Rooting in and Lighting out

New Hollywood and Genre

The notion that Vietnam could be lost, a view that haunted presidents from Kennedy to Nixon, suggests a worldview that has not fully considered the distinction between John Ford's Southwest and Ho Chi Minh's Hanoi.
Stanley Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History*

The best way to get away from where you are is to root right in.
Prospector (Dean Jagger) in *Vanishing Point*

Even if, as I argued in Chapter Two, *Nashville* includes within it some distinctly materialist challenges to classical models of diegesis and agency, this should not distract us from the film's status as a musical, and the fact that it also operates – knowingly – according to generic coordinates. When Sueleen Gay (Gwen Welles) is forced to resign her ambitions as a singer, in the face of male pressure to perform a striptease, it is hard not to register the parallels with the duress under which Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) is placed towards the end of *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952), when she is forced to sing from behind the curtain. (The crucial difference is, of course, that Sueleen is not triumphantly 'reclaimed' after all.) As Richard Maltby notes disapprovingly, the 1970s 'is the first decade in which film criticism can be said to have had a significant influence on Hollywood production' (1983: 314). The distinction between respectful allusion and parody is, in films of this period, often unclear. David A. Cook suggests that, while 'early Hollywood Renaissance' directors (such as Peckinpah and Kubrick) 'experimented *within* classical genres[, ...] Altman, Bogdanovich and others were interested in revising, "correcting" and/or deconstructing them' (2000: 159, emphasis in the original). Regardless of the motivation behind such

developments, the move towards a knowing manipulation of genres was preva-lent, and for Leo Braudy, such an approach is tantamount to crossing an aesthetic Rubicon; referring in particular to works of the New Hollywood period, he asks, 'what happens to genre films after they attempt to include the theme of their own nature?' ([1976] 2002: 169).

For some, interested in the fate of genre as a social phenomenon, this was part of a broad cultural restructuring. Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, for exam-ple, describe this intense generic self-awareness as something like a 'fall out' from contemporary ideological ruptures, suggesting that 'the close tie between genre films and social ideology means […] that genre films are among the most fragile forms, the most vulnerable to effects of social change' (1990: 76). For Thomas Schatz (1983), the opaqueness of New Hollywood genre films dealt a death blow to genre's ritualistic function. Others have dwelt more on the (gener-ally corrosive) effect of generic reflexivity on dramatic and aesthetic designs. In his far-ranging critique of American cinema of the time, Robert B. Ray suggests that, 'while the traditional stories, heroes, and genres persisted, the movies sub-jected these thematic conventions to increasingly heavy doses of irony, parody and camp' (1985: 256). 'Between 1966 and 1980,' he continues, 'an enormous number of films depended on their audiences' ability to recognize them as overt parodies' (1985: 257), a situation Ray sees as symptomatic of New Hollywood's 'schizophrenic alternation between a developing irony and a reactionary nostal-gia' (1985: 261). One of the strengths of Ray's argument is that he offers a convinc-ing media-historical context for these shifts, particularly in terms of the influence of televised Hollywood classics. Noël Carroll (1982), writing more generally about post-classical Hollywood, presents a slightly different historical case, explaining the growing trend of allusion in relation to – amongst other things – the promi-nence of auteurism and the rise of academically trained directors. Carroll writes: 'The game of allusion could begin; the senders and receivers were in place; the necessary conditions for allusionistic interplay were satisfied' (1982: 55).

From the varying examples and approaches on display here, a compos-ite image of New Hollywood emerges, whereby the notion of genre is at once hugely important and somewhat under threat, as if intense generic reflection prohibited genre from functioning as it 'should'. (It is perhaps important to note how such a narrative paves the way for the re-affirmation of genre in post-*Jaws* Hollywood.) Evidence for this ranges from the theoretically advanced (Jameson 1991: 67) to the cursory and anecdotal (Robert Altman's filmography from the

early 1970s certainly appears to suggest a sustained and systematic engagement with American film genres). But what can ecocriticism bring to this narrative? Firstly, it can help to identify the environmental and materialist implications of generic revisionism, a phenomenon which might have been assumed to be purely discursive. Secondly, ecocriticism can draw attention to new and emerging genres which perhaps require a heightened attention to environmentality in order to identify their coherence as a body of work.

