifts
dramatically and a sequence of events is initiated along a more traditional causal
chain: David hits Henry Niles with his car, brings him home, and prepares to protect
him from Charlie Venner and his gang after the disappearance of Janice Hedden. The
subtle and prolonged exposition of the film up until Segment 2.b.i is abandoned for causally motivated spectacle. Peckinpah’s straightforward and tightly woven construction of events thereafter positions the spectator to become fully engrossed in the visceral thrill of the final siege. This absorptive aspect of the home invasion sequence owes much to the viewer’s investment in brooding emotional distress that was established earlier in the film, which is finally released during the extraordinarily bloody final conflict. That David resorts to violence in order to solve his problems confirms Peckinpah’s pessimistic belief in man’s inability to harness his frenzied tendencies.

As in *The Getaway*, range and depth of narration are also used in *Straw Dogs* to cue the spectator to parallels that highlight the disparities, and sometimes the similarities between characters in discreet narrative arcs. In *Straw Dogs*, the rapid intercutting of non-synchronous locations and to Amy’s subjective hallucinations of David invites a comparison of David Sumner and Charlie Venner. The stylistic construction of the rape sequence reinforces a juxtaposition that is indicated throughout the overarching narrative structure of the film. Form encourages a consideration of David’s passivity in light of Charlie’s sexually impulsive virility. This is quite similar to the predator-prey relationship in *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, in which the dual narrative juxtaposes Pat’s willingness to abandon his morals with Billy’s tenacity towards the old ways.

*Straw Dogs* espouses a particularly vicious pessimism that marks all of Peckinpah’s action films. With violence as a central theme in these works, the action films typically present men who simultaneously survive by their capacity for
destruction and who are doomed by it. In Peckinpah’s emotion films, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner*, the director utilizes a varied set of narrative norms that reflect the films’ focus on emotional progression, self-exploration, and a celebration of domesticity. These films are slice-of-life narratives that chronicle the growth of men who do not possess traditional, goal-oriented character arcs. In *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, the conventional revenge story is subverted and transformed into the comic love story between Hildy and Cable. *Cable Hogue’s* emphasis on lyrical romanticism deviates from *The Wild Bunch* and *The Getaway* in its lack of a protagonist who is driven by an abiding goal.

Early in the film, the outlaws Taggart and Bowen leave Cable Hogue to fend for himself in the wasteland, and what might be a typical revenge story is abandoned when Cable finds water in the desert. From there, the range of narration is almost entirely limited to Cable’s perception of events. Unlike the predator-prey relationships in *The Wild Bunch*, *The Getaway*, and *Billy the Kid*, Peckinpah does not cut to Taggart and Bowen’s narrative arc. Rather, the viewer is left with Cable and the development of his nascent way station. In the action films, Peckinpah is concerned with how acts of violence affect all parties involved, both those that commit violence and those who are victimized by it. The limited range of narration in *Cable Hogue* reflects the different thematic concerns of the emotion films, with their focus on romanticism and, in this case, the development of Cable’s feelings towards Hildy. Limited range of narration invites the audience to invest in Cable’s emotional development, by virtue of the fact that our knowledge of the relationship is tied to Cable’s experience of the narrative.
When the range of narration is expanded in the emotion films, it is to reinforce these romantic thematic concerns by cueing the viewer to recognize parallels between characters. The major divergence from Cable’s storyline comes during a moment of sexual intimacy between Cable and Hildy in the town of Dead Dog. In Peckinpah films, sex is rarely a romantic activity. In *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, Pike Bishop and Pat Garret abuse prostitutes like they do bottles of whiskey, and in *Straw Dogs*, sex is associated with lack of control and violent impulse. In *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, Peckinpah undercuts the viewer’s expectations regarding sex and violence in his films by cutting away from Cable and Hildy to the Reverend Joshua. Just as Cable enters Hildy’s bedroom, Peckinpah cuts to a sequence in which the Reverend follows a crying woman home and sexually molests her, with the ruse that he is helping her get over the recent death of her brother. On one hand, this narrative divergence functions similarly to intercutting in *The Getaway* and the other action films by highlighting the difference between these two central relationships. The unromantic eroticism and exploitation of the Reverend’s behavior underscores the genuine affection between Cable and Hildy. However, like the sample scene in which Cable ogles Hildy’s breasts, the Reverend’s inappropriate behavior must be considered in the context of the campy, whimsical nature of the film. Peckinpah privileges the viewer to this moment with the Reverend because it reinforces the universality of the director’s concerns. The Reverend, like Cable, is just looking for a moment of intimacy in the desolate West, and while his intentions are slightly problematic, the implications of his behavior are understood to be harmless.
Given the episodic nature of the narrative in \textit{The Ballad of Cable Hogue}, depth of narration and repetition and variation assume importance as formal cues grant the viewer access to characters’ emotional progression. In its entirety, \textit{Cable Hogue} charts the development of a solitary, wayward vagabond into a romantic, a man who by his own means finds love and creates a community where there was none before. The film is largely objective in presentation, but there are significant moments of subjectivity that are unique to this film. As always in Peckinpah’s works, subjective point-of-view editing is used to indicate desire. In a rather traditional fashion, Peckinpah uses the POV sequence from the sample scene to indicate the beginning of the relationship between Cable and Hildy. However, there are no overt sequences of subjective montage or flashback like those in \textit{The Getaway} or \textit{Straw Dogs}. Given the focus on the progression of Hildy and Cable’s relationship, Peckinpah does not need to get emotional exposition out of the way. Rather, this is the core of the narrative and the director uses brief moments of subjectivity in order to reinforce the viewer’s understanding of Cable’s affection for Hildy. Thus, after Hildy has left for San Francisco, there is a brief superimposed flashback of her that indicates Cable’s longing. Again, this use of subjectivity illustrates Peckinpah’s affinity for telling stories about men who cannot express themselves by virtue of their masculinity. As a male character in Peckinpah’s cinematic universe, Cable is unable to express his affection for Hildy outright, so Peckinpah uses subjective flashback to indicate his desires to the audience.

Peckinpah rigorously uses repetition and variation of motifs to indicate emotional progression in \textit{The Ballad of Cable Hogue} because the film lacks a distinct
chain of cause and effect that structures its narrative. Two songs are repeated throughout the film. The first is Cable’s theme song, which is introduced during the split-screen credits sequence that culminates in his discovery of the water hole. The marriage of this formative moment with this musical motif associates Cable’s theme song with optimism and positive progression. The second song is “Butterfly Mornings,” the melody of which is introduced in the sample scene in which Cable first runs into Hildy. The repetition of these songs throughout the film indicates the development of their relationship along with the increasing success of Cable Springs. The viewer’s understanding of the positive progression of Cable’s prospects is enhanced when his theme song is repeated during montages of the way station’s construction. Similarly, various incarnations of “Butterfly Mornings” are repeated to suggest Cable’s increasing affection for Hildy. This culminates during the shared sing-a-long sequence in the latter half of the film, which confirms for the viewer the mutual affection and love between the couple. The song assumes nostalgic significance when the melody is repeated after Hildy has left for San Francisco. Thus, as the film progresses, these musical motifs assume importance as formal cues that suggest the emotions of our principal character.

*Junior Bonner* is the second of Peckinpah’s emotion films, in which the solitude and nostalgia of the principal character are conveyed over the course of several days in the life of JR Bonner. Repetition of the flashback sequence, discussed in chapter one, is the primary means by which Peckinpah indicates Junior’s subtle emotional growth. Like *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, the narrative lacks a causal chain of events that motivates character action. Rather, Junior arrives in his
hometown to spend a few days with his family before riding the maverick bull Sunshine. *Junior Bonner* shares with all of Peckinpah’s emotion films a thematic focus on domesticity and optimistic emotional growth. In the credits sequence, the flashback is intercut with JR’s lonely walk through the stables, suggesting nostalgia for his former glory and an inability to move beyond the past. The passage of time and the individual’s capacity to adapt (or lack thereof) are themes that characterize both the action and emotion films. *Junior Bonner* is most similar to *Cable Hogue* in the lack of narrative causality and the subordination of visceral action to careful character study. In lieu of major action set-pieces that cue the viewer’s response to the story, Peckinpah strategically inserts the monochrome Sunshine flashback. The repetition of the flashback while Junior is riding Sunshine for the second time reinforces the viewer’s understanding of this moment as a form of redemption for Junior. Like *The Getaway*, subjective depth of narration is used in the beginning of the film in order to immediately establish the emotional state of the principal character. However, in *The Getaway*, Doc McCoy’s emotional state is established and does not change, but is reinforced by his actions throughout the remainder of the film. In *Junior Bonner*, the second flashback confirms for the viewer that JR has undergone a subtle change, and by briefly recapturing his former glory, he has come to terms with his obsolescence.

Range of narration is used in *Junior Bonner* to reinforce the dominant theme of the passage of time by inviting comparisons between Ace and Junior Bonner, father and son. In the story, Junior has been presented with a number of alternatives that could very well mean a way out of the transient, rodeo-by-rodeo lifestyle that he
has made for himself. Buck Roan has offered JR a job as an assistant in his rodeo operations, and Curly Bonner has offered his brother a position as a mobile home salesman. On the other hand, his father Ace is presented as an alternative to the settled-down American capitalist lifestyle that Curly advocates. Ace, like Junior, is a former rodeo champion. However, Ace’s affinity for adventure has left him old, penniless, and divorced. Peckinpah cuts between two discreet storylines that encourage comparisons between father and son. When Junior witnesses his father’s house being razed, he experiences a brief instantaneous flashback of Ace. Peckinpah cuts from sequences of Junior settling down in the rodeo camp to Ace in the hospital, recovering from a car accident. Repetition and variation of location is also used to underscore the possible future that Junior sees for himself in Ace. The two men switch places when Junior goes to visit the hospital, where his father has already left to find Junior at the rodeo. The dual narratives ultimately converge at the town parade, where the two men are celebrated as rodeo legends whose reticence to give up their old ways has made them legends in their community. Peckinpah strategically uses range and depth of narration as well as repetition and variation to present Junior Bonner as man at a crossroads between a penniless lifestyle that recalls the Wild West and a comfortable modern domesticity.

From Peckinpah’s mature works, one can discern a clear set of narrative preferences that are altered from film to film in order to espouse the director’s evolving thematic concerns. The predator-prey narrative structure is utilized most overtly in those films that suggest the universality of man’s inability to change and Peckinpah’s nostalgia for the Old West. On the other hand, those films that chronicle
the emotional progression of a character or the development of a relationship tend to have narratives with a more limited range of narration. I argue here that that Peckinpah’s films can be divided into two categories: the action films and the emotion films. The analysis of *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* suggests that this classification is not entirely foolproof. Peckinpah’s films aren’t exclusively constructed with the narrative techniques of one category or the other, *The Wild Bunch* included. Rather, the director relies on specific narrative strategies that function to focus the viewer’s attention alternately on *action or emotion*. *The Wild Bunch* is most often noted for the extremely visceral, confrontational, and participatory nature of its violent gunfights. These moments are perhaps the most audaciously stylized sequences in any of Peckinpah’s films, but their duration is rather small within the greater narrative construction of the film. Peckinpah uses the strategies of his action films to call attention to spectacle when necessary, but for the great majority of *The Wild Bunch*, he uses the narrative techniques of the emotion films to draw a careful portrait of Pike Bishop, Deke Thornton, and these frontier cowboys at the end of an era.

*Case Study – The Wild Bunch*

The power of *The Wild Bunch* is predicated on the viewer’s investment in Pike Bishop and his band of murderous outlaws. It is quite remarkable that Peckinpah is able to make the viewer love these foul men, despite and perhaps because of our knowledge of their uniquely brutal gunmanship. These men are the
clearest example of the villainous protagonists that Peckinpah encourages the viewer to sympathize with throughout his body of work. Through the experiences of Pike Bishop and Dutch Engstrom and the Gorch brothers, Peckinpah suggests the tragedy of men who live and die by their guns, but also the beauty with which they do so. *The Wild Bunch* is an ode to the rough-and-tumble frontier outlaws whom Peckinpah likely fantasized about as a boy, and he asks the viewer to momentarily forgive their transgressions and consider their virtues. These are bad men and Peckinpah makes no attempt to hide this, but through careful narrative construction he encourages the viewer to invest in Pike Bishop and his Bunch, which allows an exploration of the themes that the director values most.

The story of Pike Bishop’s last days is presented via a synthesis of the narrative strategies that Peckinpah utilizes in both the emotion and action films. While the characters operate along a traditional goal-oriented narrative arc, there are significant digressions in which subjective depth and expanded range of narration focus the viewer’s attention on emotion rather than action. The film also introduces the classic Peckinpah predator-prey narrative structure. In *The Wild Bunch*, expanded range of narration and the predator-prey narrative function to encourage the viewer to recognize parallels between characters, most significantly Pike Bishop and Deke Thornton. Parallelism underscores the fundamental similarities between Bishop and Thornton, whose mutual nostalgia for the untamed Wild West is the director’s implicit celebration of men who stuck by their guns and refused to give up the way of life that they loved.
The dual narrative structure affords Peckinpah the opportunity to privilege the spectator to events that occur across great distances and periods of time. *The Wild Bunch* uses expanded range of narration as a convention of the action-adventure genre. The intensely visceral nature of this film is predicated in part on the viewer’s knowledge of the railway boss Harrigan’s plan to capture Pike and The Bunch. Thus, like *The Getaway*, the predator-prey relationship in *The Wild Bunch* encourages viewer investment by creating suspense. The expanded range of knowledge creates stakes that enhance this investment; the viewer understands that Pike and The Bunch must go to greater and greater lengths in order to evade capture or face annihilation by Deke’s posse and the railroad magnate that has placed a price on their heads.

Within the larger narrative construction of the film, these stakes provide an impetus for their willingness to steal guns for Mapache as well as justification for the increasingly desperate and violent lengths they resort to in order to remain free. This is crucial given that the viewer is encouraged to sympathize with The Bunch despite their misgivings. The viewer’s knowledge of the increasingly dangerous environment through which The Bunch must traverse in order to remain free elevates their acts of violence into a mythological last stand, linking The Bunch’s defiance to Peckinpah’s celebration of the free-spirited frontiersman, and the larger thematic concern with the death of the West.

The viewer is also privileged to Deke’s narrative arc, which facilitates the recognition of parallels between him and Pike Bishop, and subsequently invites viewer investment. Subjective depth of narration also plays a major role in encouraging this comparison, and parallels are formed by virtue of the spectator’s
knowledge of Deke’s reticence to pursue his former friend. Just as the audience understands the necessity of The Bunch’s escape into Mexico, expanded range of narration privileges us to Harrigan’s impudence and his insistence that Deke capture The Bunch or return to prison. As the narrative progresses, Peckinpah intercuts between Deke’s arc and The Bunch’s in order to indicate that Deke shares far more with men like Pike and Dutch than he does with the redneck bounty hunters whom he is forced to work with.

For example, at the end of Segment 01, Peckinpah privileges the viewer to the aftermath of the initial massacre. Here, T.C. and Coffer pick the boots off dead men and scavenge their equipment. Deke’s antagonistic disposition towards this “two-bit redneck trash” reinforces the audience’s understanding that Deke Thornton is one the few remaining men in the mold of Pike Bishop or Dutch Engstrom, men who make a living dispensing a uniquely violent and self-serving brand of frontier justice. Peckinpah goes to great lengths to demonstrate the professionalism and honor with which The Bunch operate. Again, it would be easy for the viewer to develop a negative perception of Pike and his comrades given the violence and brutality of their acts. However, the juxtaposition between The Bunch and the redneck bounty hunters enhances the viewer’s positive perception of the outlaws. There are shades of evil in Peckinpah’s West. The cruelty of The Bunch is softened somewhat when the director cuts to the petty bickering of the rednecks in Segment 01 or their recuperation after being blown off the bridge in Segment 3.c.i. On a large-scale level, the enlightened placement of the viewer reinforces our positive impression of these outlaws who are being washed away by history. Like Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, the tide of
historical change is presented to the viewer, while Pike Bishop and Deke Thornton make their last desperate attempts to cling to a dying way of life.

Peckinpah also modifies the range of narration at strategic moments in order to alternately produce suspense and surprise. In Segment 3.c, the director limits range of knowledge in order to generate surprise when The Bunch deftly detaches the locomotive from a US military convoy and makes off with a load of rifles. Peckinpah introduces the sequence without preparing the viewer for what is about to occur. Thus, the viewer is surprised when Angel pops out of the fuel silo and holds the conductor at gunpoint. The audience is not privileged to The Bunch’s preparation and planning for the robbery, but rather is thrust suddenly into it. The professionalism of The Bunch is emphasized as they surreptitiously dispatch the soldiers and steal the train. Meanwhile, the spectator’s limited range of knowledge enhances thrill by constructing each successive step of the heist as a surprise to the viewer, culminating in Pike’s defiantly spectacular decision to send the train back towards the cavalry in reverse. The treatment of the viewer in this sequence is quite a departure from the moments of action in films like The Getaway and Straw Dogs. In the former, the stakes become increasingly dangerous as the viewer gains greater knowledge of Doc’s pursuers. Peckinpah also explicitly details Doc McCoy’s preparation for the bank robbery, which stands in stark contrast to its failure when put into practice. In Straw Dogs, expanded range of narration underscores the tragic nature of Amy’s rape by virtue of the intercutting to David, who sits helplessly in a field.
After Pike has sent the locomotive back towards the cavalry transport, the range of information drastically shifts and suspense is created by the viewer’s knowledge of the imminent train crash. The skill with which The Bunch stole the train is reinforced by the juxtaposition of Pike’s dastardly move and the ineptitude of the soldiers who are trying to mobilize. Now, the visceral spectacle is enhanced as the viewer anticipates what will happen when the train slams into the cavalry car. In these two scenes, Peckinpah both limits and expands the range of knowledge in order to underscore the skill of Pike Bishop and the Wild Bunch. Initially, the viewer knows less than The Bunch regarding exactly how the train will be stolen, and the subsequent series of escalating surprises enhances the thrill of the spectacle. When the range of narration expands, Peckinpah introduces suspense by clarifying all of the elements in the sequence. At once, the viewer understands the spatial relationships of the principal parties to one another, that The Bunch has begun their escape with the weapons, that Deke and his posse are pursuing, and that the inept cavalry corps is due for a destructive reunion with their locomotive. This sets the stage for the subsequent bridge action set piece, which operates along Peckinpah’s traditional narrative preferences, generating suspense by granting the viewer a maximum level of knowledge.

The bridge sequence in Segment 3.c.i. is a classic “bomb-under-the-table” scenario, in which suspense is created by the viewer’s knowledge of the explosives under the bridge. Stylistically, the sequence does not contain the extremely overt montage that characterizes the gunfights at the beginning and end of the film. Peckinpah is often cited as a director whose sole virtue was his ability to display the
gory horror of men being torn apart by bullets, but the bridge sequence indicates a director with a careful attention to viewer placement and participation. The spectator is presented with all of the key facts. Angel has placed a bomb under the bridge, The Bunch is being pursued by Deke’s posse, and the US cavalry is close behind. This sequence is quite typical of Peckinpah, who has carefully illustrated the characters emotions in previous segments and now rewards the viewer with a moment of thrilling spectacle that is unhindered by emotional exposition or dialogue. Furthermore, the efficiency with which The Bunch operates during the bridge sequences underscores their professionalism and skill, in stark juxtaposition to the fumbling rednecks and green recruits of the US Cavalry.

The train heist and subsequent bridge demolition indicate how Peckinpah modifies range of narration in order to alternately generate suspense and surprise within a single prolonged sequence. The director also modifies range of narration in more localized instances in order to economically characterize secondary groups. In Segment 3.d, the Zapatistas arrive to take the crate of rifles that Angel has promised them. In the sequence, both the viewer and The Bunch are surprised when the rebel soldiers arrive and take the guns at machete-point. This is different from the train heist in that the viewer and The Bunch share the same amount of knowledge regarding the whereabouts of the Zapatistas. And for both the viewer and The Bunch, this surprise underscores the skill with which the Zapatistas operate. Earlier in the same segment, Peckinpah cuts to a battle in which Mapache’s army is forced to retreat. The battle showcases Mapache’s ineptitude as a general and the pathetic state of his forces. In the small-scale example in which the Zapatistas arrive to take their
guns, surprise functions similarly to the train heist in that it underscores professionalism. Within the larger construction of the narrative, the expanded range of narration juxtaposes the Zapatistas’ aptitude with the incompetence of Mapache’s men. Significantly, intercutting invites the viewer to make a comparison between The Bunch and the Zapatistas. Both groups are united by their professionalism and skill. Fighting for the Mexican peasants, the Zapatistas are quite clearly suggested to be morally superior to Mapache. Thus, this comparison encourages the viewer to align with The Bunch by virtue of their association with the honorable Zapatistas.

These examples from *The Wild Bunch* indicate the range of strategies that Peckinpah uses to shape the viewer’s perception of his characters. Shifts in range of narration serve the generation of suspense and surprise, but they also cue the viewer to recognize parallels that reinforce the audience’s investment in The Bunch. *The Wild Bunch* introduces the predator-prey relationship that is a hallmark of the director’s films, but it also uses depth of narration to strategically provide character subjectivity and emotional states. With its spectacular and stylized presentation of violence, many viewers often overlook the careful attention to Pike Bishop’s poignant nostalgia and regret. A careful analysis of the primary flashbacks in this film and their placement within its greater narrative structure is instrumental in revealing Peckinpah’s concern for the viewer’s relationship to Pike Bishop.

As in all of his films, Peckinpah uses subjectivity to communicate character emotions in lieu of traditional exposition such as dialogue or voice-over. *The Wild Bunch* does not contain the more overtly stylistic subjectivity that is utilized in *Straw Dogs* and *The Getaway*, but Peckinpah does use subjective flashbacks to espouse Pike
and Deke Thornton’s nostalgia for bygone times as well as their reticence to move forward. And in The Wild Bunch, the characters appear to be particularly aware of their obsolescence. In Segment 2.b, after the spectacular failure of the initial heist, Pike tells his Bunch that “we gotta start thinking beyond our guns...those days are closing fast.” Later, in Segment 5.c, after The Bunch has finally been killed, Freddie Sykes tells the somber Deke Thornton, “It ain’t like it used to be, but it’ll do.” In this film, the principal characters are perceptive of their anachronism. Like Pat Garret and Junior Bonner in their eponymous films, Pike Bishop and Deke Thornton are tragically cognizant that history is moving on without them.

Only in Peckinpah’s Westerns do the principal characters carry this burden of self-awareness on their shoulders. Peckinpah’s obsession with the death of the West and the passing of these frontier personalities is so pervasive that his bad men feel it in their bones. What, then, is the purpose of subjectivity if the characters are vocal about this concern for the passage of time? In Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, the initial subjectivity encourages the viewer to link Pat’s actions in the past, namely his desperate maneuvering to survive, with his inevitable demise. Subjectivity in The Wild Bunch functions closer to that in Junior Bonner. Here, repeated flashbacks indicate an endemic inability to move beyond the past, a powerful nostalgia that shapes these characters’ experience of the present. The use of flashbacks in The Wild Bunch also reveals a dichotomy in the film’s construction, in which Peckinpah alternates between the conventions of his action films and the emotion films. It is this synthesis of the norms of Peckinpah’s two dominant modes, the visceral spectacle of the action film and the tender emotional exploration of the emotion film, which
allows Peckinpah to display the bravado and professionalism of their gunmanship against the backdrop of a quickly dying way of life.

The placement of flashbacks within the overall narrative structure is instrumental in conditioning the viewer’s alignment with Pike Bishop, and to a lesser extent with Deke Thornton. The first flashback in the film functions in a relatively straightforward manner, inviting investment with Deke by privileging the viewer to his deepest fears. In Segment 2.a.i, Pat Harrigan chastises Deke and his posse for failing to capture The Bunch. Harrigan delivers Deke an ultimatum; he must capture Pike Bishop in thirty days or return to jail. As Harrigan repeats this, Peckinpah superimposes a flashback of Deke being whipped in prison. This is quite similar to *The Getaway*, in that a brief glimpse of the character’s subjectivity suggests how terrible returning to prison will be for him. In both films, this subjectivity occurs early in the narrative. In *The Wild Bunch*, the flashback establishes the overriding motivation for Deke’s actions and invites investment by encouraging the viewer to understand the events of the film from his perspective. All of Deke’s subsequent actions can be considered in light of his refusal to return to prison, and as the film progresses, each missed opportunity to capture Pike underscores Deke’s simultaneous reticence and compulsion to apprehend his friend.

Like in *The Getaway*, the characters’ emotional states in *The Wild Bunch* are established in the opening segments of the film so that visceral action can proceed unhindered. As such, the film can be divided into two portions. In the first, characters are not particularly goal-oriented. Before arriving in Agua Verde in Segment 03, roughly halfway through the film, Pike and his Bunch have no
overriding goal other than to evade capture. The narrative meanders and contains several digressive episodes such as when they visit Angel’s village in Segment 2.f. These quiet moments function primarily to encourage the identification of parallels between the outlaws and their pursuers, as well as the various groups that The Bunch encounters in Mexico. The formation of parallels is discussed in-depth later in this chapter, but depth of narration plays a crucial role in encouraging the viewer to consider Deke Thornton and Pike Bishop’s shared past.

Between Segments 02 and 3.c, Peckinpah goes to great lengths to establish the regretful nostalgia that is shared by Deke Thornton and Pike Bishop. The narrative shifts abruptly in Segment 3.c when The Bunch steals the rifles from the US military convoy. This sequence initiates a tightly woven chain of causal action in the narrative, in which The Bunch are constantly on the verge of capture, unable to return to the US due to Deke and his posse, and forced to deal with Mapache and the abduction of Angel. By presenting all of the subjective flashbacks before the train heist in Segment 3.c, Peckinpah can privilege the audience to extraordinary spectacle while also encouraging a consideration of Pike’s actions in the context of his shared past with Deke, despite the fact that these two men never directly interact. In Segment 2.c.i, Peckinpah compounds depth of narration with expanded range in order to construct a flashback that appears to be shared by both Pike and Deke. This is the most important use of subjectivity in the film, which overtly encourages the spectator to identify a parallel between the two men, despite their positions at opposite ends of the law. In the shared flashback, the viewer learns that Pike and Deke were once partners and friends. At some point in the past, lawmen cornered them in a
whorehouse; Pike managed to escape but Deke was caught, presumably winding up in prison where he was eventually forced to pursue his old friend.

The flashback is initiated by a conversation that Pike has with Dutch, in which the two men are reminiscing about old times. As the flashback progresses, it fades out to Deke, who is sitting next to a similar campfire. The stylistic construction of the flashback greatly expands the viewer’s range of knowledge by linking the two men across great distances. The fades in and out of flashback suggest that both men are fixated on this significant formative memory, an event that fundamentally altered their ways of life. Deke was sent to prison and put in a position to hunt his friend and pacify the West that he once exploited. On a localized level, this flashback is expository, illuminating these men’s past and inviting viewer investment with Deke and Pike by developing their motivations and allegiances.

This is one critical difference between *The Wild Bunch* and *The Getaway*, which share the same basic narrative structure but diverge in the methods of generating character investment. In the former, Peckinpah presents two men at opposite ends of the predator-prey relationship in order to develop themes that are conventional to the Western: loyalty, honor, and the death of the West. *The Getaway* focuses the viewer’s attention on action and spectacle throughout the entirety of the film. Thus, there is a brief but powerful moment of subjectivity at the immediate outset that establishes Doc’s dominant emotional state and desires, allowing the remainder of the narrative to proceed unhindered in a traditional causal chain of reaction and counter-reaction. Peckinpah does not privilege the viewer to the subjectivity of Rudy or Beynon’s henchmen because Peckinpah’s thematic concerns
in *The Getaway* do not require it. Rather, the viewer is encouraged to invest solely in Doc and Carol McCoy, so that we can experience the spectacle of their escape vicariously through their actions. On the other hand, the meandering pace of the initial segments of *The Wild Bunch* is compounded by multiple targets of viewer investment. Subjectivity encourages investment with both Pike Bishop and Deke Thornton, dividing the viewer’s alignment and underscoring the gravity of the predicament that both men are forced into.

The shared flashback in *The Wild Bunch* also begs an interesting comparison with the “Butterfly Mornings” musical sequence in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*. This comparison reveals how Peckinpah uses a similar stylistic and narrative device with a vastly different effect in mind. In *Cable Hogue*, an overtly stylized musical sequence reinforces the romantic link between Hildy and Cable. Stylization distinguishes the sequence from the rest of the film, punctuating the importance of the moment as a formal cue that punctuates the affection between the two lovers, despite their reticence to directly verbalize their love for one another. In *The Wild Bunch*, the shared flashback sequence is distinguished from the greater narrative by its overt subjectivity, which calls attention to the shared importance of the event for both Deke and Pike. In the latter film, Peckinpah uses expanded range and depth of narration rather than style to present a formal cue that suggests a major formative moment in these men’s lives.

In *The Wild Bunch*, Peckinpah invites the viewer to invest in characters on a variety of levels. Expanded range and subjective depth encourage minor investment in Deke Thornton by suggesting his reticence to hunt Pike Bishop due to their shared
past. Additional flashbacks are used to develop Pike Bishop even further. In Segment 3.b.i, the viewer is privileged to a flashback of Pike’s lover being murdered while in a hotel with him. This is a fairly conventional flashback, inviting audience investment with Pike by providing depth to his character and emphasizing a formative event in his life. Unlike the previous flashback in Segment 2.c.i, this has no bearing on the viewer’s understanding of the relationship between Pike and Deke. Rather, the additional flashback positions Pike to be the primary proxy for how the viewer experiences the film. Pike’s final flashback in Segment 3.b.i, like the others, indicates his nostalgic regret in lieu of dialogue or voice-over. The flashback reinforces the abiding theme of men who are fixated on the past and unable to survive into the future, and it provides direct visual evidence of this nostalgia. Pike is the most developed character in the film; still, some of the viewer’s investment in Pike transfers to Dutch, the Gorch brothers, and the rest of The Bunch by virtue of the fact that these men have likely shared a similar past as him and will almost certainly be doomed to the same fate (this is confirmed by their deaths in Segment 05).

*The Wild Bunch* also contains a host of secondary characters that Peckinpah does not intend the viewer to invest in, such as Mapache and his coterie of German military advisors. These are generic Western archetypes that function solely as narrative counterpoints to The Bunch. Rather than risking viewer investment in these secondary characters by privileging the viewer to their subjectivity, Peckinpah uses repetition and variation of the motifs associated with them in order to indicate parallels and suggest comparisons that espouse the film’s themes. The repeated use of weapons and machines, children, and moments of communal drinking are elements
that abound throughout all of Peckinpah’s works, particularly the Westerns that
chronicle the transformation of the frontier (*The Wild Bunch*, *The Ballad of Cable
Hogue*, *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*). With regards to the repetition and variation of
generic imagery, motif structure is analyzed with greater detail in chapter three.
However, within a more functional sense, the Western canon provides an abundance
of images that can be repeated and varied, cueing the viewer to compare and contrast
heroes and villains (Pike and Mapache, respectively) in the efficient generic language
of the Western.

A dominant image that recurs throughout the entire canon of Western films is
the modern machine. The steam train has long suggested the encroachment of
civilization upon the frontier, and Peckinpah takes this one step further with the
automobile. With regards to narrative construction rather than genre, it should be
considered a means to underscore Mapache’s status as an antagonist whom the viewer
is encouraged to root against. In Segment 03, the Wild Bunch arrives in Agua Verde
and discovers the technological wonder that is Mapache’s automobile. Immediately,
The Bunch’s curiosity and surprise suggests that they belong to the era of horses and
carriages, and this serves to underscore Peckinpah’s concern for these men who are
quickly becoming an anachronism themselves. This automobile appears again in
Segment 4.a, when Angel is dragged behind the car after he has been caught stealing
the rifles. The use of the car in these two segments indicates Peckinpah’s pessimistic
attitude towards technology and modernization. The association of the car with the
cruel Mapache signals links technology to the death of the West and the destruction
of these men who thrive in its rugged lawlessness. Peckinpah mourns the destruction
of the West in which these men lived, and though he recognizes that it was technology, namely these outlaws’ mastery of weapons, that enables them to survive in the first place, it is this same mastery that dooms them.

The machine gun assumes importance as a motif that indicates the disparity between The Bunch and Mapache’s army. This advanced piece of weaponry is new technology, a stark contrast to the simple six-shooters with which the generic cowboys rid the West of lawlessness. The machine gun is introduced in Segment 3.d when Tector Gorch finds it tucked away amongst the stolen rifles. In Segment 04, Mapache and his men attempt to use the machine gun and lose control of it, peppering Agua Verde in bullets. Later, in Segment 5.b, Pike and The Bunch use the machine gun properly in order to massacre Mapache’s entire army in the climactic gunfight. The machine gun is used as a structural device that encourages the recognition of parallels between Pike’s Bunch and Mapache’s army. The same motif is repeated in each segment, and the methods with which the men interact with it are varied. Mapache’s unskilled use of the machine gun results in wanton, uncontrolled destruction. Meanwhile, The Bunch uses the gun to dispatch Mapache and redeem themselves for Angel’s death.

The machine gun suggests this professional disparity despite the separation of the two parties in space. Although Mapache and The Bunch do not face off until the very end of the film, the viewer has been conditioned to associate Mapache with the unskilled exploitation of technology that he does not comprehend, while the professionalism of The Bunch allows them to use the advanced weaponry to destroy the General. By the time of the final gunfight, the machine gun has assumed
significance as a motif that underscores the difference between these two parties. In the battle, the weapon reinforces the tragic violence by which The Bunch survives. The machine gun and the subsequent violence that is wrought are simultaneously their means of survival and the source of their destruction. This reinforces Peckinpah’s complicated attitude towards violence, that it is a fundamentally necessary yet tragic part of who these men are.

Children are another repeated motif in Peckinpah’s works that are linked to his complicated attitude toward violence. In *The Wild Bunch*, several children are given agency as imitators and instigators of violence. In Segment 3.c, an American child soldier ignorantly sits aboard the train as The Bunch steals the equipment transport. This is in stark contrast to the Mexican child soldiers in Segments 3.d and 5.b. In the former, a child soldier dodges mortar explosions amidst Mapache’s embarrassing defeat in order to inform the General that The Bunch has successfully stolen the US rifle shipment. Later, there is a brief shot of a Mexican child soldier in the final gunfight who shoots Pike Bishop in the final moments of his life. There is a great disparity in how Peckinpah presents the child soldiers of the American military and Mapache’s. This difference emphasizes the extent to which the American West has been pacified. In the United States, “green” army recruits have the mundane responsibility of patrolling military convoys, while in Mapache’s Army children are used as messengers and grunts. Pike and his Bunch have truly descended into a vastly uncivilized world when they cross the border into Mexico. The repeated motif of the child soldier underscores the lengths to which the Bunch must go in order to survive in the only way they know how, by their guns.
Youth is linked with violence throughout *The Wild Bunch*, reinforcing its pervasive nature in the American and Mexican West. Segment 00 contains one of the film’s most iconic images, in which a group of children torture a scorpion by placing it on top of an anthill, and in Segment 01 they light the entire spectacle on fire. After the initial shootout in Segment 01, children imitate the Wild Bunch by pretending to be gunfighters. In Segment 03, Agua Verde is introduced with a close-up insert of a child suckling on woman’s breast, which is draped in an ammo bandolier. The link between children and violence is a constant presence in Peckinpah’s West. At the end of *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, children are seen playing around gallows and throwing rocks at Pat after he has killed Billy. In the initial sample scene from *Straw Dogs*, children are playing in a graveyard and watch as David and Amy Sumner walk through the town. More significantly, Janice Hedden is an adolescent who is killed by the man-child Henry Niles. These examples suggest Peckinpah’s concern for the pervasive nature of violence in our society, ingrained even in the youngest of our communities. Peckinpah believes, perhaps, that the West was a place where even children had to be violent in order to survive, and with this necessity came a significant loss of innocence and naiveté. Interestingly, there are no children in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, the Peckinpah film that celebrates innocence, childishness, and naiveté most overtly.

However, these violent children in *The Wild Bunch* also function to underscore the crucial difference between Mapache and the Zapatistas. When The Bunch visits Angel’s village in Segment 2.f, two adolescent girls teach the Gorch brothers how to play a game. These children prance around in an idyllic
environment, surrounded by a community and greener pastures that thrive despite the oppression of Mapache’s army. The repetition and variation of the children motif encourages the viewer to compare the two parties. Angel’s village and Mapache’s encampment present two alternatives for Mexico’s future, and this plays significantly into The Bunch’s decision to sacrifice themselves for Angel rather than allow Mapache to get away unscathed. The children motif encourages the viewer to understand Angel and the Zapatistas to be the more virtuous party, subsequently making The Bunch’s final decision appear to be the correct choice, justifying our investment in them.