This calls for two different models of genre study. The first emphasizes a genre's fluid and flexible status: its susceptibility and relation to factors beyond the text. The second prioritizes detailed textual study as a means of identifying the common traits within a particular corpus of films. Firstly, I will discuss the historicized fate of a pre-existing genre, the Vietnamization of the western, and then turn to a group of New Hollywood films whose strong generic relationship to one another – as 'fugitive films' – is yet to be properly recognized. The western's famous unmistakability makes it an excellent case study for generic revisions and transitions, and while Steve Neale (2000: 133) has warned of its potential for distorting our understanding of genres in general, the western's ever-present natural imagery and apparent ideological adaptability (French 1977: 24) make it a vital subject for a study such as this. The fugitive film warrants attention for quite different reasons. Firstly, the genre's lack of substantial prehistory, at least in comparison to the western, is itself an important reminder that New Hollywood filmmakers were not solely focused on the revival of past forms. And more importantly, its centrality to New Hollywood is strangely overlooked. Arthur Penn, Sam Peckinpah, Terrence Malick, Robert Altman, Steven Spielberg and Sidney Lumet all contributed to the cycle, and one might even include *Easy Rider, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* in this group too. Writing about the political implications of cinematic space in New Hollywood, Mark Shiel (2007: 92) argues that *Easy Rider* 'exemplified the assertive countercultural conception of space of the day'. When we consider that, for many commentators, it was *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Easy Rider* that 'kicked off' or set the tone for New Hollywood, the importance of the fugitive film comes sharply into focus.

There are, then, solid historical and critical reasons for the study of both westerns and fugitive films, but the gulf between the two – especially with regard to genre theory – cannot be overlooked. To analyse, consecutively, the Vietnamized western (or the Vietnamization of the western) and the fugitive film demands a certain degree of flexibility in terms of how we choose to understand genre. On

the one hand is a historically specific (and academically sanctified) subset of a genre that has been recognized and recycled in the broadest possible terms (as myth and as national narrative), and on the other, a group of films which have tended to be subsumed into other categories (the gangster film, the road movie) but which seem to display a considerable number of common traits. If these differences cannot be successfully reconciled, they can at least be placed in some context.

Different Genres, Different Approaches to Genre

'Vietnamization' was the name given to President Nixon's policy, begun in the late 1960s, of increasing military support for South Vietnamese troops at the same time as reducing US troops. It describes an attempt to yield initiative and responsibility. I use the idea of the 'Vietnamization of the western' to describe the complex influence that this war had on the western genre, a shift which might also have involved – as will be described – a transition of initiative, responsibility and agency. The idea of the Vietnamized western brings with it assumptions of a relatively stable generic structure which has been honed and focused by contemporary events, or even one which has suffered contamination or irreversible transformation. With Vietnamized westerns, then, attention turns towards the nature of such honing and transformation, its textual and contextual features. The fugitive film, on the other hand, is not widely recognized as a genre and so demands more of an attempt to define its core characteristics, in turn raising the difficult question of whether common textual features are enough to constitute a genre. A good place to begin outlining this distinction in a more theoretical sense is with Steve Neale's 'Questions of Genre' (2003), in which the author suggests some differences between his own ideal for genre study and that of Rick Altman, differences which will broadly shape the present chapter. 'Genres do not only consist of films', Neale contends, but also 'specific systems of expectation and hypothesis' (2003: 161) which must be traced to 'industrial and journalistic discourse' (2003: 164). He also argues for a thoroughly historicized appreciation of genre and its 'mutability' (2003: 169): 'For Altman, the role of industrial and journalistic terms is crucial in establishing the presence of generic consistencies but of limited use in defining them' (2003: 164). What Altman sees as an important stepping stone, Neale takes to be the object of study. For Altman, film genres are

contextualized by important social, historical and industrial discourse, whereas for Neale such factors – what he calls 'intertextual relay' (2003: 167) – *are* genres. But how do these different approaches relate to the task at hand, and what properties of theirs lend themselves to studying the fugitive film and the Vietnamized western?