Peckinpah’s narratives also repeatedly contain moments of communal drinking and celebration that function in the service of parallels and mark character development. There are two fiestas in The Wild Bunch that also juxtapose the Zapatistas against Mapache. In Segment 2.f, The Bunch and Angel’s family enjoy a wholesome albeit drunken party in their village. The Bunch dance joyously with young girls in a fashion that does not connote sexual indulgence or eroticism. Contrarily, in Segment 3.a, The Bunch raucously take advantage of Mapache’s luxurious villa, showering under cascades of tequila and bathing with whores. Again, two alternatives are presented in Peckinpah’s Mexico. In the first, men coexist peacefully with women and in the latter, men violently exploit women and indulge in their sexual desires. Drinking is clearly associated with contentedness in Peckinpah’s films and in The Wild Bunch, communal drinking also charts the progression of the camaraderie between Pike and his men. In Segment 2.b, The Bunch share a drink together after the tense exchange that follows their discovery of the steel washers.
The drink accompanies an emotional détente in which tensions are defused and unity is restored. In Segment 3.c.i, The Bunch share a drink after blowing up the bridge and successfully stealing the rifles. The sequence in 3.c.i is significantly more jovial than the preceding drinking scenes, underscored by non-diegetic music and an abundance of laughter. The repetition indicates that the increasingly deadly stakes in The Bunch’s escape has yielded an increasingly strong sense of camaraderie between the men. Though these men do take pleasure in blowing up bridges and robbing from the US military, they do enjoy the simpler things in life, and the increasingly overt expressions of friendship between The Bunch reinforces the viewer’s own increasingly strong bond with these characters.

Conclusion

The Wild Bunch illustrates the range of Peckinpah’s formal preferences regarding narration and narrative construction. In part one of this chapter, I argued that Peckinpah tailors the narrative structure of each film to meet its particular thematic needs. Thus, in conveying his nostalgia for the Old West and the complicated nature of honor, loyalty, and violence, Peckinpah relies on the dual narratives of the predator-prey plot device. In The Wild Bunch, The Getaway, and Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, the predator-prey structure encourages the viewer to form comparisons between men that condition viewer alignment and investment, as well as espousing Peckinpah’s thematic concerns. These pictures, along with Straw Dogs, are Peckinpah’s action films, concerned predominantly with the repercussions
of violence and man’s inability to escape it. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Junior Bonner* espouse the director’s more sentimental tastes, including the value he places on family and friendship. As such, range of narration in the emotion films is generally more limited, and he uses repetition and variation in order to chart out the emotional progression of the principal characters. Each film is unique in its adherence to or variation from these narrative norms, but they all share principal characters who are reticent to express themselves emotionally. Given that the director’s films share universal concerns regarding love and loss, violence and tenderness, no Peckinpah action film is completely devoid of emotional expression and no Peckinpah emotion film neglects those moments of violence and despair. Each of his films addresses these concerns in a different way that reflects the director’s ambivalence towards his own subject matter. Thus, while the virtues of love and compassion are celebrated in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, they are doomed by man’s propensity for violence in *Straw Dogs*.

In chapter three, I argue that Peckinpah uses generic visual shorthand throughout his Westerns in order to condition audience response to characters as well as facilitate our understanding of his cinematic universe. Chapter two has touched on the repetition and variation of certain generic icons, such as the automobile and the machine gun, and the next chapter expands upon this imagery specifically in terms of the generic associations that they carry. The majority of Peckinpah’s mature works are Westerns, and chapter three illustrates the sophistication with which Peckinpah understood and utilized generic visual shorthand in his films.
Chapter 3. 

Genre

By the time Sam Peckinpah released his first feature, *The Deadly Companions*, in 1961, the Western had enjoyed a long history as one of American culture’s most dominant generic forms. Chronicling the emergence of the United States from a rag-tag group of farmers, cowboys, whores, schoolteachers, and even Indians, the Western was fodder for pulp novels, comic books, prestige pictures, B-quickies, and nascent television programming. Peckinpah began his film career during a period of major change in the Hollywood studio system. The dominance of the Big Five (Fox, MGM, Paramount, RKO, and Warner Bros.) and the Little Three (Columbia, United Artists, and Universal) was transformed by the rise of smaller, independent outfits and producers who organized projects on a film-to-film basis. The causes for this are numerous and complex, stemming largely from declining attendance, rising costs, and the Majors’ loss of vertical integration after being
ordered to divest their theater holdings by the Paramount Case of 1948. The onset and incredible popularity of television in the 1950s created a demand for programming, and subsequently a vacuum to be filled by writers, producers, and technical staff, one that a young Sam Peckinpah was eager to fill.

The Western provided an economical and efficient vehicle for early television programming, given the existence of pre-existing locations and sets in and around Los Angeles. Additionally, the genre had developed a visual shorthand that did not require long contextual explanations within the narrative. Directors like John Ford and Howard Hawks and Anthony Mann had ingrained into the American consciousness generic Western icons that carried with them meanings inherited from the dozens of films that formed the genre’s canon. These directors, in working with the Western, and the American filmgoers, in watching them, had developed a generic language that could be divorced from the requirements of causal narrative exposition and progression. John Ford, in films like *My Darling Clementine* (1946), had established the church as a sign of progress, of civilization, and of hope. Slightly later in the generic cycle, a film like *Shane* (1953) demonstrates the stunning power of something as simple as the color black. When Jack Palance’s gunfighter enters the film, his black attire cues the viewer to understand that he fights for the side of corruption and evil, against the virtuous Shane. These generic tropes are repeated in subsequent films and become conventions. It is this generic visual shorthand, the accumulated meaning and associations suggested by the colors black and white, the cavalry uniform, the automobile, the cattle drive, the steam train, the saloon, the church, the banker, the lawman, the outlaw, the schoolteacher, the whore, etc that
made the Western a powerful medium for television. A television writer could efficiently craft meaning out of these loaded images. For example, a scenario for conflict can be presented almost instantaneously by placing a gunfighter dressed in black at one end of a train platform, awaiting the entrance of a politician or banker who arrives by steam train. These three generic images, working in concert, are immediate visual suggestions of the conflict between good and evil, civilization and wilderness that had dominated the Western for decades.

It is crucial that Peckinpah began his Hollywood career in the burgeoning television industry. His enormous success as a writer and producer of Western programs (*Gunsmoke, Broken Arrow, The Rifleman, The Westerner*) suggests that he had many opportunities to develop a nuanced understanding of generic iconography. The grit and realism that critics ascribe to Peckinpah’s Westerns is largely due to the marriage of these generic conventions with his own world-view.

In her seminal book, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre*, Jeanine Basinger outlines the standard stages in the development of a genre:

1. It is born, grows, and becomes fixed into a basic definition that is recognizable, even though its characteristics are imaginatively varied by filmmakers.

2. After it is established, it goes through an evolutionary process in which it remains recognizable even though its ideological meanings change, its narrative expands, or its characteristics become abstracted to the point of being referential.

3. During its evolutionary process, it may be varied by seemingly incompatible attitudes or generic mixes.  

The first stage of the Western’s generic development, as summarized by Basinger, was initiated by the pulp fiction and dime novels of the late nineteenth and early

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tenth century, by James Fennimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, for example. As the generic archetypes solidified and motion pictures emerged, silent era directors continued to develop the meanings associated with the unique characteristics of the cinematic Western. The film Western was ultimately refined by those directors who found the genre a particularly effective means of communicating their own concerns, such as John Ford. These directors, hand-in-hand with the viewers who watched their films, shared an understanding of the generic language of the Western.

Peckinpah began his filmmaking career during Basinger’s second phase of generic development, in which established generic iconography could be used referentially to advance ironic or critical themes. This chapter analyzes precisely how Peckinpah uses established generic shorthand in his Westerns, and how this usage evolved throughout his career. Of his fourteen feature films, five can be resolutely classified as Westerns: *The Deadly Companions* (1961), *Ride the High Country* (1962), *Major Dundee* (1965), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* (1973). *The Deadly Companions* is omitted from this analysis because Peckinpah was ordered to follow the script verbatim and was not allowed any creative liberties with the film. 41 *Major Dundee* is also omitted because the film was re-cut by producers and bears little similarity to the product that Peckinpah intended to create. 42 *Ride the High Country*, though it is not constructed using Peckinpah’s typical narrative and stylistic devices, indicates attention to genre and is analyzed as an example of Peckinpah’s stunning understanding of Western iconography at the beginning of his film career. The subsequent analysis of *The Wild Bunch* illustrates

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41 Weddle, 198.
42 Ibid, 251.
how Peckinpah uses generic imagery to subvert audience expectations, signaling the establishment of a new breed of Western that explicitly addresses the director’s concern with the demise of the frontier. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* presents a more difficult case because it cannot be resolutely classified within one genre. It contains many hallmarks of the Western, but this constitutes a generic framework within which Peckinpah explores the comedic and sentimental romance between Cable and Hildy. This film might participate in Basinger’s third phase of generic development, in which genres intermingle and borrow from one another. Finally, *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* is analyzed, suggesting how the director’s attitude towards his dominant themes and the genre itself had changed over the course of his career. His final Western professes an astoundingly pessimistic world-view that is unmatched by any of his other works, perhaps even *Straw Dogs*. Generic references and imagery play a major role in how Peckinpah advances this attitude.

Many of the director’s other features contain characteristics of the Western, but are not set in a time period that allows Peckinpah to espouse his concerns through the prevailing generic theme of the death of the frontier. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* is also included in this chapter for precisely this reason, because it deals with this abiding theme of Peckinpah’s Westerns. Films such as *The Getaway, Junior Bonner, Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* (1974), and *Convoy* (1978) might be considered pseudo-Westerns or modern Westerns because they do utilize Western generic iconography to tell the stories of loners and contemporary outlaws at the time when the films were being made. However, these same films might also be called road-movies or thrillers or action-adventure pictures. That they do not take place at the
turn of the twentieth century in the American West fundamentally separates them from the resolutely “Western” Westerns, in which Peckinpah addresses his most fundamental thematic concerns.

*Generic Shorthand in Peckinpah’s Westerns*

*Ride the High Country*

*Ride the High Country* is Peckinpah’s first authorial Western, in which he transforms generic subject matter into something wholly personal by addressing his dominant themes against the narrative backdrop of the decline of the frontier. Generic imagery is used to immediately indicate to the viewer what kind of Western they are about to see. This is not an allegorical fable about civilization and savagery, unity, and nation-building (ie. *My Darling Clementine*) or a taut psychological drama that uses Western iconography to enhance emotional thrills (ie. *Winchester ’73* (1950), *The Naked Spur* (1953)). Rather, Peckinpah demythologizes the myth of the Western by examining the humanity of its marginalized heroes, in this case Steve Judd and Gil Westrum. In *Ride the High Country*, these two elderly cowboys and former partners take on one last job, to obtain and deliver a shipment of gold from a mining town and deliver it to a bank. Unbeknownst to Judd, Westrum plans on stealing the gold and making off with it on his own. In the first scene, generic visual shorthand is utilized to immediately suggest Judd and Westrum’s obsolescence, the
tragic fact that the society that they were instrumental in nurturing has moved on without them.

The film opens with a majestic tilt up and panoramic pan across the mountainous terrain of the eponymous High Country. The long shot length and delicate camera movement are compounded by an august score, suggesting Peckinpah’s reverent attitude towards these forested peaks, to the unspoiled natural beauty of the High Country. Within generic terms, this shot belongs to a long tradition in which Western films have relied on landscape to structure the filmic universe. In Stagecoach (1939), John Ford uses Monument Valley to suggest the indomitable challenge that the Western frontier presents to its central group of white settlers. The danger in the American West lies not just in hostile Indians, but in every stone, mountain, and windswept plain. Monument Valley would later be reinforced as an icon of the mythologized American West in films such as My Darling Clementine. While Ford uses landscape in an allegorical manner to indicate the challenges white settlers face in civilizing the frontier, director Anthony Mann uses landscape to reinforce the chilling psychological thrills that mark his films. Thus, the tangled forest of cacti that the rival brothers ride through before their final encounter punctuates the tense emotional drama that occurs at the end of Winchester ’73. In the first shot of Ride the High Country, Peckinpah uses film form to celebrate the untamed wilds. The shot is not imbued with particular narrative significance, however, until the sequence that immediately follows.

After the initial sequence of shots that showcase the High Country, the grandiose score drops out and Peckinpah cuts to a bustling circus, the music replaced
by foreign snake-charming melodies. The shift in image and score suggests that something is not right; this is not an ordinary Western. The sequence presents a stark contrast to the majestic images of unspoiled forests and craggy mountaintops. It is the antithesis of the untamed West that was presented in the previous imagery of the High Country, a space that has been utterly transformed by American industrial and societal growth, bearing little similarity to the iconic frontier towns of John Ford’s West. Ford utilized the established iconography for the generic Western town in films like *My Darling Clementine* and in the body of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), with the sparse main street occupied by the saloon, the bank, the newspaper office, etc. These images suggested the nascent beginnings of civilization on the frontier, somewhat like Cable Springs in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, where the dangerous wilds were pacified by the sweat and blood of individuals unified around a single cause. In *Ride the High Country*, the first images of the central town suggest a stage of development far removed from those seminal Western films that established the iconography. Peckinpah uses the juxtaposition of his reverential images of the High Country and the unfettered capitalism and industrialism of the town to suggest nostalgia for the forests and mountains that were quickly disappearing. With the introduction of Steve Judd in the subsequent shots, the aging cowboy becomes linked to this attitude of reverential nostalgia.

Steve Judd casually rides his horse into a town that is as hostile to him in its advanced stage of development as the Wild West was before towns like this had ever sprung up. As Judd rides into town, a shot-reverse-shot sequence and a point-of-view shot from his perspective suggest that he has made the mistaken assumption that the
residents of the town are cheering for him as he rides through. In these shots, Judd stands out in stark contrast to his surroundings. He wears the traditional garb of the frontier gunman, but the grin on his face reveals a man fundamentally out of touch with the change that has come to the West. Judd rides past a storefront littered with bicycles, and a crowd of passers-by in an automobile ridicules him in a POV shot. It quickly becomes apparent to the viewer, and slightly less quickly to Judd, that he has ridden into alien territory. These brief appearances of the automobile, the bicycles, and, most notably, the police officer, indicate that this is not the frontier town that the likes of Steve Judd are comfortable operating in. Moreover, the audience’s expanded range of knowledge (the viewer knows that the townsfolk are ridiculing Judd before he does) enhances our sympathy with Judd by allowing us time to ponder his ignorance and obsolescence.

Steve Judd’s perception of his anachronistic role becomes the same as the viewer’s only when the police officer tells Judd to get out of the way, just in time for the camel and horse riders to brush by. Peckinpah uses the generic language of the Western as well as a nascent application of his mature stylistic and narrative strategies to efficiently convey that Steve Judd is a man belonging to a different era. Again, the bicycles and automobiles that litter the streets are loaded visual shorthand that carry with them an accrued meaning from the Western films that have come before *Ride the High Country*. The astute moviegoer in 1962 would likely have recognized these machines as suggestions of a developed West, one with no need for cowboys like Steve Judd.
In this initial scene we can see a nascent application of the point-of-view montage and expanded narration that Peckinpah would use in his mature works. These POV shots as Judd makes his way down the street are not quite as sophisticated as in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* or *Straw Dogs*, but they do contribute to the viewer’s growing understanding of Judd’s tragedy, affording the viewer an opportunity to sympathize with him. The disparity between Judd’s perception of what is happening (he tips his hat to the onlookers, unaware that he is being taunted) and the viewer’s understanding that he is being laughed at is functionally similar to the abundance of generic references. Western iconography, compounded by style and narrative construction, effectively indicates that this a Western about the end of the West, embodied by the obsolescence of the elder cowboy Steve Judd. Sympathy here is the product of clarity, and generic iconography facilitates the viewer’s understanding that Judd is a man out of another era, thus encouraging investment in his narrative arc.

Peckinpah reinforces this juxtaposition between Steve Judd’s emblematic, albeit aging cowboy-archetype and the industrialized town in the subsequent sequences. A car drives by, almost hitting Judd, who is saved by a vigilant police officer. The bewildered Judd watches the modern and eclectic spectacle of the circus, with its multi-colored balloons, popcorn machines, camel races, snake charmers, belly dancers, and finally, “The Oregon Kid.”

Masquerading as “The Oregon Kid,” ex-cowboy Gil Westrum now makes his living peddling his skills as a gunfighter by challenging folks to a shooting contest at a carnival booth. This costume performance operates on several levels of genre and
greatly shapes the viewer’s perception of Judd and Westrum. On a large-scale level, Westrum’s “Oklahoma Kid” performance is somewhat of an emasculation of the typical Western hero. The archetypal cowboy-hero is often very similar to Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine*, the only man who is skilled enough with his six-shooters that he alone has the means to use violence in order to eradicate the threat to the American pioneers, in that case bringing peace to the town of Tombstone. The Western hero’s propensity for violence makes him ill fit for life in the pacified West, and accordingly, he must move on into the iconic sunset once the conflict has been resolved.

Westrum’s “Oregon Kid” presents a pessimistic outcome for the Wyatt Earps and Shanes of Western lore. In *Ride the High Country*, there are no more sunsets to be ridden into and the pacification of the West has pushed once-lauded cowboys to the margins of society. Gil Westrum, who once utilized his capacity for violence to rid frontier settlements of danger, is now forced to use his skill with a gun as the basis for a ludicrous carnival sideshow. Further underscoring his decline, Westrum’s caricatured outlaw costume suggests that even in their own time (at the turn of the twentieth century), the Western hero-outlaw had become mythologized to the point of generic self-reference. Just as Peckinpah uses the automobile and the camel and the police officer to indicate a “death of the West” Western, Westrum utilizes the generic imagery of the outlaw in order to scratch out a living. This duality of generic reference, on both a large- and small-scale level, propels the viewer’s understanding of these antique cowboys. Finally, Judd and Westrum reminisce about the old days, their exploits in Tombstone, Dodge City, etc. The viewer’s recognition of these
tows from Westerns such as *My Darling Clementine* and *Dodge City* situates these elder cowboys directly in the Western canon, placing the events of *Ride the High Country* at the end of The West’s golden age.

Oftentimes, and this is a problem endemic to the existing literature on Peckinpah, a discussion of genre is limited to how the films exist within the Western canon, but does not address how the generic elements resonate individually within each film and contribute to the relationship between film and viewer. The brief encounter between Steve Judd and Gill Westrum at the Oklahoma Kid booth underscores a fundamental difference between the two former partners and friends. Steve Judd’s traditional dress and behavior (he enters the town on a horse, tips his hat to the crowd) indicates a man who is not quite ready to abandon his former ways. Judd still behaves like an Old West frontier cowboy, and his actions later in the film confirm that he is unwilling to leave this lifestyle behind (he is in this town in the first place to accept a job that is reminiscent of the good old days). Gil Westrum, like Sheriff Garret in *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, is attempting to adapt to an age in which the Old West is quickly becoming an afterthought, kept alive through the mythology of men like the “Oklahoma Kid” and in games through which people experience the danger of the untamed West vicariously.