There would be little point in trying to summarize or condense Steve Neale's substantial body of writing on genre into a succinct synopsis, but certain contentions recur consistently and are especially appropriate to a study of the Vietnamization of the western. The first is the notion of genre as process; not an organic life cycle so much as an ever-shifting set of parameters. As Neale describes, 'the repertoire of generic conventions available at any one point in time is always *in* play rather than simply being *re*-played' (2003: 219, emphasis in the original). Related to this is his critique of genre theory (that of Thomas Schatz in particular) that posits variation and change as little more than 'additional extras, inessential options' (2003: 211). As Neale sees it, for the very reason that there is no original, seminal moment in any genre's history which determines its essential characteristics, change is *anything but* a deviation; it is the very being of genre. This in turn links back to Neale's conception of genres as 'specific systems of expectation and hypothesis' (2000: 31), as phenomena which consist of much more than films. According to this approach, industrial, social, aesthetic and journalistic discourse, or 'intertextual relay', all contribute to (rather than simply contextualize) a genre. And – crucially for any study of the Vietnamization of the western – history is never far away; the 'impact of the "real world" is necessarily continuous', writes Neale. 'Its influence can be detected even where genres themselves are at their most self-consciously self-referential' (2003: 213). As has been discussed, New Hollywood is widely thought to have been just such a time.

Neale urges us to interrogate genres as ever-morphing constellations, and my interpretation of Vietnamized westerns strives to do just that. Almost by definition, it assumes the instability of the western. It also assumes the potential impact of contemporary history on film genres and strives to locate that impact in circulating discourse as well as the films themselves. However, it deviates from Neale's notion of genre in one important respect. Vietnamization, as I understand, was not just another politically inspired 'update' of the western, but a process in which the strong emphasis on material environments posed a fundamental challenge to the genre. This challenge, I argue, cannot be characterized as merely reflexive

game-playing, but rather a re-examination – stimulated by the war in Vietnam – of some of the western's core environmental preconceptions.

In 'Questions of Genre', Neale asks that a distinction be made 'between those studies of genres conceived as institutionalized classes of texts and systems of expectation and those studies that use critically or theoretically constructed terms as the basis for discussing classes of films' (2003: 167). If my analysis of Vietnamized westerns answers to the former description, then my analysis of the fugitive film answers to the latter – an approach more in keeping with the work of Rick Altman than Neale. Altman's most influential contribution to genre studies is his 'semantic/syntactic' approach, a method of analysis which pays equal (and simultaneous) attention to the building-block details of a genre (such as its icon-ographic elements) and the structures into which such details are placed. Since Altman introduced this model in 1984, he has built on it, critiqued it and altered it, most significantly by arguing for a third – 'pragmatic' – strand (1999: 207–213). The following analysis of the fugitive film will not attempt to follow the linguistic model developed by Altman (or even attempt to apply his hypothesis of how genres emerge), but will rather follow his lead in examining both the broad strokes and the specific nuances of films in order to ascertain how and why a corpus of works warrants attention as a corpus. Detailing his interest in the importance of industrial discourse as a means rather than an end (referring here specifically to the musical, but as a 'lesson' for genre studies in general), Altman writes: 'Far from seeking to explain the genre or its texts, far from creating a vocabulary appropri-ate both to systematic and historical analysis, Hollywood's version of the musical serves only to locate the genre, rather than provide a method of dealing with its functioning' (1989: 13).

This study of the fugitive film does not attempt to follow the vast and thor-ough methodology spelled out by Altman in *The American Film Musical* (1989) but does focus on the shared affinities between a preselected corpus. In this sense, the study has certain methodological similarities with Stanley Cavell's two genre-focused works, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (1996) and *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (1981). In each, Cavell interrogates the significant correspondences between a relatively small group of films produced in a relatively distinct time period. He explains his understanding of genre not with recourse to the kind of industrial and discursive influences which hold sway in much genre theory – significantly, Cavell classifies a genre's 'fortunes in the rest of the world' as its 'posthistory'

(1981: 28) – but instead describes an expressive and philosophical framework which crystallizes at a particular place and (especially) time: 'it has no history, only a birth' (1981: 28). There is much in Cavell and Rick Altman which is deeply incompatible, but what distinguishes them both from Neale's work on genre – namely, their ultimate focus on a corpus of films – is what shapes the following discussion of the fugitive film, and my attempt to, in Altman's words, 'deal with its functioning'. The functioning of both genres in question can, it seems to me, be more fully understood by asking of them important ecocritical questions regarding characters' relationships with the world in which they live and how individual films foreground and thematize that relationship.