Through generic shorthand, Peckinpah immediately establishes the fundamental difference between Judd and Westrum, that the former adheres to a quickly disappearing way of life while the latter will do anything to survive, and the film is about each man’s attempt to reconcile his former glory with his looming extinction. Peckinpah uses generic imagery in this initial sequence of *Ride the High
Country in order to economically present this juxtaposition to the viewer, making each man emblematic of one alternative to dealing with obsolescence. In addition to reinforcing Peckinpah’s thematic preoccupations, generic shorthand conditions the viewer’s relationship to Steve Judd and Gil Westrum. The first sequences of the film have associated Steve Judd with the pastoral beauty of the High Country, positioning him as a target for audience alignment. Contrarily, generic shorthand is used to associate Gil Westrum with technological civilization and the death of the frontier, precluding the audience’s alignment with him by establishing him as the counterpoint to Judd’s virtuous cowboy. As the two cowboys ride deeper and deeper into the High Country, essentially trying to regain what little is left of their former adventuring, the viewer’s alignment with Steve Judd reinforces the value Peckinpah places in loyalty, self-reliance, and the adventuresome spirit.

The Wild Bunch

The Wild Bunch ostensibly takes place during the same time period as Ride the High Country and makes use of much of the same generic shorthand. Peckinpah similarly uses the opening scene of the film to establish that this is not an ordinary Western, but one that deals with its demise. The Wild Bunch diverges from Ride the High Country, however, in Peckinpah’s cynical, ironic use of generic shorthand. He uses the cavalry uniform, the Petticoat Brigade, and the railroad boss precisely because he knows that the audience of 1969 would likely have come to associate these icons with specific traits. In straightforward generic terms, the presence of the
Temperance Union, for example, might indicate that there exists some semblance of civility in this Western town. Using generic iconography, Peckinpah quickly announces to the viewer that not everything is quite as it seems.

Peckinpah uses his knowledge of generic shorthand wisely, encouraging spectators to form expectations based on their own experience with the Western canon. Unlike *Ride the High Country*, Peckinpah uses generic shorthand in the first sequences of *The Wild Bunch* to subvert audience expectations. The film opens with a long shot of The Bunch riding into town. Pike and his Bunch have not yet been identified with the brutal opportunism for which they are infamous; rather, they wear United States cavalry uniforms. In Western generic language, the cavalry are the safeguard against the encroachment of hostile Indians. In Ford’s *Stagecoach*, the cavalry triumphantly ride in to rescue the endangered travelers, and later in *Rio Grande* (1950), the cavalry are responsible for eradicating the Apache threat to the white settlers. These are the generic associations that Peckinpah is playing with by introducing Pike and The Bunch in these costumes. The expectation that these generic men might be virtuous heroes is reinforced when Pike Bishop cordially helps an old woman across the street. The last thing that the audience expects from these soldiers is that they will brutally tear up the town, which is exactly what they proceed to do.

Peckinpah continues to layer the scene with generic references that condition audience expectations. As The Bunch rides through the street on their way to the railroad office, they pass a priest who delivers a sermon on the virtues of temperance to the iconic, elderly Petticoat Brigade. At this point, The Bunch is riding through a
generic town that one might find in Ford’s West, interacting with archetypal characters that the genre-conscious audience would certainly recognize. Unlike in *Ride the High Country*, there are no automobiles or police officers or sideshow games; this is a West that still requires US Cavalry soldiers to protect the townsfolk from the dangers of the frontier. But the presence of the Temperance Union suggests a West in which the seeds of civilization have been planted. These generic tropes associated with the Temperance Union undermine the viewer’s expectation that Pike and the cavalry officers (read The Bunch) would ever be capable of any unlawful aggression. In *Ride the High Country*, generic shorthand is used at face value to condition audience expectations, which are confirmed by the actions of Judd and Westrum. When The Bunch enters the railroad office and Pike growls, “If they move...kill em,” the audience is abruptly shaken from its generic understanding of good and evil, hero and outlaw. Peckinpah instantly communicates that generic conceptions will be turned upside-down in *The Wild Bunch*, and the horrific gunfight that ensues confirms that this a universe in which morality exists in shades of grey, rather than in stark black and white.

The line between hero and outlaw is blurred, and the audience cannot be certain who represents the side of civilization or savagery. Deke’s posse, by their ragged dress and redneck mannerisms, appear to be generic outlaws, but they are in fact on the side of the law and the railroad, which in generic terms signifies progress. Meanwhile, The Bunch behaves with consummate professionalism and skillful gunmanship, the mark of the archetypal Western hero. But they dole out violence solely in service of themselves and not for a greater good. Within the narrative
construction of the film, the similar generic characterization of Pike and Deke encourages the viewer to draw connections between their situations. Like Judd and Westrum in *Ride the High Country*, Thornton and Bishop present two alternatives to dealing with obsolescence. Both Thornton and Westrum are representative of a new era, in which there is no room for self-serving outlaws and adventuring cowboys. Meanwhile, Pike is quite similar to Judd, refusing to be pushed to the margins without a fight. Thus, by suggesting generic associations and inverting audience expectations, Peckinpah boldly asserts that nothing is as it seems, setting the stage for his grandest statement on the demise of the frontier spirit and the tragic figures that cling to its last vestiges.

As the film progresses, then, Peckinpah uses additional generic shorthand in a more straightforward manner to concisely characterize individuals such as Mapache, and locations such as Angel’s village and Mapache’s Agua Verde stronghold. The presence or lack of automobiles and technology in general is a strong indication of Peckinpah’s attitude towards the viewer’s alignment with groups of characters. The repetition and variation of elements such as the machine gun and automobiles was analyzed in-depth with regards to narrative construction in chapter two, but Peckinpah also conditions viewer response through generic shorthand. Like the High Country, the lack of automobiles, weaponry, and soldiers of any kind in Angel’s village reinforces its pastoral, utopian qualities. This stands in stark contrast to Agua Verde, in which Peckinpah uses generic iconography to immediately establish it as the antithesis of Angel’s village. When The Bunch first rides in, they encounter Mapache’s automobile. This icon carries an association with the death of the West,
suggesting that Mapache is a force of change, and if Angel’s village is the Mexican ideal, then Mapache must logically be defined as its destructor. Here, the generic associations carried by the automobile and the machine gun precludes the audience from aligning with Mapache and his army.

Of course, there are elements of generic shorthand in the film that do not necessarily function to subvert expectations or encourage audience alignment one way or another. Rather, Peckinpah peppers generic iconography throughout the film in order to enliven the world across which The Bunch and Deke’s posse traverse. The German military advisors in Mapache’s coterie are archetypes that the genre-savvy filmgoer would certainly recognize, and this situates The Wild Bunch within the canonical Western film tradition. These localized generic references also reinforce Peckinpah’s savage take on the traditional Western. When the actual U.S. Cavalry appears to protect the military weapons transport, they turn out to be young boys who can’t keep a straight face, much less defend their cargo from the battle-hardened Bunch. This is a direct reference to the Westerns of yesteryear in which the cavalry would often charge in to the rescue, as in Stagecoach. And finally, there is a slight allusion to the whore-with-the-heart-of-gold, reduced to its purest, most referential generic form. In the final scene, Pike makes his silent decision to rescue Angel. This comes after a lengthy shot-reverse-shot between Pike and a Mexican whore, whom he has just slept with. In and of itself, the presence of the whore does not bear much significance to the narrative and should not be read as a causal factor for Pike’s decision, as this is motivated by his character psychology. But this fleeting moment of connection between Pike and the whore illustrates Peckinpah’s attitude towards the
ambiguous morality of his cinematic universe, in which even the lowliest of whores can spur the most violent outlaw to recognize an impulse for redemptive self-sacrifice. This sequence confirms the director’s understanding of generic form, which is just as important to the construction of his cinematic universe as those narrative and stylistic preferences discussed in the previous chapters.

The Ballad of Cable Hogue

*The Ballad of Cable Hogue* is situated at Basinger’s third phase of generic development, and the intermingling of generic conventions makes it difficult to distill exactly which genre the film belongs to. It does take place in the untamed turn-of-the-century American West and uses the vocabulary of the genre: outlaws, preachers, bankers, whores, the desert, the stagecoach, the automobile, etc. However, Peckinpah’s attitude towards his central characters in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* is fundamentally different than that in the purer Westerns that he directed previously. *Ride the High Country* and *The Wild Bunch* share a dominant concern with the death of the West and the extinction of a particular breed of men who were instrumental to and thrived on the frontier’s existence. In *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, Peckinpah has different concerns, insofar as the film is not exclusively about men and the dangerous, albeit disappearing world that they inhabit. Rather, *Cable Hogue* is peculiar amidst Peckinpah’s greater oeuvre in its focus on a strong, central female protagonist who is not simply reactive, but a major agent of causal change in the narrative.
Cable Hogue’s character arc is most certainly the focus of this film, but he is also an anomalous protagonist within Peckinpah’s body of work. Unlike Steve Judd or Pike Bishop or Pat Garret, whose psychological development is paralleled by the physical journeys they make through the dying West, Cable Hogue remains entirely sedentary. This calls attention to the romantic progression between him and Hildy, but it requires an entirely different approach to narrative construction than in Peckinpah’s other films. As such, Peckinpah does not use the predator-prey relationship that was detailed in chapter two, instead relying on a more idiosyncratic set of narrative and stylistic norms that might be unfamiliar to a viewer expecting to see a generic Western, or even a Peckinpah Western, which at this point may have accumulated associations and audience expectations as a sub-genre unto itself. Given the experimental formal tools that Peckinpah is toying with in his follow-up to *The Wild Bunch*, the director uses generic shorthand throughout *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* in order to guide the viewer’s understanding of this genre-bending romantic-comedy-pseudo-Western.

The people that Cable Hogue encounters as he develops his settlement are characterized by established generic archetypes. Joshua is a reverend, but his behavior hardly fits the viewer’s expectations regarding this generic icon. In *My Darling Clementine*, the church is representative of community and progress, of civilization, but in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, the Reverend Joshua suggests the opposite. Wandering the desert proselytizing a “church of his own revelation,” he attempts to cheat Cable and molest women, but ultimately proves himself a reliable friend. Peckinpah is working against generic expectations, similarly to how he
positions the Temperance Union in The Wild Bunch. However, in Cable Hogue, Peckinpah is concerned with the journey of one man, the story of his romance against the backdrop of a changing American West, rather than the story of the American West itself. As such, the generic inversion of the priest in Reverend Joshua’s character does not suggest that this is a Peckinpah revisionist Western such as Ride the High Country, The Wild Bunch, or Pat Garret and Billy the Kid. Rather, Peckinpah uses the generic archetype of the frontier preacher to suggest that there is something redeemable in even the most despicable people. If Cable is able to accept Joshua, who blatantly disregards generic expectations of propriety and civility, than perhaps the viewer can align with him as well. The Ballad of Cable Hogue almost tells the inverted story of My Darling Clementine. In Ford’s film, the hero rids Tombstone of its miscreants so that it may make progress towards being a civilized oasis in an otherwise dangerous frontier. In Peckinpah’s, those very miscreants who have been pushed to the margins of society find solace in compassion and the organic friendships that result. In the director’s follow-up to the bloody The Wild Bunch, he indicates that community in the wasteland can be founded via a celebration of kindness and vitality, rather than vengeance and death.

Hildy is also introduced in generic terms. Her costume and appearance is quite clearly evoking the whore-with-the-heart-of-gold. Hildy has beautiful blonde hair and the eroticism of her lingerie is equaled only by her vivacious, independent, and endearing spirit. This is crucial, because it conditions the viewer to expect a redemptive romance between Hildy and Cable. Cable is hardly a character with which the viewer might traditionally invest in, given his vagabond appearance,
illiteracy, and utter lack of propriety. But the film successfully makes the satisfaction of the viewer’s expectations contingent upon the romance between Cable and Hildy. In this respect, generic shorthand is instrumental. This is somewhat similar to Ford’s *Stagecoach*, in which the viewer invests in the romance between the whore Dallas and the outlaw Ringo Kid. Cable is not identified as an outlaw such as Ringo nor is the scraggly-bearded Jason Robards nearly as handsome as John Wayne, but Hildy is quite similar to Dallas, both in appearance and temperament. Both have been cast out of their communities by a supposedly moral religious contingent that is intolerant of their profession. Like the Reverend Joshua, Hildy functions as a means to condition the audience’s understanding of this specific filmic universe, in which dirty vagabonds and lecherous priests are appropriate characters with which the audience can invest emotionally. That the central romance between an illiterate wanderer and an ostracized whore can yield such warmth and community underscores the importance of friendship and emotion in the otherwise unforgiving and desolate landscape.

However, though the film is not primarily concerned with Peckinpah’s obsession with the dying West, the recurrence of the automobile during *Cable Hogue*’s climax does reaffirm the West’s final days as an abiding theme throughout the director’s entire body of work. The automobile appears twice in *Cable Hogue* and the generic meaning associated with it is utilized in a straightforward manner. Like *Ride the High Country* and *The Wild Bunch*, the automobile is indicative of change, industrialization, and the pacification of the West. The automobile is anachronistic within Ford’s *Stagecoach* and *My Darling Clementine*, in
which communities are only beginning to spring up from the desolate sands and untamed plains. In *Ride the High Country*, the presence of the automobile underscores the anachronistic nature of Steve Judd and Gil Westrum themselves, who have been outpaced and outmoded by a rapidly evolving society. Their journey away from the centers of technology and industry and into the High Country reflects their nostalgia for the past. And in *The Wild Bunch*, the automobile is used both as a generic indicator of the death of the West as well as a narrative device that encourages audience alignment against Mapache.

The appearance of the automobile in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* is not quite as pessimistic. When Hildy rides up to Cable Springs in her horseless carriage, where only horse-drawn carriages once rode, the viewer immediately understands that change is imminent. This is confirmed when Hildy leaves Cable for San Francisco, presumably to start her life anew in a bustling metropolis where opportunity abounds. On the large-scale terms of genre, her move indicates the beginning of the end for Cable Springs. By striking upon water where there once was none, Cable Hogue has initiated an irreversible cycle of change in which the frontier will cede to civilization. Most significantly, the use of such large-scale generic language facilitates the viewer’s understanding of the central romance. Cable’s discovery of water marks both the beginnings of this cycle of development on the societal level, as well as the beginnings of the small-scale relationship between him and Hildy. As the settlement prospers and Cable grows increasingly sedentary, so too does the love between him and Hildy blossom. Thus, the meaning associated with the arrival of the automobile encourages the viewer to expect a change in their relationship. This change comes
quite abruptly when Cable is run over by Hildy’s car and dies. This unexpected and coincidentally unmotivated death is a violation of classical Hollywood norms, which place a premium on logical causality. The arrival of the automobile earlier in this sequence cues the audience to expect imminent change, softening the film’s violation of classical storytelling norms.

Despite Cable’s unexpected death, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* is Peckinpah’s most optimistic film. Although it does deal with the central romance in the generic terms of the West’s demise, it does so light-heartedly, and with an open mind towards the possibility of something promising coming out of this change. The final sermon presents a tableau of sorts that is representative of a generic conclusion reminiscent of *My Darling Clementine*, an expression of optimism and a celebration of community that is anomalous within the greater context of Peckinpah’s films. The final scene, the funeral after Cable has been run over by the car, suggests that from this ragtag group of outcasts (a whore, a depraved preacher, a traitorous outlaw, and Slim Pickins!), a community has been forged that might justify, or perhaps necessitate, Cable’s sacrifice. Like Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine* or Judd and Westrum in *Ride the High Country*, Cable has paved the way for a civilized community, and in doing so he has confirmed his own obsolescence.

Peckinpah appears to be agreeing with Ford and the generic Western canon’s implication that something must be sacrificed for the greater good, for the establishment of an American West in which schools and churches can be erected. But Peckinpah is also suggesting an altered vision. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* prophesies an amalgam of the past and present, the establishment of a community
from those very whores and outlaws and vagabonds who were cast out of Dodge City and Tombstone, a community of outcasts whom the viewer is encouraged to invest in and align with. And while the end of the film presents Cable Springs as a fleeting reprieve from the hostile desert, it does celebrate those unbreakable bonds formed between all of those whom Cable had touched. Thus, in using generic shorthand to mark the progression of Cable and Hildy’s relationship as the central focus of _The Ballad of Cable Hogue_, Peckinpah also bridges _My Darling Clementine_ and _The Wild Bunch_ with an uncharacteristically optimistic film that diverges from as much as it owes to his generic predecessors.

*Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*

*Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* quite clearly espouses Peckinpah’s dominant thematic concerns with the death of the West and the individual’s inability or unwillingness to adapt to change, or perhaps the sacrifices they must make in doing so. However, Peckinpah constructs the world of *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* so as to focus the viewer’s attention on the two eponymous characters. Generic archetypes, shorthand, and recurrent narrative elements fade to the margins as Peckinpah almost tenderly sketches the tragedy that has befallen Pat and Billy. It is a film very much about Pat Garret’s psychological self-discovery and evaluation, his responses to the part he is playing in the death of Billy the Kid, and to that effect, the death of the West. It is a bleak film, perhaps Peckinpah’s most cynical treatment of the changing
West that is traversed by Gil Westrum and Steve Judd and terrorized by Pike Bishop and his Wild Bunch.

Unlike *Ride the High Country* and *The Wild Bunch*, in which generic shorthand reinforces the viewer’s understanding of the central characters’ own obsolescence, *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* is primarily concerned with Garret’s own subtle psychological progression. The obsolescence felt by Pat Garret is of a much more overtly psychological origin than in the earlier films, in which this thematic concern is indicated externally via generic shorthand such as the automobile and the police officer. Through strategically placed conversations and dialogue, such as when Pat and Billy discuss their past together in Segment 00 or when the Governor of the New Mexico territories explains Pat’s mission in Segment 02, Peckinpah presents the changing world that Garret operates in. These scenes recall those moments in *Ride the High Country* when Judd and Westrum reminisce about the good old days, or Segment 2.c in *The Wild Bunch*, when Dutch and Pike discuss their past. But in these films, unlike in *Billy the Kid*, generic shorthand is used to suggest a West that is changing around these hesitant antique cowboys and outlaws. In *Billy the Kid*, Peckinpah presents a much more personal psychological progression of the sheriff as he traverses the changing West, which is defined only during those fleeting instances in which he encounters recognizable generic archetypes.

This is not to say that generic shorthand is secondary to the thematics or formal construction of this film. The narrative itself is an extremely stripped down distillation of the Billy the Kid myth, which had been recreated in Arthur Penn’s *The Left-Handed Gun* (1958) fifteen years earlier. Peckinpah is certainly working within
the confines of the generic Western, but he strategically places iconography so as to reinforce the transience of Pat and Billy’s final quest through the desert, this time at odds with one another rather than together. Generic shorthand is utilized in this film somewhat similarly to its deployment in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*. Genre is invoked in *Cable Hogue* so as to facilitate the viewer’s understanding of a relatively idiosyncratic narrative structure and romantic development. In *Billy the Kid*, generic icons serve as touchstones for the viewer to understand Pat’s journey. As Pat traverses the New Mexico territory and goes through the generic motions of the Old West, the film digresses and dwells on his encounters with archetypal characters. Pat Garret’s task is to eradicate the last remaining obstacle to civilization in New Mexico, and in doing so he is experiencing one last, fleeting taste of the Old West, the destruction of which he is facilitating.

In this sense, Peckinpah is able to concisely characterize those individuals that populate the desolate New Mexico territories without affording them too much significance in the narrative. The viewer’s investment is directed towards Pat and Billy partially because everyone they interact with exists solely as a generic archetype. The generic shorthand is particularly salient regarding the company that each man keeps. The sheriff’s posse includes the typically unhinged religious zealot, in which R.G. Armstrong essentially reprises his role from *Ride the High Country*. Armstrong’s enthusiastic Ollinger is one of several characters in the film that suggests Peckinpah’s complicated attitude towards morality. The director does not spend much time characterizing Ollinger precisely because he exists solely as a generic archetype against which Billy can react. Crucially, Ollinger also situates the viewer
within a cynical, jaded take on the Western alongside films such as *The Wild Bunch*. The pious man in this filmic universe is entirely unbalanced and acts far more aggressively than Billy has until this point in the film, beating the outlaw and threatening to kill him in Segment 1.a. With regards to the viewer’s experience, this undermines the potential for the audience to align against Billy when he kills Ollinger. But the violently devout Ollinger also suggests that this is a Western in which the lines between good and evil are blurred, and that despite Pat Garrett’s role as a sheriff and Billy’s as an outlaw, they might be much more similar than traditional generic archetypes would have the viewer believe.

Generic shorthand is used frequently throughout *Billy the Kid* to reinforce Peckinpah’s attitude towards this ambiguity of moral polarization. Conventionally, as in *Shane*, the force of good is clad in white, diametrically and irrevocably opposed to the villain in black. In *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, the lawman Garret is dressed quite similarly to Jack Palance’s hired gunfighter in *Shane*, swathed in black like the archetypal Wild West outlaw. But Garret is a sheriff, on the presumed side of good, according to the language of the Western. Meanwhile, Billy the Kid is dressed in shades of white throughout the film. Visually, this reinforces Peckinpah’s suggestion that morality is not easily coded as good and evil in the American West. The progression of civilization has forced once “bad” men like Pat Garret to take up the badge in the name of polite society. Peckinpah’s characterization of Billy the Kid using the color white suggests his reverence for those outlaws who stuck to their guns, who refused to change their ways despite the increasingly obvious inevitability.
of their doom. The blurring of morality facilitates the viewer’s alignment with men like Garret and Billy, because one cannot easily identify a traditional villain.

The viewer’s perception of Pat and Billy is reinforced by the various generic archetypes that they encounter on their separate travels. In Segment 2.b.i, Pat Garret encounters Slim Pickins’ Sheriff Baker in a nameless albeit familiar generic Western settlement. Exposition is sparse, but it is clear that Garret wants Baker to help him track down one of Billy’s accomplices. During the ensuing gunfight, Baker is shot in the stomach and the narrative diverges to focus on a tender exchange between Baker and his wife as the former crawls off to die by the riverside. This digression indicates the toll that Garret’s traitorous pursuit of Billy has taken on those he once called his friends. Previous dialogue in this segment suggested a history between the two lawmen, Garret and Baker. This history requires no further exposition, as the viewer’s familiarity with genre allows a number of possibilities, any of which are suitable (The two men shared one or two generic adventures together, perhaps). The importance of the episode lies in the repercussions of Pat Garret’s behavior. His pursuit of Billy the Kid has resulted in the death of Sheriff Baker and a beautifully tragic moment of tenderness between the dying man and his wife. Peckinpah confronts the viewer here with a fundamental question about progress in the American West, namely whether or not civilization, or in this case individual survival, is worth the death of those one holds most dear to oneself. For the former-outlaw, now-sheriff Pat Garret, the answer appears to be yes.

Pat Garret continues to traverse the generic Western landscape in his pursuit of Billy. Close to the end of his search, Garret visits the ranch of the cattle baron
Chisum. The conversation between the sheriff and the baron is short, but it concisely defines the larger forces at play in the changing West. Peckinpah understands the requirement of brevity in these exchanges, in order to focus the viewer’s attention solely on Garret’s journey, both physical and psychological. Context here is provided by the countless Westerns that came before *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*. Chisum, with his fenced-off grazing fields and numerous ranch-hands, clearly carries with him the associations of the next phase in Western development, away from the open frontier and towards a more sedentary, pacified landscape. The name Chisum also recalls the Chisolm Trail, a famous route used for cattle drives that facilitated the settlement of the frontier territories. The Chisolm Trail was featured in numerous Westerns, most notably Howard Hawks’ *Red River* (1948). Peckinpah glosses over what could be a major moment of narrative development in a more traditional Western, where the hesitant sheriff is forced to confront the ambiguous morality of his employer, a convention that is treated similarly in *The Wild Bunch* when Peckinpah briefly presents Thornton’s conversation with the railroad boss Pat Harrigan.

It is particularly important, then, when Peckinpah does dwell on moments that he deems significant within Garret’s world, such as when Sheriff Baker is killed in Segment 2.b.i. In Segment 04, Peckinpah constructs a beautifully concise, somewhat tableau-like scene that suggests that there is still some danger in the New Mexico territories. Camping at night along a riverside, Garret sees a family floating in a raft. The father is shooting a can that floats alongside, and when Garret joins in the game, the father shoots back at the sheriff. Garret prepares to fire on the father, but after a
moment of contemplative hesitation, he allows them to continue on their way. There is absolutely no narrative development in this sequence, but it functions as a crucial moment of world building and characterization. At the end of an era, Garret finds pleasure in carrying out the generic motions of the Old West: the paranoid suspicion, shooting from entrenched positions, domesticity struggling against nature, etc. Garret’s actions here suggest his reticence to assist in its destruction, his yearning to remain in touch with the instinctual lawlessness of a bygone time.

Generic shorthand also anchors Pat Garret’s emotional and psychological development to the Western landscape itself. The conventional Western set-pieces (the ranch, the jail, the saloon, the whorehouse) that Garrett navigates are sparse in their presentation and linked only by Garret’s fleeting entrances and exits. This imbues the cinematic universe of Pat Garret and Billy the Kid with a certain surreality in which these generic landmarks do not appear to exist when Pat or Billy are not present, reinforcing the viewer’s perception of the frontier as a landscape that is quickly fading away. And since the film is structured using Peckinpah’s traditional predator-prey dual narrative, the director also peppers Billy the Kid’s character arc with a smattering of generic iconography as he traverses the landscape.

Generic references allow Peckinpah to concisely indicate the fundamental conflict between Billy the Kid and the forces of pacification, namely the Governor and the rancher Chisum. This conflict is crucial to the narrative because it positions Garret and Billy at opposite ends of the forces that are changing the West, but the associations carried by generic icons allow Peckinpah to focus the viewer’s attention on the characters themselves rather than these larger macro-external forces. For
example, in Segment 2.c., Chisum’s men ambush the Kid’s posse while Alias and Billy are playfully hunting wild turkey. Although one of the Kid’s men is killed, Billy and Alias are able to take down Chisum’s men from a distance. Through the use of the outlaw and the ranchers, Peckinpah indicates his attitude towards the forces of change in his West. The visual imagery of Billy the Kid hunting the wild turkeys defines him as one with the West, natural, pastoral, and correct. Meanwhile, the ranch hands clearly outnumber Billy’s henchman when they kill him, suggesting weakness and cowardice, an indication that Peckinpah holds Chisum’s men in negative regard. And through the dual predator-prey narrative structure, this moment of violent conflict reflects back on Pat Garret, now associated with the cowardice and unprofessionalism of the ranchers. Peckinpah uses opposing generic imagery in each narrative arc, then, to create parallels between Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, which suggests Peckinpah’s nostalgia for a time when cattle grazed unfenced and men of violence roamed freely.

This opposition between the forces of change and the traditional Western outlaw is reinforced in Segment 4.a. As he is traveling to Mexico, Billy encounters his friend Paco’s wagon, which is under attack by Chisum’s men. The ranch hands have brutally beaten Paco and are about to rape his daughter when Billy arrives and kills them. This sequence is the impetus for Billy to return to New Mexico and face the inevitability of his obsolescence, but it also underscores the opposition between Garret and the Kid. Throughout the film, Mexico has been referred to as a lawless refuge from Chisum and his enforcers, reminiscent of the American West several decades earlier. That Billy defends Paco from Chisum’s men, who are already
established as antagonists when they outnumber and murder Billy’s friend, confirms the outlaw as a protector of the natural, indigenous aspects of the frontier. Peckinpah celebrated a version of these Mexicans in the sequences featuring Angel’s village in *The Wild Bunch*, and in *Billy the Kid*, the director enhances the viewer’s alignment with Billy by elevating him to heroic status as a defender of the weak and helpless.

The treatment of women by Pat and Billy also emphasizes the differences between these two men who have chosen different paths in coming to terms with the changing West. Women function as a generic trope that is used to direct viewer allegiance. A common characteristic of the generic hero is that he recognizes something redeemable in the whore-with-a-heart-of-gold. Ringo Kidd and Dallas’ relationship in *Stagecoach* is an example of this convention. But *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* never presents any moments of tenderness between Pat and any woman. Rather, the only moment of intimacy that the audience is privileged to is his visit to a whorehouse in Segment 4.b. Pat’s interaction with these women is exclusively sexual, lacking any emotional connection. This is markedly different than Billy’s interaction with women. In Segment 2.a., Billy returns to his hideout where a number of his posse is sleeping with whores. Billy pushes his friend out of a bed and hops in with the naked woman that his friend was sleeping with. This association with 1960s notions of free love and sexual liberation is not negative. Rather, the film develops Billy’s relationship with a young woman who bears a striking resemblance to a member of the Flower Generation, with her long, natural brown hair and proclivity for wearing loose clothing. Of course, Peckinpah is creating links between the outlaw culture of the Wild West and the rock-and-roll, hippie lifestyle embodied by Kris
Kristofferson and Bob Dylan’s star image, but these associations do have important implications within the narrative construction of the film. The juxtaposition between Garret’s treatment of women and Billy’s further characterizes the sheriff as a member of a corrupt and destructive cadre. In Segment 3.a., the viewer is privileged to a tender moment between Billy and his lover. He gives her a small necklace before he leaves for Mexico, a visual confirmation of the love he feels for this woman. Billy’s kind treatment of her invites the spectator to root for the success of their romance, and subsequently Billy’s survival.

Finally, during the climax of the film in Segment 05, Peckinpah confirms his disdain for the forces of change that Garret has come to represent. While Garret and his posse encircle Billy in Fort Sumner, the outlaw enjoys his last moments with the woman he loves. Billy treats his lover extremely tenderly as they undress in a rented bedroom, clearly communicating the organic love and mutual respect between the couple. It is crucial that Pat Garret, in executing the outlaw Billy the Kid, interrupts this passionate moment. The sheriff has destroyed the romance with which the audience has been conditioned to root for by the archetypal expectations associated with the whore-with-a-heart-of-gold. Billy and his lover won’t ride off into the sunset like Dallas and Ringo. Rather, in disrupting the romance, Garret is confirmed as a negative force of change, on the side of those ranchers and government bureaucrats whom Peckinpah has painted as corruptors of a natural order, an ideal Wild West that is populated by outlaws and dusty border towns and borderless expanses. The existing literature has analyzed the following sequence ad infinitum, in which Sheriff Garret destroys his own reflection in a mirror after he kills Billy the Kid. But in
disrupting this organic romance, the viewer is cued to conclude that Garret has finally realized that he has destroyed something greater, the West that he once loved and can now no longer be a part of.

In *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*, Peckinpah weds his nuanced understanding of generic iconography with his preferred predator-prey narrative structure. Generic references situate the film in a tradition of Westerns that, like *Ride the High Country* and *The Wild Bunch*, explores the death of the West. Peckinpah’s use of generic iconography also encourages the viewer to form parallels between the experiences of Pat and Billy as they traverse the familiar albeit surreal Western landscape. Generic visual shorthand allows Peckinpah to concentrate the audience’s attention on the development of these characters while also elevating their actions to produce a commentary on the larger forces that are corrupting Peckinpah’s ideal West. The film is doubly tragic then, an exploration of Pat Garret’s own self-destruction as well as the inevitable loss of the untamed West to the progress of Eastern civilization.

**Conclusion**

By tracing the use of generic iconography and archetypes in Peckinpah’s Westerns, one can observe the evolution of the director’s attitude towards his prevailing subject matter and themes. In *Ride the High Country*, Peckinpah introduces his dominant concern for the demise of the West, which sustains the majority of his career. But the straightforward use of generic imagery in this film also suggests the limitations of his directorial skill, which had not yet reached the
sophistication demonstrated by *The Wild Bunch*. In the latter film, Peckinpah uses generic imagery to subvert audience expectations rather than confirm them. *The Wild Bunch*’s loud departure from the Westerns that preceded it owes much to this generic subversion, compounded by the maturity of the director’s stylistic and narrative preferences. Peckinpah capitalizes on the viewer’s expectations that are associated with icons such as the automobile and the cavalry officer in order to boldly introduce a new kind of Western, the “Peckinpah Western,” in which the line between hero and outlaw, good and evil is blurred. This blurred line allows Peckinpah to encourage viewer alignment with those bad men whom one would traditionally revile, the murderous Pike Bishop and the traitorous Pat Garret. Just as he uses style and narrative construction to make us love outsiders, loners, and violent criminals, Peckinpah invokes genre to facilitate our understanding of the morally ambiguous universes within which they operate.

Peckinpah’s ability to utilize generic shorthand is predicated on their position along Basinger’s stages of generic development. *Ride the High Country* is situated at the second stage, in which generic imagery is loaded with associations from innumerable prior films. In this early film, Peckinpah uses generic references in a straightforward manner in order to communicate the obsolescence of Steve Judd and Gil Westrum. *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* also participate in this second stage, Peckinpah’s knowledge of narrative construction afforded the director the ability to subvert audience expectations and cue the recognition of parallels between men like Pike Bishop and Deke Thornton, and Pat and Billy. 

Amongst Peckinpah’s mature Westerns, only *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* occupies
the third stage of generic development, in which genres mix and borrow traits from one another. As such, Peckinpah communicates a romantic story in the language of the Western, against the backdrop of a disappearing frontier. All of Peckinpah’s Westerns, regardless of their position in relation to the development of the genre, are fundamentally concerned with this theme, the death of the West and how individuals cope with the progression of history.
Conclusion.

By examining the techniques with which Sam Peckinpah encourages the audience to root for his morally ambiguous protagonists, one can begin to understand the unique cinematic universe that the director constructs throughout his oeuvre. Peckinpah’s cinema is fundamentally grounded in the themes that drove the artist’s work: obsolescence, nostalgia, regret, the inability or reticence of individual’s to cope with change, and their often violent responses to it. All of Peckinpah’s mature works indicate these thematic concerns. *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* is clearly Peckinpah’s most optimistic film, celebrating love and community while the majority of his films lack a romantic sub-plot altogether. And though films such as *Straw Dogs* betray a powerful cynicism towards romance and community, all of the Peckinpah’s works bear evidence of a man who was constantly questioning and searching for answers regarding these themes. The evolution of Peckinpah’s concerns throughout his career
suggests that he may never have found the answers he was looking for, but his intellectual and emotional curiosity yielded a hauntingly powerful oeuvre that reflects the emotional vigor of its thunderous creator.

Paul Seydor, David Weddle, Jim Kitses, and others have located the roots of Peckinpah’s thematic concerns in his personal experiences, intellectual pursuits, and various other minutiae of his life. It is my hope that this thesis is complementary to their works, further establishing Peckinpah’s fine skill as a director by illustrating that his thematic concerns were inextricably linked to a rigorous set of formal techniques and preferences. In chapter one, I argued that Peckinpah relies on three techniques that are intrinsic to how he encourages audience alignment and investment. The chapter illustrates how point-of-view editing, emotional montage, and visceral, physical montage operate across his body of work to privilege the viewer to individual’s psychological states despite their hesitation to express their emotions outright. Cable Hogue, Doc McCoy, and JR Bonner are united by their existence at the margins of society and their inability to express themselves emotionally, and the dominant theme of Peckinpah’s work is his exploration of the outlaws and outcasts who are forced to come to terms with their isolation at the fringe. The *Straw Dogs* case study clarifies how these techniques operate over the course of an entire film, but they are altered so as to espouse the director’s evolving thematic concerns. For example, POV editing is used in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* to facilitate the viewer’s understanding of a campy universe in which romance is celebrated, but the same technique is used in *Straw Dogs* in order to clarify a pervasive atmosphere of paranoia and repressed desire, punctuating Peckinpah’s jaded cynicism towards love
and community in that film. And by using all of the aforementioned techniques to align the viewer with David Sumner, and to an extent with his wife Amy, Peckinpah underscores the tragedy of humankind’s violent nature and how we are doomed by our tendency to focus inward rather than bravely confront our obstacles.

Chapter two proposes a fundamental dichotomy in the construction of Peckinpah’s films. The action films are concerned with violence and its repercussions on the principal characters. Films such as *The Wild Bunch*, *The Getaway*, and *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* rely on the predator-prey narrative structure, in which the viewer is encouraged to recognize parallels between men who are hunted and their hunters. These parallels are crucial to the viewer’s acceptance of men who might otherwise be considered cruel, unnecessarily violent, or downright evil. Secondly, there are Peckinpah’s emotion films, in which romance, domesticity, and community are celebrated. Since Peckinpah’s form is inextricably linked to his films’ content, he uses an altered set of narrative norms in order to provide the viewer access to character subjectivity. Flashback is incredibly important in *Junior Bonner*, suggesting the immense importance of the rodeo for JR as a moment of redemption. And in the subsequent case study, *The Wild Bunch* is used to illustrate how Peckinpah synthesizes the techniques of the action and emotion films in order to alternate between Pike and Deke’s obsession with the past and reluctance to give up their way of life, and the visceral thrill of the gunfights.