The Vietnamization of the Western

In his review of *The Wild Bunch* in *The Village Voice,* Andrew Sarris (1971) complained of 'those who choose to mimic [Norman] Mailer's insight as to why we are in Vietnam with every two-bit, two-gun epic that comes out of Hollywood' (1971: 448). There is some ambiguity in Sarris's statement about whether he is referring to those producing films, or those interpreting and reviewing them. This ambiguity begins to suggest the complexity inherent in the Vietnamization of the western; where it comes from, what dictates or defines it and what its implications are for the genre. Chroniclers of the western, as well as historians of New Hollywood, invariably stress the profound effect of the Vietnam War on the fate of the genre, as manifested in films such as *The Wild Bunch, Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* (Abraham Polonsky, 1969), *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn, 1970), *Soldier Blue* (Ralph Nelson, 1970), *Ulzana's Raid* (Robert Aldrich, 1972) and *Bad Company* (Robert Benton, 1972). Even if one accepts that the western has a history of shaping itself according to contemporary social concerns, the repercussions for the genre of the USA's disastrous campaign in southeast Asia were considerable – and, for some, terminal. Before investigating the environmental implications of such repercussions, I will discuss some of the ways in which the war is thought to have affected the western, so often seen as the genre most closely aligned with notions of national character and historical progress.

In *The Crowded Prairie* (1998), Michael Coyne follows the western from 1939 to the late 1970s, tracing the genre's changing interpretations and reflections of US American national identity and concluding that Vietnam effectively terminated

its life cycle. At times, Coyne seems to conceive of Vietnamization as a transitional process, as when he describes how, in response to escalating US involvement in Asia, westerns in the 1960s moved away from town settings towards frontier situations and cavalry sagas (1998: 126). Towards the book's end, however, it becomes clear that Vietnamization, as far as Coyne is concerned, transformed the western irreversibly. 'Vietnam has killed the western twice', he argues (1998: 191), firstly by bringing into question the value system of the genre, and secondly by replacing one nation-changing historical moment with another. The first of these is what is meant by 'Vietnamization'; the war, according to Coyne, 'made mockery of long-cherished national concepts of invincibility and righteousness, and the Western was a casualty of the accompanying fallout' (1998: 189). Although Coyne cites specific examples of films deliberately (if obliquely) raising the spectre of Vietnam, he is perhaps more interested in the large-scale undermining of a whole mythic formula, or what Gilbert Adair describes as its annexation (1981: 10).

Stanley Corkin instead identifies a 'shift in emphasis' (2004: 206), and suggests that westerns from the early 1960s displayed a move away from 'the triumphalist narrative of nation that had marked the genre since its inception' (2004: 211), thus implying that the genre could accommodate such transmutations. However, in a significant twist, Corkin also characterizes the genre as a contributing factor to the USA's woeful miscalculations in foreign policy, suggesting that 'the very notion of a New Frontier was at the core of Kennedy's and Johnson's ruinous Vietnam policies' (2004: 247). This idea of a two-way relationship between the war and the genre is also discussed by J. Hoberman, in a piece revealingly entitled 'How the Western Was Lost', who describes it as an 'irresistible' metaphor, noting how the western profoundly influenced the language, preconceptions and actions of US soldiers abroad (1998: 88). Hoberman also, in another context, describes films such as *Little Big Man* and *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* as 'the equivalent of marching for peace beneath a Viet Cong flag' (2003: 265), emphasizing their deliberate editorializing; in this sense, these westerns were not overshadowed by Vietnam so much as directly mobilized by Vietnam.