With regards to the themes of nostalgia, regret, and how we cope with the passage of time, Peckinpah found the Western as the most effective vehicle for espousing his concerns. In *Ride the High Country*, *The Wild Bunch*, *The Ballad of*
Cable Hogue, and Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, Peckinpah utilizes his profound knowledge of generic convention in order to condition the viewer’s understanding of the cinematic universe in each film, and how individuals operate in that universe. Concise visual iconography, such as the cavalry officer, is used in The Wild Bunch to immediately indicate that this is not a Western about the cinematic West we have come to know through the films of Ford and others, but a wholly different beast, the “death of the West” Western, the Peckinpah Western. But this generic iconography is also used in service of character alignment and investment. In The Wild Bunch, Peckinpah uses loaded icons such as the automobile to preclude the viewer’s investment in characters like Mapache, whose association with technology links him to negative forces of change. Genre functions similarly to form and narrative structure in Peckinpah’s cinema, in that the director’s invocation of generic convention varies as his thematic concerns evolve. Thus, in Pat Garret and Billy the Kid, generic iconography is used to underscore the ambiguous moral polarity in the dying West as well as the tragedy of Garrett’s decision to embrace change and hunt down his former friend. Peckinpah toys with the expectations associated with the colors black and white, and the archetypal characters such as the lawman, the outlaw, the religious man, and the Mexican. Nothing is as it seems in this alien West, and the viewer’s focus shifts to Garret’s delicate emotional progression as he makes his last journey across the disappearing frontier.

The preceding chapters illustrate that form, narrative, and genre always exist in service of the relationship between viewer and content. In his films, Peckinpah is fundamentally concerned with the audience’s investment in men whom society has
pushed to the margins, bad men with whom we wouldn’t ordinarily sympathize. The
goal of this analysis is to enable an understanding of Peckinpah as a filmmaker who
was not solely concerned with explosive squibs and controversial attitudes towards
women and violence, but a director who understood film form and how to manipulate
the cut in order to provide the viewer with a uniquely visceral cinematic experience.
Recent developments in Hollywood suggest that Peckinpah’s legacy has not been
marginalized like the achievements of those cowboys and outcasts whose lives he
chronicled in his films.

In a recent interview on 60 Minutes, Kathryn Bigelow cited The Wild Bunch
as the film that inspired her to enter filmmaking. Lesley Stahl goes on to converse
with Bigelow about the director’s production methods, particularly how she records
the action with several cameras operating simultaneously, as Peckinpah often did.
Stahl cites the gritty realism of The Hurt Locker (2009) and the sense that the viewer
is placed alongside the bomb techs as they dodge death under the blistering Iraqi sun.
It would be presumptuous to make the claim that Bigelow’s active cinema, one in
which the viewer is asked to sympathize and engage with these dangerous men, owes
wholly to Peckinpah’s influence. However, Bigelow’s reference to Peckinpah
certainly indicates that the elder director continues to be relevant to contemporary
filmmakers. Like Peckinpah, Bigelow belongs to a tradition of filmmakers that
chronicle the lives and stories of people who exist at the margins of society, outside
the safe domestic and professional boundaries that most Americans are familiar with.

Whether they are the outlaw-vampires of Near Dark (1987) or the beach bum bank

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43 Lesley Stahl. "Interview with Kathryn Bigelow."
robbers of *Point Break* (1991), Bigelow is dealing with those same men of action who live and die by the violence that defines them. *The Hurt Locker’s* Staff Sergeant William James is quite similar to Peckinpah’s Pike Bishop and Billy the Kid; in his decision to return to Iraq and continue to risk his life, James is choosing to live and die as he wishes rather than conform to the norms of civilized society.

Bigelow also belongs to a younger generation of directors who came of age during a time in which formal experimentation was tolerated to a much greater degree than in decades prior. Peckinpah’s body of work directly suggests the declining ability of Classical Hollywood to impose a system of formal norms on its directors. Directors like Peckinpah, who were telling the stories of gangsters and outlaws whose masculinity makes them reticent to express their emotions outright, were finally afforded the opportunity to use overt stylistic techniques in order to convey character subjectivity. One only need look at the great disparity in stylistic construction between *Ride the High Country* and *The Wild Bunch*. Released in 1961, *Ride the High Country* adheres to a classical style in which clarity of information and causal logic is absolutely fundamental. Steve Judd expresses his nostalgia for the Old West through his conversations with Gil Westrum. There is no stylistic bravado or complex emotional montage, as in Peckinpah’s later films. Eight years later, *The Wild Bunch* suggests a director fully in tune with the opportunities afforded by the New Hollywood. Rather than relying on dialogue, Peckinpah utilizes slow motion and non-synchronous intercutting in order to present violence and bloodlust as the tragic flaw of Pike and his Bunch. Style enhances the thrill and the aggressively
confrontational aspect of the opening and final gunfights, which punctuates The
Bunch’s doomed reliance on violence in order to survive.

Critics and historians often cite Peckinpah as an influence on
contemporaneous and subsequent filmmakers, such as Martin Scorcese and Quentin
Tarantino, but perhaps it was the freedoms offered by the declining studio system that
brought directors with similar thematic concerns to espouse them using shared formal
techniques. Martin Scorcese is an excellent example of a director whose early works
share similarities with Peckinpah’s. Both directors are fundamentally concerned with
men whose violent nature pushes them to the fringe of society. The gangsters of
Mean Streets (1973) and Raging Bull’s Jake LaMotta (1980) are treated similarly to
Pike Bishop and Doc McCoy in that their desires and emotions are expressed through
stylized montage rather than dialogue. But even in Scorcese’s earliest works, the
director uses style to convey the emotions of character’s that are hesitant or unwilling
to express themselves directly. Who’s That Knocking at My Door (1967) was
released two years prior to The Wild Bunch and far earlier than Peckinpah’s most
sophisticated mature works. Scorcese’s debut feature relies on intercutting of non-
synchronous locations and time periods in order to construct subjective sequences
that convey J.R.’s love for his girlfriend, and later his uncomfortable obsession with
the fact that she has been raped. Remarkably few lines of dialogue are used to clarify
these emotions; rather, Scorcese uses the unique properties of cinema, its ability to
link time and space to blur the lines between objective reality and subjective
imaginings, to condition the viewer’s understanding of J.R.’s love, passion,
obsession, and disgust.
Scorcese’s means of presenting subjectivity in *Who’s That Knocking at My Door* is quite similar to Peckinpah’s emotional montage in *The Getaway* and in *Straw Dogs*. That one director’s stylistic experimentation comes after the other does not necessarily confirm that Scorcese was an influence on Peckinpah, or vice versa. Rather, it is likely that both directors seized on the opportunities afforded by the loosening of stylistic standards during the 1960s and 1970s. Like Scorcese, and other directors such as Arthur Penn and Mike Nichols, Peckinpah’s legacy includes a movement towards increasingly experimental formal design. These directors, in their unconventional techniques and controversial content, pushed the boundaries of how to engage with filmgoers on a strictly cinematic level. The great auteurs of the Classical era, Lubitsch and Hitchcock, Capra and Hawks, created tremendously personal works despite the indomitable mode of production under which they worked. These later directors, freed from the reins of the Majors, were able to create an art that was not necessarily more personal, entertaining, or valuable, but one that was important in advancing the capabilities of cinematic expression.

When directors themselves, such as Kathryn Bigelow, directly acknowledge the influence of artists on their own work, then it is appropriate to begin a formal analysis of direct links between the two bodies of work. This is more difficult when there are no acknowledged connections between artists. As such, it is somewhat of an impossible task to track down the possible influences that Peckinpah may or may not have had on subsequent generations of directors. It is unclear whether or not Quentin Tarantino’s stylized treatment of violence derives from Peckinpah’s, but regardless, this is an aesthetic comparison. The value of Peckinpah’s work does not lie in the
sheer volume of blood that he was able to pack into each frame, but in the uniquely cinematic techniques with which he facilitated viewer understanding and enhanced alignment. The most useful comparisons that can be made are between those directors who are dealing with similar subject matter, and to see where their formal approaches towards this content converges and diverges. Both Peckinpah and Bigelow make use of multiple-camera shooting and slow motion in order to enhance the viewer’s perception that they are participating in the action of the film. But where Peckinpah uses an abundance of intercutting in and out of slow motion, Bigelow clarifies the beautiful intensity of violence with a prolonged slow motion shot of an explosion in the opening sequences of *The Hurt Locker*. The intensity of urban combat is further punctuated by her constantly roving hand-held camera. Thus, in sharing her concerns for men of violence with Peckinpah, Bigelow appropriates techniques from her predecessor that are effective, and adds a formal dimension of her own. Not only is cinema a collaborative art, then, but a derivative one in which the contributions of former greats can be transformed into something wholly new and personal.

Kathryn Bigelow’s acknowledgement of Peckinpah as an influence is an opportunity to begin a reconsideration of the director on formal terms rather than the controversy of his films’ content. Sam Peckinpah has often been met with detractors who called his films chauvinistic and cruel and sensationalist. This thesis has not addressed the criticism of Peckinpah’s most ardent opponents, those who disregard his films solely due to the surface controversy of the difficult themes and situations that they deal with. If anything, the controversial nature of Peckinpah’s films suggests the bravado with which he tackled those issues that reside in human nature’s
darkest recesses, and his films reveal what happens when those lurking demons crawl to the surface. That Peckinpah was notoriously deceptive and brash in interviews has reinforced his legacy as an enfant terrible who cared little about the reception of his films, but I’d like to hope that this thesis proves Peckinpah’s nuanced concern for the relationship between cinema and spectator. Sam Peckinpah was headstrong and cantankerous and certainly directed his fair share of stinkers, but at least for a time, the immense controversy that overshadowed the artist was equaled by his finesse as a filmmaker.
Appendix
Segmentations

*Straw Dogs* (Sam Peckinpah, 1971)
Segmentation
117 min.

00. Credits. [Graveyard.] The credits roll over black and white, out-of-focus sequence of children in a graveyard. Transition to color and zoom in on children playing “ring-around-the-rosie.”

01. [Village street, Interior bar, Country road. David Sumner, Amy Sumner, Charlie Venner, Henry Niles, Tom Hedden, Major Scott, Janice & Bobby Hedden.] Charlie helps David and Amy load their car. Charlie offers to fix David’s garage. David goes into a bar, leaving Charlie and Amy alone together. *“There was once a time, Mrs. Sumner, when you were ready to beg me for it,”* Charlie reminds her. Henry Niles plays catch with a teenage girl. In the bar, Tom becomes belligerent and makes David nervous. David pays for the glasses that Tom broke. As Charlie and Amy drive away, they almost hit Charlie and Tom. David questions Amy about her past, particularly her relationship with Charlie. She changes the topic by trying to get into David’s pants.

1.a. [Trencher Farm. David Sumner, Amy Sumner, Norman Scutt, Chris Cawsey.] When Amy and David arrive home, Scutt and Cawsey are working on the roof. Cawsey shows Scutt that he has stolen Amy’s underwear. Norman responds, *“Bugger your trophy, I want what was in ‘em.”* Inside, Amy looks for her cat and David asks her why she hired Charlie Venner. Amy childishly erases part of David’s chalkboard. David watches through a window as Amy flirts with Scutt and Cawsey. David teases her, *“You act like you’re 14...”* As the workers leave, Cawsey makes a joke that David does not appreciate.

1.b. [Bar, Trencher Farm (night). Tom Hedden, Major John, Bartender, John Niles, Norman Scutt, Bobby and Janice Hedden.] Tom tells John to look after his brother, who has been getting too close to the town’s young girls. At their home, David and Amy get ready for bed, while Janice and Bobby spy on them through a window. David and Amy play chess in bed, which leads to childish sex-play. In the bar, Cawsey shows Charlie and his friends Amy’s underwear.

1.c. [Trencher Farm. Amy Sumner, David Sumner, Charlie Venner, Norman Scutt, Chris Cawsey.] Inside, David chastises Amy for interrupting him while he works. *“Don’t play games with me,”* he says, after Amy sticks a piece of gum on his blackboard. Later, as Amy gets out of her car, she notices Charlie and his friends staring up her short skirt. Amy complains to
David, and accuses him of leaving the U.S. out of cowardice. After Amy apologizes, she goes upstairs to take a bath, and pauses for a moment next to a window. Through the window, she makes eye contact with Charlie, who sees her naked.

1.d. [Trencher Farm, Village street, Bar. Charlie Venner and workers, Amy Sumner, David Sumer, Henry Niles, John Niles, Bobby and Janice Hedden, Major Scott.] As the workers leave for the day, they laugh at David’s inability to drive a British car. David almost gets into an accident as he passes Charlie’s truck on the road. Outside the bar, John Niles chastises his brother for talking to Janice Hedden. In the bar, Charlie’s friend laughs at David when he orders a scotch with ice. The Major invites David to a church social.

1.e. [Trencher living room. Amy Sumner, David Sumner, Major Scott, Reverend Barney Hood, Louise Hood.] Getting home from the bar, David drunkenly plays loud bagpipe music. The Reverend invites David and Amy to a church social. David attempts to explain his profession to the Reverend, which leads to an argument between men of science and faith.

02. [Sumner bedroom. David Sumner, Amy Sumner.] David finds Amy’s dead cat hanging in the closet. Amy screams, and when she settles down, suspects Scutt or Cawsey.

2.a. [Trencher Farm (day). David Sumner, Amy Sumner, Charlie Venner, Norman Scutt, Chris Cawsey, workers.] Amy shames David into confronting the workers about her cat. David brings the workers inside so that they can hang up the bear trap. Amy brings the boys several pints of beer, as well as a bowl of milk, mocking David’s inability to confront them. Charlie invites David to hunt with workers. Amy watches through a window as the workers horse around. David finds that she has written on his blackboard, “DID I CATCH YOU OFF GUARD?”

2.b. [Forest, Trencher Farm. David Sumner, Charlie Venner, Norman Scutt, Chris Cawsey, Riddaway.] Scutt and Cawsey tell David to just wait in one spot until they drive the geese towards him. Scutt drives a few geese his way, and David attempts to shoot them.

2.b.i. [Trencher living room, Forest. Amy Sumner, Charlie Venner, David Sumner, Norman Scutt] At the Sumner home, Charlie shows up and invites himself in. Charlie begins to kiss Amy, and she asks him to leave. He refuses, and continues to kiss her, despite her struggle. After slapping her around, Charlie begins to take off Amy’s clothes. Charlie begins to rape Amy, and her struggle gives way to passivity, and she begins to kiss Charlie. In the forest, David successfully kills a pheasant just as Amy begins to acquiesce to Charlie. When Scutt enters the living room, Charlie holds her down while he sodomizes Amy, who aggressively resists.

2.c. [Sumner bedroom. David Sumner, Amy Sumner.] David comes home, where Amy is lying in bed. Amy calls David a coward for not confronting the workers about the cat, and he chastises her for acting like a child. As David kisses Amy, she recalls her rape.
03. [Trencher Farm. Norman Scutt, Chris Cawsey, Riddaway, Charlie Venner, David Sumner, Amy Sumner.] David fires the workers, telling them that he doesn’t want them around.

3.a. [Church, Secluded shed, Bar. David Sumner, Amy Sumner, Charlie Venner, Norman Scutt, Riddaway, Cawsey, Reverend Hood, Louise Hood, Tom Hedden, Bobby and Janice Hedden, Major Scott, John Niles, Henry Niles, villagers, children.] As David and Amy enter the church social, Amy recalls the trauma of her rape. Amy looks visibly upset as the Reverend puts on a magic show. Janice Hedden makes a point of saying hello to David. Discouraged by his lack of enthusiasm, she asks Henry Niles to go for a walk with her. After David and Amy leave, Bobby Hedden tells Tom that Henry Niles left with Janice. Tom beats up John Niles, and sends Bobby to find Janice. In a shed, Janice seduces Henry Niles, who inadvertently strangles her to death when he hears the search party. Tom Hedden waits in the pub with Charlie and the gang for news of Janice.

3.b. [Village road (night), Trencher Farm, Bar. David Sumner, Amy Sumner, Henry Niles.] On their way home, David accidentally hits Henry Niles with his car. David decides to take care of Henry in their home, despite Amy’s complaints. David calls the bar, looking for Major Scott. The bartender tells Tom that Henry Niles is at Trencher’s. Tom, Charlie, and the gang arrive at Trencher’s looking for Niles. David prevents them from beating on Henry Niles. After Charlie reports back to Tom, Tom tries to force his way into the house with a shotgun. *I can handle this...*” David reassures Amy.

3.b.i. [Trencher Farm. David & Amy, Henry Niles, Tom, Charlie, Scutt, Cawsey, Riddaway, Major Scott.] Tom and his gang begin to get violent in their attempts to get in the house. Scutt starts throwing rocks through David’s windows, as Charlie demands that he hand over Niles. Amy tries to convince David to give Niles to them, but he refuses. As the gang gets drunker, their aggressiveness increases and Cawsey begins throwing rats through the windows. Eventually Major Scott arrives, attempting to resolve the situation. Tom Hedden shoots and kills Major Scott outside of David’s home.

04. [Trencher Farm. David Sumner, Amy Sumner, Tom Hedden, Charlie Venner, Norman Scutt, Chris Cawsey, Riddaway.] After the Major’s death, the gang’s attempts to enter the house become increasingly violent. David assures Amy that he can keep them out, but she is intent on handing Niles over. As David prepares his defenses, Amy refuses to help him. Amy tries to open the door for Charlie, but David stops her. David slaps her and threatens to break her neck if she doesn’t obey. Henry Niles escapes the locked bathroom where he was being held and attacks Amy, but David stops him. As Charlie and Tom try to enter through a window, David dumps boiling oil on him. David blasts Scottish bagpipe music in order to disorient his attackers. As Tom tries to enter through a window, David smacks his shotgun and Tom shoots himself in the foot. David takes Tom’s gun, but it isn’t loaded. David beats Cawsey to death with a fireplace poker. Upstairs, Scutt attempts to rape Amy, and both Charlie and David rush to stop him. Charlie shoots Scutt, and then begins to fight David.
David hits Charlie over the head with the bear trap, which snaps his neck and kills him. After the fight appears to be over, Riddaway jumps David and tries to break his back. Amy watches in disbelief, eventually shooting Riddaway just before David’s spine is snapped. After the fight, David asks if Amy is okay, and she nods.

05. [Village road (dawn). David Sumner, Henry Niles]. David drives Henry away from the farm. Henry says, “I don’t know my way home,” and David responds, “It’s ok, I don’t either.”

00. Credits. Secondary credits roll as David’s car drives into the darkness.

_The Wild Bunch_ (Sam Peckinpah, 1969)

Segmentation

145 min.