Richard Slotkin suggests yet another (subtle) variation on Vietnamization when he observes that a spate of 'Mexico westerns' from 1969, although produced prior to revelations about the My Lai massacre, were 'being assimilated' in American cinemas just as those revelations were surfacing (1992: 591). Rather than describing a loss of credibility on the part of the genre as a whole (like Coyne), focusing on thematic changes within westerns (like Corkin) or even

giving a direct commentary (like Hoberman), Slotkin here locates Vietnamization as a shift in the arena of reception; audiences coming to terms with US war crimes necessarily interpreted westerns in the light of such injustices. Paul Kerr, in an article called 'The Vietnam Subtext' (1980), warns against exaggerating the ability of contemporary audiences to concoct such interpretations. Focusing on a scene in *The Missouri Breaks* (Arthur Penn, 1976) in which a shack is firebombed, he is doubtful that viewers would draw any direct links with comparable attacks by US forces in Vietnam, partly because television cameramen during the war had so little access to such actions. Kerr suggests that 'one clearly cannot argue against the possibility of unconscious connotation; it remains a possibility though not, I suspect, very high in the connotative lexicons of Brando, Nicholson, Western, Penn or McGuane fans' (1980: 71).

Kerr aside, there is substantial overlap between these positions, but their subtle differences give some sense of the complexity of Vietnamization. The following analysis does not set out to prove or disprove any of these approaches. Instead, it focuses on the specifically environmental implications of Vietnamization, a process which, I will argue, shifted the genre's relationship with, and conception of, the material environment. I will propose two shifts signalled by Vietnamization, transmutations of established western conventions which significantly change what the western 'does' and how it does it: the successful conquest of the environment is no longer predestined; place is no longer mythical or abstract. These are two of potentially many more such shifts, not all of which would offer such immediate ecocritical interest. What I hope to suggest by investigating them is that Vietnamization is a far more substantial process than a contemporary glossing (affecting, in Altman's terms, not just the semantics but the syntax too), and that it affects the genre in more specific ways than is sometimes suggested by references to a loss of innocence or a reigning cynicism. The Vietnamization of the western, I argue, can be understood as an ecocritical effect.

The Successful Conquest of the Environment Is No Longer Predestined

According to most accounts of Vietnamization, those aspects of the war which 'came back to haunt' the western were racial prejudice, delusions of superiority, the folly of invasion and – in the case of My Lai especially – horrific and indiscriminate violence. Without bringing into question the significance and tragedy of these, it is important to remember that this by no means stands as the whole

picture of US involvement in Vietnam. One missing link, which this chapter takes to be of particular importance, is the topographical and environmental havoc wreaked by the war. (In *Tropic Thunder* (Ben Stiller, 2008), a surprisingly bitter satire of the Hollywood Vietnam film, Danny McBride plays Cody, a chauvinistic and testosterone-fuelled special effects coordinator who takes inordinate pleasure in wreaking havoc on the Vietnamese rural countryside. 'I'm trying to put tiger balm on this jungle's nuts', he says before dropping a huge amount of explosives on the location, and engulfing the ground and trees in flames. Cody is ecstatic with the results: 'Mother Nature just pissed her pants', he crows.) Throughout the conflict, vast quantities of herbicides, such as Agent Orange, were sprayed on crops and other plants in an effort to destroy native food supplies and maximize visibility for aerial observation and attack. A 1976 study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Ecological Consequences of the Second Indochina War*, traces in meticulous detail the environmental impact of US tactics in Vietnam (described in the introduction as 'inescapably anti-ecological' (1976: 10)). Much of this was the result of specific policies – such as the use of anti-plant chemicals and mechanized land clearing – while some was the tragic by-product of military actions, referred to in the study as 'the ecology of disturbance' (1976: 63). 'Chemical anti-plant warfare,' it concludes, 'although not an innovation of the Second Indochina War, was during this conflict employed at such a profligate level that its use has become inseparably associated with it' (1976: 40).

Partly in an effort to limit American casualties, the war was waged largely from above, and in the absence of a credible ground-war strategy, an incredible volume of bombs was dropped on rural Vietnam. In *The Eco Wars* (1989), David Day gives a brief glimpse into the mindset of US forces: 'Entire forests came under "suspicion" as wilful collaborators, and were consequently firebombed and pulverized into swamplands. As one American general pointed out with almost unbelievable understatement in the midst of the Vietnam campaign: "Soldiers can't be expected to be conservationists"' (1989: 132). In *Dispatches* (1978), one of the most celebrated of all Vietnam accounts, Michael Herr describes a similar animosity, albeit one prompted by understandable fear and fatigue:

> *Flying over jungle was almost pure pleasure, doing it on foot was nearly all pain. I never belonged in there. Maybe it really was what its people had always called it, Beyond; at the very least it was serious, I gave up things to it I probably never*

got back. ('Aw, jungle's okay. If you know her you can live in her real good, if you don't she'll take you down in an hour. Under.') Once in some thick jungle corner with some grunts standing around, a correspondent said, 'Gee, you must really see some beautiful sunsets in here,' and they almost pissed themselves laughing. (Herr 1978: 10–11)

The Vietnam War was in no small part an exercise in ecological devastation, and an environmentally traumatic experience, as well as a display of misguided hubris or racial prejudice. (The ironic corollary of ecocidal military tactics is, of course, the acknowledgement of the profound importance of the natural environment to a society.) If the western genre began to shoulder the burden of Vietnam as an inescapable reference point, then its own rich and complicated environmental identity must surely have undergone significant challenge and revision.

The western's environmental character has inevitably attracted ecocritical attention. Deborah A. Carmichael's *The Landscape of Hollywood Westerns* (2006) was one of the first collections of ecocritical film studies and brings together a number of approaches to the question of environmentality in the genre, including studies of politically environmentalist films, landscape discourse, auteurs and film technology. In her introduction, Carmichael suggests that because 'the human response to nature sets up the conflicts of this genre […] landscape and environment establish the parameters of possible exploitation or enjoyment of the American inheritance of land. Turner understood the importance of land and boundaries in national development, and Western films return to these themes' (2006: 4). The Vietnamized western, I believe, disrupts this connection between the western's environmental setting and themes of national development. In such analyses, Turner's 'frontier thesis' is often invoked to legitimize the link, but perhaps Turner's thesis leads down an interpretive cul-de-sac where the natural world, in westerns, always has something of a meta-historical significance, rather than a powerful material agency, or even a contemporary urgency. New Hollywood westerns, whether produced as or interpreted as films about Vietnam, tended towards a geographical specificity not normally associated with the genre, and while this may have dulled their ability to construct elegant national narratives in the tradition of John Ford, it also subjected the genre to a provocative ecocritical interrogation.

There is not sufficient space here to comprehensively describe, even if it were possible, the genre's 'conventional' attitude to the natural environment.

Carmichael's collection, like Murray and Heumann's more recent *Gunfight at the Eco-Coral* (2012), wisely avoids this by attending to a series of thoroughly historicized case studies. However, despite warnings that one film cannot make up a genre, I will examine some of the environmental values and politics at play in *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953), a film which John Saunders (2001) also uses as a focus for genre analysis; he describes it as a film 'which sets out to distil' the 'elusive essence' of the genre (2001: 13).[1] In this distillation, the genre's celebration of America's rugged vastness retains a prominent role, and – as is so often the case with westerns – the environment is simultaneously a theatrical setting and an active player in the film's narrative; the plot of *Shane* is based upon a conflict between hardworking homesteaders and a ruthless cattle baron. The question, then, is not so much whether the natural environment is significant in *Shane* (or whether the environment is significant in the western, according to *Shane*), but rather, what kind of relationship does *Shane* develop between its story, its characters and their environment?