00. Credits. [Ext. Southwestern town. Pike Bishop, The Wild Bunch, Towns’ children, Petticoat brigade, various townsfolk, Deke Thornton, Pat Harrigan, bounty hunters.] The Bunch rides into town dressed as US Army soldiers. Black & white monochrome freeze-frames for each credit (as if a daguerreotype). The Bunch rides past a group of children torturing a scorpion with an anthill. The Bunch rides past a preacher delivering a sermon about the values of temperance. As Pike Bishop leads his Bunch towards the railroad office, he helps an old woman across the street. A group of bounty hunters spies The Bunch as they enter the railroad office. Pike Bishop says, “If they move...kill em!,” his face captured in monochrome freeze-frame with the director’s credit.

01. [Int. RR office, Ext. Texas town. The Wild Bunch, Deke Thornton, Pat Harrigan, bounty hunters, townsfolk.] Thornton tells his bounty hunters to stay quiet until The Bunch makes a move, but the outlaws have already noticed them. The Temperance Union begins a parade through the central square; the marching band’s song grows louder as the gunfight draws nearer. As the parade passes the RR office, The Bunch uses it as cover to make their violent escape. Thornton tries to shoot Bishop, but hesitates and kills a civilian by accident. A great number of townsfolk and outlaws are killed as the Bunch makes its escape. The Bunch rides out of town past the group of children who have started to burn the scorpion-on-the-anthill. In town, the bounty hunters scavenge equipment from the dead. C

02. [Ext. desert. Pike Bishop, The Wild Bunch.] As The Bunch traverses the desert, Bishop executes a comrade who is no longer fit to ride.

2.a. [Int./Ext. Railroad HQ. Deke Thornton, Pat Harrigan, bounty hunters.] Harrigan tells Thornton and his posse that they have 30 days to catch The Bunch, or he will return them to prison.

2.a.i. Flashback – A memory of Deke being whipped is superimposed over his reaction shot.
2.b. [Ext. desert, Ext. Mexican village. The Bunch -- comprised of Freddie Sykes, Angel, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch and Dutch Engstrom -- Mexican children.] The Bunch continues to make their journey away from the town, arriving at a village where Sykes waits for them with supplies. The Gorch brothers complain about how the loot will be divided, only to discover that the gold was replaced with steel washers. Tense words lead to a potential gunfight between Angel and the Gorch brothers, which is defused by Bishop and Dutch. Bishop says, “We gotta start thinking beyond our guns...those days are closing fast.”

2.c. [Ext. wilderness (night), Ext. Mexican town (night). Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Angel, Freddie Sykes, Deke Thornton, bounty hunters.] In the Mexican village, Bishop and Dutch talk about their next move and reminisce about old times.

2.c.i. Flashback – Bishop remembers how he left Thornton behind after being shot in a whorehouse. Intercutting suggests that this is a shared flashback between both Bishop and Thornton.

2.d [Exterior desert. The Bunch.] The Bunch travels across sand dunes, and Sykes’ poor riding causes the horses to fall down the dune. An altercation leads to tension between the Gorch brothers and Bishop, who is embarrassed when he falls off his horse due to a faulty spur. A series of fades indicate the passage of time as they travel. Bishop learns that Crazy Lee, who was killed in the first gunfight, was Sykes’ grandson.

2.e. [Exterior Rio Grande. Deke Thornton, bounty hunters.] Thornton and his posse pursue the Bunch’s trail, concluding that the Bunch will head to Agua Verde.

2.f [Exterior Angel’s village. Village elder, Angel, Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Freddie Sykes, Mexican townsfolk.] Angel learns that Mapache has killed his father and that his sister has willingly joined the General. At night, a fiesta is thrown for The Bunch and Angel pledges his allegiance to the Bishop. The Bunch is quite respectful to the Mexican women. The next day, The Bunch rides out of the village, honored by townsfolk who crowd the streets and dole out gifts.

03. [Ext. Agua Verde. Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Freddie Sykes, Angel, General Mapache, Teresa, Mexican officers and regulars, Cmdr. Frederick Mohr, Mexican villagers.] The Bunch travels through Agua Verde to the central square, where they hope to meet with General Mapache. Dutch comments, “We ain’t nothing like him...we don’t hang nobody.” Angel sees his former lover Teresa, who tells him that she now wishes to be with Mapache. Angel shoots Teresa as she licks the inside of Mapache’s ear, and The Bunch is quick to assert that they had nothing to do with it. Cmdr. Mohr, the German military advisor, notices their equipment and recommends that Mapache meet with The Bunch.

That night in Agua Verde, Cmdr. Mohr explains that he wants The Bunch to steal a load of rifles from an American military convoy. The Bunch agrees and Angel is freed. The Bunch enjoys a night of drunken celebration in Mapache’s villa. Increasingly loud Mexican fiesta music indicates the jovial atmosphere. Bishop agrees to give Angel one case of rifles for his people.

3.b. [Int. Railroad HQ, Ext. Desert. Deke Thornton, Pat Harrigan, bounty hunters, Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Freddie Sykes, Angel.] Thornton requests more time and better supplies from Harrigan, who refuses and tells Thornton that he has 24 days to catch Bishop. At a campsite, Dutch asks Bishop how he hurt his leg.

3.b.i. Flashback – *A woman slaps Bishop, who is holding flowers and says that her husband is gone. Later, in a bedroom, the husband storms in and kills Bishop’s lover and shoots him in the leg.*

3.c. [Ext. Railroad way station, Ext./Int. RR car. Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, US Cavalry soldiers, conductor, Deke Thornton, bounty hunters.] The Bunch silently and efficiently takes control of the military train, each member professionally performing his task. From inside the car, Deke notices something fishy, but cannot see anything wrong when he looks out the window. Angel unlatches the engine- and rifle-cars from the soldier-transport and The Bunch makes their escape, with Deke and his posse in pursuit (on horseback). The Bunch’s train is able to outrun Deke’s posse and Bishop sends the train in the reverse direction to provide a distraction for their escape. The US Cavalry regulars are powerless to do anything apart from fumbling with horses.

3.c.i. [Ext River, Ext. Desert. Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, Freddie Sykes, Deke Thornton, bounty hunters, US Cavalry platoon.] As the Bunch makes their escape with the load of rifles, Deke’s posse and the US Cavalry platoon follow behind them. The Bunch rigs a bridge with dynamite and blows it up, sending Deke and his posse into the river below. After they escape once and for all, The Bunch enjoys a comical drink together. Playful non-diegetic music indicates the markedly changed atmosphere. On the riverbank, Thornton and the other survivors resolve to continue their pursuit.

3.d. [Ext. Battlefield, Ext. Mountains, Int. Cave. General Mapache, Mexican officers and soldiers, Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, Freddie Sykes, Deke Thornton, bounty hunters, Zapatistas] Mapache’s army is suffering a defeat by the rebels. He receives a telegram that The Bunch has successfully stolen the rifles and signals a retreat back to Agua Verde. Bishop spies Deke and his posse through binoculars. Deke knows where Bishop is, but decides to lay low. Thornton tells the posse, “*What do I have, nothing but you egg-sucking, chicken-stealing gutter trash with not even 60 rounds between you. We’re after men, and I wish to God I was with ‘em.*” Bishop rigs the carriage of rifles with dynamite as an insurance policy against Mapache. Tector Gorch finds a machine-gun on the carriage. The Bunch continues on its way, and is caught off guard when a group of Zapatistas comes to take their share of rifles from Angel.
3.d.i  [Ext. Canyon floor.  Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, Freddie Sykes, Mexican officer, Mexican regulars.] The Bunch arrives at the rendezvous point where they are met by a large number of Mexican regulars and a senior officer. Pike shows the officer the explosives and the machine gun, which causes a regular to fire at the carriage. Tensions (and the TNT) are defused once the officer orders the regular to be executed. Thornton watches the Bunch’s departure from a distance.

04. [Ext. Agua Verde, Ext. Mountainside.  Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, Freddie Sykes, General Mapache, Mexican officers, Cmdr. Mohr, regulars, townsfolk.] Bishop arrives in Agua Verde and demands his share of gold in exchange for the location of a portion of rifles. Bishop offers the machine-gun as a present to the General. Bishop brings the gold back to The Bunch. In Agua Verde, Mapache’s men try to use the machine-gun, with which they accidentally pepper the town with bullets. Dutch and Angel arrive in Agua Verde to provide the location of the last crate of rifles. Mapache knows that Angel stole a crate, and demands that he stays as a prisoner. Dutch leaves Angel behind and returns to The Bunch. Dutch tells Mapache, “He’s a thief, you take care of him.” On the mountainside, the remaining Bunch figures it will be impossible to rescue Angel. They see Sykes in the valley being chased by Deke’s posse. Sykes is shot in the leg and disappears into the mountainside, and the remaining Bunch uses this as a distraction to escape back to Agua Verde. Sykes’ manages to evade Deke’s posse, but is captured by a Zapatista.

4.a. [Ext. Agua Verde, Ext. Mountainside.  Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, General Mapache, Army officers and regulars, townsfolk, Deke Thornton, bounty hunters, Army patrol.] The Bunch arrives in Agua Verde, where Angel is being dragged behind a car. Mapache refuses to sell him back to Bishop. On the mountainside, Deke’s posse continues to look for The Bunch, but retreats upon seeing an Army patrol.

05. [Int./Ext. Brothel, Ext. Agua Verde. Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Mexican prostitutes, Mexican baby.] Pike, the Gorch Brothers, and Dutch recover from a night of debauchery in an Agua Verde whorehouse. Saying only “Let’s go,” Pike convinces the surviving members of The Bunch to rescue Angel. The Bunch takes a long walk through town to the main square. Diegetic Mexican folk singing accompanies non-diegetic military marching music.

5.b. [Int./Ext. Agua Verde – Main Square. Pike Bishop, Dutch Engstrom, Lyle Gorch, Tector Gorch, Angel, General Mapache, Cmdr. Mohr, Mexican officers and regulars, townsfolk, Deke Thornton, bounty hunters.] When The Bunch arrives at the main square, Mapache slits Angel’s throat. In response, The Bunch blasts Mapache. After an extended pause and moment of disbelief, Bishop singles out Cmdr. Mohr and kills him. This initiates a massive, prolonged gunfight between The Bunch and Mapache’s entire army. The battle revolves around who controls the machine gun in the center of the square. With their superior skills, The Bunch massacres Mapache’s entire army and a large number of civilians, but they too perish in the process.
Deke and his posse watch the battle form a distance, and begin to ride towards Agua Verde.

5.c. [Ext. Main Square, Ext. Agua Verde. Deke Thornton, bounty hunters, Freddie Sykes, Zapatistas.] Deke and his posse arrive at the main square after the battle has ended, and everyone in sight is dead, including the entire Bunch. Deke takes Bishop’s gun while the bounty hunters ravenously loot the bodies, even taking the gold in the Gorch’s teeth. Thornton stays at the gate of Agua Verde as the posse rides off with The Bunch’s bodies. Freddie Sykes arrives at the head of a convoy of Zapatistas, and invites Thornton to join him. Sykes says, “It ain’t like it used to be, but it’ll do.” Together, they ride off into the horizon. The Mexican folk-song begins (as in 05), as images of each member of The Bunch, laughing, are superimposed over Deke’s departure.

00. Credits

Pat Garret and Billy the Kid (Sam Peckinpah, orig. release 1973, 1988 Turner Preview Version)

Segmentation

122 min.

00. Credits. [Ext. Near Las Cruces, Ext. Fort Sumner, Int. Saloon. Pat Garret, henchmen, assassins, Billy the Kid and band of outlaws, townsfolk, children, Billy’s girlfriend, bartender.] In 1909, Pat Garret is assassinated by the men he worked with in the past. In 1881, Pat Garret arrives in Fort Sumner as Billy shoots the heads off chickens. The credits are marked by sporadic sepia freeze-frames and the 1909 sequence is in sepia. In 1881, Billy’s outlaws criticize Pat for becoming a sheriff. Children clean up the dead chickens as Pat and Billy gather around a domestic dinner table. Pat and Billy share a drink in a saloon and reminisce about old friends. Pat tells Billy that he has been hired by the Governor to get rid of the outlaw. “It feels like...times have changed,” says Pat. “Times maybe...but not me.” Billy responds. After Pat leaves, Billy explains his reticence to kill Pat because they are friends.

01. [Ext. Billy’s hideout, Int. Billy’s hideout. Pat Garret, sheriff’s posse, Billy the Kid, outlaws.] Pat Garret and his posse ambush Billy and two of his gang. After a prolonged gunfight and casualties on both sides, Garret and his posse capture Billy the Kid. Bob Dylan’s theme plays as Billy gives himself up.

1.a. [Int./Ext. Sheriff’s Office, Int. Outhouse. Pat Garret, Billy the Kid, Bob Ollinger, J.W. Bell, townsfolk, Alias (played by Bob Dylan.) Pat and his deputies (Ollinger and Bell) play cards with Billy in the jailhouse. After Garret leaves to collect taxes, tensions rise between Ollinger and Billy over the latter’s lack of religious conviction. In the outhouse, Billy discovers a
pistol hidden under a stack of papers. Ollinger watches as children play on the gallows outside the jailhouse. Back in the courthouse, Billy shoots Bell in the back after he tries to run for help. Billy shoots Ollinger with a shotgun. “Keep the change, Bob,” he says. Billy sings a song as he loots the jailhouse and the townsfolk watch complacently. Alias watches as Billy rides away. Pat Garret returns to the town and sees what damage has been done.


1.b. [Ext. Countryside. Pat Garret, Billy the Kid.] Billy rides lackadaisically into the countryside, the passage of time indicated by several fades. Similarly, Pat travels through the countryside.

02. [Int. Governor’s Mansion. Pat Garret, Governor, Government associates.] The Governor and his associates offer Garret a $1000 reward for the Kid’s capture. He responds with contempt, but guarantees that he will capture the kid.

2.a. [Int./Ext. Billy’s hideout. Billy, outlaws, whores, Alias, Billy’s girlfriend.] Billy arrives to his hideout at night, where he is greeted by several members of his gang and a number of whores. The next day he is confronted by a group of opposing outlaws, which he and his gang kill handily. Alias proves his worth by helping Billy fend off the attack.


2.b.i. [Ext/Int. “Black” Harris’ hideout, riverside. Sherriff Baker, Baker’s wife, Pat Garret, “Black” Harris, outlaw, children.] When Pat, Sherriff Baker, and his wife arrive at “Black” Harris’ hideout, a gunfight ensues. Harris is shot and before he is killed, he and Garret reminisce about old times. Sherriff Baker is shot as well, and wanders off by the river to die alongside his wife. Music – Knockin’ at Heaven’s Door.

2.c. [Ext. Countryside. Billy the Kid, Alias, Selva, Chisum’s men.] While traveling through the countryside, Billy and his men come upon a gaggle of turkeys and have some fun wrangling them up. Their fun and games are interrupted by Chisum’s men, who kill one of Billy’s for trespassing. From a distance, Alias and Billy kill many of Chisum’s posse.

03. [Ext. Countryside, Chisum’s ranch. Pat Garret, Poe, Chisum, Ranch hands.] While camping out alone, Garret is approached by Poe, who has been deputized by the Governor in order to facilitate Billy’s capture. Garret reluctantly accepts Poe’s help. “This country’s getting’ old and I aim to get old with it. Now the Kid don’t want it that way…he might be a better man for it… I ain’t judgin’,” Pat explains to Poe. Garret and Poe visit Chisum looking for information, but he has none.
3.a. [Ext. Border town. Paco, Billy the Kid, Alias, Billy’s girlfriend outlaws, townsfolk.] Billy’s friend Paco invites him to come to Mexico, but Billy is hesitant. Paco explains that his war with Chisum is resolved. Before he leaves, Billy gives his girlfriend a cross-necklace.

3.b. [Ext./Int. Saloon. Pat Garret, Poe, Lemuel.] Garret and Poe have a drink in what appears to be a regular spot for Garret. Poe explains that Billy needs to be caught quickly. They decide to split paths, and Garret waits at the bar for Billy’s henchmen.

3.c. [Int/Ext. “Alamosa” Bill’s home. “Alamosa” Bill, his family and their children, Billy the Kid.] Billy arrives at Alamosa’s home and eats dinner with his family. They behave as if they are all old friends. Outside, Billy and Alamosa begin a generic Wild West shootout, in which they agree to duel on the count of ten. Billy turns around at “3” and shoots Alamosa when the latter turns around at “8.” Billy rides off, leaving Alamosa to die.

3.d. [Int. Saloon, as in 3.b. Pat Garret, Lemuel, Holly, Alias and gang.] As Alias and a number of Billy’s men enter Lemuel’s saloon, Pat pulls a gun on them and forces them to sit around his table and play cards. Pat forces Alias to knock an outlaw unconscious with Lemuel’s rifle. Pat then forces Alias to repeatedly read the labels of supply cans while Holly drinks an entire bottle of whiskey and Lemuel observes with a hat pulled over his eyes. “...Fine quality tomatoes, A&K salmon, spinach and beans, baked beans, beans, beets,” Alias recites. After being forced to drink copiously, Holly draws his gun on Pat and Pat kills him.

3.e. [Int. Boarding house. Poe and random boarders.] Getting ready for bed, Poe asks the other boarders what they have heard about Billy’s whereabouts. Poe coerces an old man into telling him that Billy is in Fort Sumner.

04. [Ext. Riverside. Pat Garret, Family.] Pat camps by a riverside as a boat passes by. On the boat, the father uses a floating bottle for target practice. When Pat shoots the bottle from the riverbank, the father opens fire on Pat. After a tense moment, both men realize the futility of their aggression and put down their guns.

4.a. [Ext. Countryside. Billy the Kid, Paco, Paco’s daughter, Chisum’s men.] While traveling the countryside, Billy comes across Paco’s wagon, which is under attack by Chisum’s men. Billy kills Chisum’s men and saves Paco’s daughter, but Paco is already fatally wounded. This incident convinces Billy not to flee into Mexico, and he returns the way he came.

4.b. [Int. Hotel Lobby, Int. Hotel Room, Ext. Fort Sumner. Pat Garret, Billy the Kid, Poe, Rupert, Sheriff, Whores, Outlaws, children.] Pat visits a hotel where he has been before and invites several whores to his bedroom. Meanwhile, Billy returns to Fort Sumner and is greeted by his men. Billy makes clear his intent to get revenge for Paco’s death. Back at the hotel, Poe walks in on Pat lying in bed with several whores. Poe reports that Billy is at Fort Sumner. In the hotel lobby, Garret enlists the local Sheriff as his deputy. The sheriff indicates that he doesn’t think he will survive their encounter with Billy. After the three men leave, Rupert complains that Pat has destroyed his business. In Fort Sumner, Billy and Alias relax and share a
drink. Billy’s Fort Sumner is characterized by relaxation; children prance and men and women enjoy each other’s company.