Murray and Heumann position *Shane* according to an ongoing environmentalist debate in the genre, between free-range and fenced farming; as the authors show, these are not metaphorical concepts, but very 'real' subjects for the western (2012: 39–44). I would instead like to look at the opening scene, in which the film establishes some essential coordinates of its environmental sensibility, before 'environmental issues' enter the film's discourse. Shane (Alan Ladd) has been welcomed into the Starrett household and, following a hearty supper, shows his gratitude by (spontaneously) going outside to chop away at the huge tree stump that Joe Starrett (Van Heflin) was labouring at when Shane arrived. Joe soon joins him, and together they succeed. That the two men solidify their friendship in this manner suggests on the part of *Shane* a quickness to understand the natural world as symbolic, separate and conquerable. The allegorical appropriateness of the stump (a longstanding problem for Joe which Shane willingly helps him overcome) is precise; falling within the carefully delineated boundaries of the well-kept garden, the stump's rugged resilience marks it as alien, other; the overcoming of the stump is both progressive and inevitable. Each of these points is further exemplified by discussions later on in the film, regarding the homesteaders' claims on the land. As Joe delivers the rhetorical set piece of the film ('God didn't make all this country for just one man...'), the right to own land is raised to the level of divine entitlement, and the environment's preciousness is articulated in thoroughly anthropocentric terms. Although the land has an immediate

Figure 3.1   Symbolically conquering the environment: *Shane* (Paramount Pictures)

and vital importance for the various homesteaders, these are not the grounds on which Joe convinces them to stay. For the homesteaders, for *Shane*, and to no small extent for the western as a genre, the land generates its importance from what it stands for and is meaningful to the extent that it can be overcome. As is exemplified in the stump-chopping episode, this overcoming is in play, but rarely in doubt.

In films such as *Jeremiah Johnson* (Sydney Pollack, 1972), *Ulzana's Raid, McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971) and *The Wild Bunch,* such an overcoming is perpetually in doubt. If the western presupposes man's inevitable (and desirable) conquest of his environment, these films cloud the issue with doubt, and no small amount of confusion. They are, at least in part, about the impossibility of any such conquest, and the foolishness of imagining it in the first place – an interpretation which might also double up as a verdict on US involvement in Vietnam. *Jeremiah Johnson* is centred on one man, Johnson (Robert Redford), who is determined to embed himself in the environment of the American West, learning to be self-sufficient, and also learning the perilous cost of ignoring the customs and conventions of local inhabitants. The violence inflicted on him (Johnson's wife and adopted child are murdered) is the direct result of geographical hubris; Johnson reluctantly leads the cavalry through a valley he knows to be held sacred. It is significant that he is forced into such a transgression by

the insistence of US Cavalry troops, whose insensitivity to, and ignorance of, the region force Johnson's hand (and steer our sympathy away from them). This staging of military presence as an environmental disruption is also at the heart of *Ulzana's Raid*, in which US Army Scout MacIntosh (Burt Lancaster) accompanies a fresh-faced and naïve Lieutenant (Bruce Davison) in pursuit of an Apache war party, a mission on which they are constantly outwitted. Their tactical shortcomings invariably reveal their relative ignorance of the environment, and so automatically bring into question the Army's right to be there. MacIntosh repeatedly criticizes the Lieutenant's moralizing and double standards and his belief in the Army's divine right to control the territory and impose its own, hypocritical moral code. 'Ain't no sense hating the Apaches for killing', argues MacIntosh. 'That would be like hating the desert 'cause there ain't no water on it.'

One of the central texts of ecocriticism, as both a manifesto and an object of textual study, is Aldo Leopold's 'The Land Ethic', which appears in *A Sand County Almanac* ([1949] 1987). In it, Leopold argues for an expanded sense of moral responsibility, one which includes the biotic as well as the human community. It would be something of a stretch to claim that New Hollywood westerns expressed a principled environmentalism along the lines of Leopold, but aspects of his philosophy nevertheless find some sort of reflection in the Vietnamization of the genre. A land ethic, writes Leopold, 'changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community of such' ([1949] 1987: 204). Films contemplating the failure of environmental conquest, and more specifically those films critiquing the very attempt at such a conquest, play out this distinction between conqueror and member, and almost by default endorse a position similar to Leopold's. The much-discussed elegiac quality of New Hollywood westerns, featuring jaded cowboys or servicemen who have seen better days, might thus be reinterpreted as a shift from conquest to membership. It is a painful but progressive shift, embodied by heroes such as Jeremiah Johnson and MacIntosh.