05. [Ext. Fort Sumner, Int. Pete Maxwell’s home. Billy the Kid, Sheriff, Poe, Pat Garret, Pete Maxwell, Billy’s Girlfriend, Coffin-maker, Alias, townsfolk.] Billy the Kid and his girlfriend rent out one of Pete Maxwell’s rooms and make love. Outside, Billy talks to a coffin-maker (played by Peckinpah), who calls the sheriff a coward. “You chicken-shit, badge-wearing, son-of-a-bitch,” the coffin-maker says. Pat Garret and his posse slowly move in towards Billy. After Billy and his girlfriend make love, he leaves to get some food while Pat enters the house from the back. When Billy comes back in, Pat shoots him. Pat then sees himself in the mirror and shoots his reflection. When Poe tries to cut off Billy’s thumb for proof of his death, Pat erupts in anger and knocks Poe to the ground. “What you want…and what you get…are two different things,” he yells at Poe. The next morning, Billy rides off into the sunset while children throw rocks at him.

00. Credits. [Ext. Countryside, as in 00. Pat Garret, henchmen, assassins.] In 1909, Pat Garret is shot and killed. Secondary credits roll over a sepia image of his empty carriage.

**Shot Breakdowns**

#1.0 – *The Wild Bunch*, Standard Scene Construction

00:27:59 – 00:29:06

Total Duration – 1 minute, 7 seconds

Longest Shot: 9 seconds

Shortest Shot: < 1 second

Average Shot Length: 3.05 seconds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Camera Movement</th>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Angel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Angel - &quot;You can have my silver...&quot; Laughing.</td>
<td>Angel taunts Gorches with his washers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Gorch brothers as in 1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Score begins. Sound of pistols being drawn.</td>
<td>Now both brothers are looking at Angel. Tector tries to draw his pistol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Action/Event</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Angel, as in 2.</td>
<td>Angel - &quot;C'mon Gringo...&quot; Gun cocks.</td>
<td>Angel already has his gun pointing at the Gorch brothers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Gorch brothers.</td>
<td>Angel - &quot;...don't kill me...&quot;</td>
<td>The Gorch brothers stare at Angel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Pike.</td>
<td>Guitar music. Angel begins to talk.</td>
<td>Pike stares off screen, presumably at the Gorches and Angel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Angel, as in 2.</td>
<td>Angel - &quot;Por favor...&quot;</td>
<td>Angel continues to taunt the Gorch brothers, pointing his gun at them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Gorch brothers, as in 1.</td>
<td>Score - guitar twang. Angel begins to talk.</td>
<td>Gorches continue to stare helplessly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>XLS, as in 1.1, shot 1.</td>
<td>Angel is still talking to the Gorches. Score picks up.</td>
<td>Sykes, in foreground, quietly draws a rifle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>CU, low angle - Sykes.</td>
<td>Angel still taunts the Gorches. Score - guitar music.</td>
<td>Sykes loads his rifle and walks out of the frame.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Sykes, Bishop, and Dutch spread horizontally and in deep space.</td>
<td>Camera tracks with Sykes as he walks past Pike and Dutch.</td>
<td>Sykes moves in the background while Bishop and Dutch watch the confrontation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>CU – Angel.</td>
<td>Score.</td>
<td>Angel's taunting smile becomes a menacing stare.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Gorch brothers, as in 1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gorches continue to stare at Angel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Pike, as in 6.</td>
<td>Pike - &quot;Go on, go for it.&quot; Score continues.</td>
<td>Pike addresses them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>9 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Gorch brothers, now from behind.</td>
<td>Off-screen: Pike: &quot;Fall apart.&quot; Dutch - &quot;Walk softly, boys.&quot; Score continues.</td>
<td>Gorches look off screen at Dutch and Bishop, then at each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Dutch</td>
<td>Score. Dutch stares at Gorches, holding pistol in their direction, but not aiming.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Pike, as in 6.</td>
<td>The mood of score changes, slightly more upbeat. Bishop stares menacingly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Gorch brothers, as in 13.</td>
<td>Score. The Gorches turn away from Angel and sit down, leaving frame.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Angel, as in 2.</td>
<td>Angel puts gun away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>8 sec.</td>
<td>XLS, as in 1.1, shot 1, and 1.2, shot 9.</td>
<td>Ambient noise - chickens. Score continues, now indicating a cooling of tensions. The Bunch all regroup around the center plaza. The Gorches throw the washers on the ground.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Dutch</td>
<td>Dutch - &quot;What's our next move?&quot; Dutch looks at Bishop.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
#1.1 - *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, Point-of-View Editing

00:23:52 - 00:25:43  
Total Duration: 1 minute, 51 seconds  
Longest Shot: 9 seconds  
Shortest Shot: < 1 second  
Average Shot Length: 2.7 seconds  

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<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Cable</td>
<td>Slight backwards track that moves with Cable.</td>
<td>Score - guitar twanging. Ambient noise from town.</td>
<td>Cable rides into town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>LS, as in 1. Cable is now closer to the camera.</td>
<td>Track backwards with Cable.</td>
<td>Ambient noise. Cable - &quot;Woahhh.&quot;</td>
<td>Cable stops his horse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Cable.</td>
<td>Zoom into Cable's face.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable stares at Hildy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MLS, as in 4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hildy checks her purse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Cable.</td>
<td>Zoom into Cable's face.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable continues to stare at Hildy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MLS, as in 4, 6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hildy begins to walk off a porch, towards the screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU, as in 7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable continues to stare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Cable.</td>
<td>Camera pans to follow Hildy as she walks past Cable and smiles.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable continues to stare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>CU, as in 7, 9.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having made eye contact with Hildy, Cable smiles and nods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>LS, as in 1. Both Hildy and Cable are in the frame.</td>
<td>Slight pan to center Hildy and Cable.</td>
<td>Score - lullaby motif. Cable - &quot;Howdy, Miss.&quot;</td>
<td>Cable addresses Hildy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Cable.</td>
<td>Score - lullaby motif.</td>
<td>Cable opens his mouth, as if to say something.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6 sec.</td>
<td>POV MCU - Hildy, cleavage.</td>
<td>Tilt down and zoom into Hildy's cleavage.</td>
<td>Cable - &quot;Please, uh...mmm...uh&quot; Hildy nods her head, as if confused by Cable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Cable.</td>
<td>Ambient noise.</td>
<td>Cable turns his head away, then back towards Hildy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Hildy.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hildy smiles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>5 sec.</td>
<td>CU, as in 15.</td>
<td>Dialogue.</td>
<td>Cable asks where the Land Office is.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>POV CU - Cleavage, as in 14, Land Office.</td>
<td>Quick pan from cleavage to LS - land office.</td>
<td>Hildy - &quot;Well you're lookin' right at it...&quot; Hildy retorts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU Cable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>POV LS - storefront signs.</td>
<td>Quick pan across signs, too blurry to read.</td>
<td>Hildy - &quot;Can't you see the signs?&quot; Cable looks around at the signs, which he cannot read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU Hildy, as in 16.</td>
<td>Cable responds, still at a loss for words.</td>
<td>Hildy cocks head in confusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Cable, as in 19.</td>
<td>Cable - &quot;Well, Hell I don't read too goddamn good...&quot;</td>
<td>Cable begins to get off horse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Cable and Hildy, as in 12.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable gets off horse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>7 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Hildy.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable asks which building to go to. Hildy blushes and points to it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Cable, as in 25.</td>
<td>Hildy - &quot;It's right there&quot;</td>
<td>Cable looks at the sign.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Cable, as in 25, 27.</td>
<td>Cable looks at Hildy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Hildy, as in 26.</td>
<td>Cable thanks Hildy.</td>
<td>Hildy nods, and turns to walk away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Cable, as in 27.</td>
<td>Cable mutters, and asks where the stage office is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>5 sec.</td>
<td>MS Hildy, now farther from camera.</td>
<td>Hildy gives him directions.</td>
<td>Hildy points in the direction of the office.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Cable, as in 27, 31.</td>
<td>Cable thanks Hildy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Hildy, as in 32.</td>
<td>Pan follows Hildy. Score - Lullaby motif. Cable thanks Hildy.</td>
<td>Hildy walks away, into the background.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>MCU Cable, as in 27, 31, 33.</td>
<td>Score - lullaby motif.</td>
<td>Cable stares at Hildy as she walks away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>POV LS - Hildy.</td>
<td>Pan follows Hildy.</td>
<td>Hildy walks away, and turns around and looks at Cable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU Cable, as in 27, 31, 33, 35.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cable continues to stare at Hildy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>POV XCU Cleavage.</td>
<td>Quick zoom into cleavage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>POV LS - Hildy, having walked down the road.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hildy is looking directly at Cable, waves, and keeps walking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>POV XCU Cleavage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
![#1.2 - The Getaway, Emotional Montage](image)

- **Total Duration:** 22 seconds
- **Longest Shot:** 9 seconds
- **Shortest Shot:** < 1 second
- **Average Shot Length:** 1 second

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Camera Movement</th>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Doc in cell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doc inspects his model bridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Doc and prisoners in shower.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doc and prisoners continue to shower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Doc and Carol in bed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carol stares at Doc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Doc in cell, as in 2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doc continues to fiddle with model bridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>XCU Insert - 2 photos of Carol.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Carol and Doc in bed, as in 4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carol stares at Doc, as in 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec, but slightly longer than 7.</td>
<td>MCU - Doc in shower.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doc washes his hair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CU OTS - Gloved Hand in machine room</td>
<td>Doc's hand presses a large red button</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>MCU - Doc in shower, as in 8</td>
<td>Doc continues to wash his hair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>CU - Machinery running</td>
<td>Sound of faucets now joined by rhythm of machinery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>MS - Prison guard on horseback in forest</td>
<td>No humans in frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>CU - Machinery running, as in 11</td>
<td>No humans in frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>MS - Doc in cell, as in 5</td>
<td>Doc stares at his model bridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>CU - Piston in machine room</td>
<td>Piston moves back and forth. No humans in frame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>XCU - Moving mechanism in machine room</td>
<td>Volume of machines and water is increasing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>MS - Prisoner's legs in forest</td>
<td>Sewing mechanism moves rapidly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>CU - Doc in shower</td>
<td>Prisoners are digging a ditch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>MS - Doc in cell, as in 5, 14</td>
<td>Doc calmly destroys his model bridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>MCU - Doc's face</td>
<td>Doc stares</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>CU - Doc's hands and broken bridge</td>
<td>Doc destroys the bridge with greater ferocity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#1.3 – *Junior Bonner, Physical Montage*
01:33:59 - 01:34:17
Total Duration: 18 seconds
Longest Shot: 4 seconds
Shortest Shot: < 1 second
Average Shot Length: .72 seconds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Camera Movement</th>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>MS - JR</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowd cheering, announcer over PA.</td>
<td>JR mounts the bull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - JR.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowd cheering and PA, as in 1.</td>
<td>JR sits on bull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU Insert - JR's gloved hand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>JR clenches the reigns tightly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>Flashback LS - JR, monochrome.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intensified sound, as in 1.</td>
<td>Slow motion, JR starts to fall off the bull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>CU - JR, as in 3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowd cheering and PA, as in 3.</td>
<td>JR nods, signaling them to open the gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Bullpen.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Crowd noise, bull bells, moos.</td>
<td>JR and bull come through the gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>XCU Insert - A stopwatch is started.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finger starts the clock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - JR.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>JR hangs on to the bull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - JR, frontal.</td>
<td>Pan as JR and bull move past camera.</td>
<td>JR and bull hurl towards camera.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - JR and bull.</td>
<td>Pan follows JR and bull.</td>
<td>Same.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - two spectators, directly frontal.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spectators keenly watch the rodeo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - several spectators.</td>
<td>Track out.</td>
<td>Spectators look off-screen, watching rodeo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - JR and Bull, as in 12.</td>
<td>Pan reframes JR in center.</td>
<td>JR hangs on to bull.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Rodeo organizer.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organizer watches the rodeo intently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>LS - JR and bull.</td>
<td>Zoom out frames JR in center.</td>
<td>JR hangs on to bull.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - love interest.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Girl watches the rodeo intently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>LS - JR and bull.</td>
<td>Pan keeps JR in frame.</td>
<td>JR hangs on to bull.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>XCU Insert - Stopwatch, as in 8.</td>
<td>Slight zoom in.</td>
<td>Clock keeps ticking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>LS - crowd of spectators.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spectators look off-camera at rodeo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>LS - JR.</td>
<td>Pan and zoom keeps him in frame.</td>
<td>JR hangs on to bull.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - JR on top of bull.</td>
<td>JR gasps.</td>
<td>JR begins to fall backwards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Camera Angle</td>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>Flashback LS -</td>
<td>Pan centers JR in the frame.</td>
<td>Intensified crowd noises.</td>
<td>JR barely hangs on to the bull.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>JR falling off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bull, as in 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - JR, as</td>
<td>Crowd noises,</td>
<td></td>
<td>JR continues to fall backwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**#1.4 – *Straw Dogs*, Point-of-View Editing**

00:01:34 - 00:02:10
Total Duration: 36 seconds
Longest Shot: 8 seconds
Shortest Shot: < 1 second
Average Shot Length: 2.4 seconds
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Shot Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MLS</td>
<td>Slight low angle, possible POV from 7</td>
<td>Amy and Janice walk down the street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Straight, obscured by a scale in the foreground</td>
<td>Old man steps forward, looking off-screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>High angle, as if POV from 9.</td>
<td>Amy walks down the street, as Janice and Bobby follow her with the mantrap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4 sec.</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>Straight, cows in foreground, David in background</td>
<td>David continues to walk down street, towards camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Slight low angle.</td>
<td>Amy continues to walk down street with Janice, Amy smiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Charlie walks forward, off camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>Slight angle.</td>
<td>David walks towards screen and speaks to Amy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8 sec.</td>
<td>LS</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>David joins Amy next to their car, as Charlie walks on-screen to greet her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### #1.5 – *Straw Dogs*, Emotional Montage

01:12:20 - 01:12:58  
**Total Duration:** 38 seconds  
**Longest Shot:** 6 seconds  
**Shortest Shot:** < 1 second  
**Average Shot Length:** 1.5 seconds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Camera Angle</th>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.b</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Charlie Venner.</td>
<td>Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td><strong>Superimposition</strong> - Charlie slaps Amy before rape.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Amy and David.</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Footsteps, chatter, party horns.</td>
<td>Am and David walk into the church, past Charlie and Scutt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Little boy.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Boy reaches across a table.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - Charlie and Scutt, as in end of 2.</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Charlie and Scutt watch from the side.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Little boys.</td>
<td>Slight high angle.</td>
<td>Little boys have fun with their party horns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - Amy and David.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Party horns, chatter, dialogue.</td>
<td>Amy and David are seated by the Reverend's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>LS - Reverend.</td>
<td>Low camera height, as if POV from child.</td>
<td>Party horns, chatter.</td>
<td>The Reverend serves food to the children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Shot Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - 2 women.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>2 women enjoy the party.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Little girl.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Little girl blows her party horn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Amy and David.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>David and Amy are seated. David looks off-screen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Little boy.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Boy blows party horn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Another little boy.</td>
<td>Straight, low camera height.</td>
<td>Boy blows party horn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Another little girl.</td>
<td>Straight, low camera height.</td>
<td>Girl eats cake.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Scutt.</td>
<td>Slight low angle.</td>
<td>Flashback - Scutt rapes Amy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Another little boy.</td>
<td>Straight, low camera height.</td>
<td>Little boy blows party horn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Amy.</td>
<td>High angle.</td>
<td>Flashback - Charlie holds Amy down while she is raped.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Boy, as in 19.</td>
<td>Straight, low camera height.</td>
<td>Little boy blows party horn, as in 19.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Amy, as in 20.</td>
<td>High angle.</td>
<td>Flashback - Charlie holds Amy down while she is raped.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Amy and David.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Chatter, horns, dialogue.</td>
<td>Amy looks turns towards the camera, having been stared off-screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Camera Angle</td>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MS - Reverend's wife.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Reverend's wife asks Amy if she would like a drink.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>3 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Amy and David, as in 23.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Amy looks at David as if she is shaken, and agrees to have a drink.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#1.6 – *Straw Dogs*, Emotional/Physical Montage  
01:00:42 - 1:01:22  
Total Duration: 40 seconds  
Longest Shot: 12 seconds  
Shortest Shot: < 1 second  
Average Shot Length: 1.2 seconds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Camera Angle</th>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - Charlie and Amy.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Score, Amy whimpers, Charlie says, “Amy…”</td>
<td>Charlie undresses Amy while he holds her down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - Amy and Charlie</td>
<td>Straight, low camera height.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charlie takes his shirt off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy</td>
<td>High angle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Amy stares at Charlie, who is on top of her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Charlie.</td>
<td>Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charlie continues to take his shirt off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - David.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Flashback</em> - David takes his shirt off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie.</td>
<td>Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Charlie continues to take his shirt off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy's breasts.</td>
<td>High angle, as if POV from Amy. Amy lies still.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MLS - David Straight.</td>
<td>David sits in the hunting field.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie, as in 7. Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie stares at Amy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy's breasts, as in 8. High angle, as if POV from Charlie.</td>
<td>Amy lies still.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - David. Straight.</td>
<td>Flashback - David continues to take his shirt off.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie, as in 10. Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie stares at Amy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie's abdomen. Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie begins to unbuckle his belt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy. Low angle, as if POV from Charlie.</td>
<td>Amy stares at Charlie.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie's abdomen, as in 14. Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie continues to take off his belt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie, as in 13. Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie stares at Amy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy, as in 15. High angle, as if POV from Charlie.</td>
<td>Amy stares at Charlie.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - David, as in 9. Straight.</td>
<td>David sits complacently.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 frame.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie's abdomen, as in 16. Low angle, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie continues to take off his belt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie. Low angle, wide-angle lens, as if POV from Amy.</td>
<td>Charlie leans in towards Amy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Shot Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy.</td>
<td>High angle, as if POV from Charlie.</td>
<td>Amy lies still.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1 frame.</td>
<td>MS - David, as in 12.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>Flashback - David sits on top of Amy in bed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MS - David, as in 19.</td>
<td>Straight.</td>
<td>David sits in the hunting field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>MCU - Amy</td>
<td>High angle, not POV.</td>
<td>Charlie leans on top of Amy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy, as in 25.</td>
<td>High angle, as if POV from Charlie.</td>
<td>Amy lies still.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>&lt; 1 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Charlie.</td>
<td>Extreme high angle, as if POV from Amy, wide-angle lens.</td>
<td>Charlie is on top of Amy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>6 sec.</td>
<td>CU - Amy, as in 27.</td>
<td>High angle, not POV.</td>
<td>Charlie rapes Amy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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