Jeremiah Johnson and *Ulzana's Raid* critique the genre's presumption of (or fascination with) environmental mastery by offering a profoundly sympathetic view of characters who concede the impossibility of such mastery. *The Wild Bunch* – one of the Mexico westerns that Slotkin positions in relation to the My Lai massacre – takes a different tack, presenting few wholly sympathetic people, but blurring the distinctions between 'civilization' and 'wilderness' to such an

extent that any notion of mastery breaks down completely. In Peckinpah's earlier film, *Ride the High Country* (1962), as two ageing cowboys – Gil (Randolph Scott) and Judd (Joel McCrea) – are riding together, Gil observes that they have arrived at 'a beauty spot of nature'. 'We didn't come here to admire the scenery', replies Judd. This gentle joke would not make much sense in *The Wild Bunch*, where scenery barely seems like a credible concept any more. In *Ride the High Country*, *Shane* and many classical westerns, the civilized home is fundamentally distinct from its surroundings. Windows and thresholds take on considerable significance precisely because they negotiate separate phenomena; whatever exists outside is – almost automatically – a threat. *Shane*, a meticulously framed film, offers countless examples of this, as when Shane first sees Marian (Jean Arthur) through her kitchen window; and in *Ride the High Country*, the villainy of the Hammond gang is demonstrated by their effrontery in occupying the Knudsen homestead and firing from its windows and doors. This is another effective moment which, significantly, would make no sense in *The Wild Bunch*, where wandering and dwelling, wilderness and hearth, invariably blur.

When, for example, Pike's (William Holden) gang visit Angel's (Jaime Sanchez) village in Mexico, the scene begins with a famished dog scrounging amongst what look like ruins; has the gang arrived at a 'place', or are they still traversing the landscape? A dissolve then takes us to the village scene proper, but still the boundaries are barely distinguishable. Women wash and cook, surrounded by children, but they are outside, with kitchen shelves mounted incongruously on an outdoor wall. Pike and the Gorch brothers (Warren Oates and Ben Johnson) are warmly welcomed, but the hospitality is conducted outdoors. If the inevitable convergence of mankind and nature is here at its most idyllic, the film's climax shows that idyll's horrific inverse. Once again, the gang descend on a dwelling whose perimeters are mere gestures, but now hospitality is replaced by, at first, suspicion, then brutal slaughter (Angel's throat is cut), and finally mechanized carnage. By refusing to confine security and violence to their normal generic locations, *The Wild Bunch* makes a mockery of the idea that westerners might ever hope to (or even want to) overcome their surroundings. American soldiers in Vietnam faced the bewildering task of identifying threats and opportunities in an unfamiliar and daunting territory, and the depiction of an environment which bleeds between normally distinguishable spaces should be considered an important, if subtle, feature of the Vietnamization of the western. Conquest is not only unlikely, but inconceivable.

Figure 3.2   Indeterminate boundaries: *The Wild Bunch* (Warner Bros. / Seven Arts)

Place Is No Longer Mythical or Abstract

In *Geographic Perspectives on America's Past* (1979), David Ward writes of the tradition in American culture for developing a relationship with nature characterized by unhelpful extremes, such as fear and awe, and invariably based upon nationalistic ideology first and topographical realities second. Ward's critique is concerned not so much with environmental ethics as with questions of scale and nuance. He explains:

> *National aspirations or ideologies prevalent at a particular time affect the images or interpretive schemes which express the American identity in terms of large scale perspectives on environment and landscape. These images and schema rarely reveal the ambiguities and conflicts which are also apparent in the American scene, nor do they define environments or localities on a scale appropriate to the evaluation of human responses to new surroundings. (1979: 15)*

Vietnamized westerns were – I will argue, *pace* Ward – relatively alive to the 'ambiguities and conflicts' inherent in navigating a difficult environment, altering their scale by generating a more immediate and localized frame of reference. Because, to adopt Ward's phraseology, the 'ideologies prevalent' in New Hollywood were generally critical of US intervention in Vietnam, they were also critical of the traditionally unambiguous 'images and schema' which underpinned such intervention. In other words, the Vietnamization of the western attempted to correct the environmental and geographical generalizations Ward takes to task. In Andrew

Sarris's review of *The Wild Bunch*, quoted above, he says of the opening sequence that 'the obvious parallel with Vietnam is clouded by the subtler ambiguities that creep into any violent confrontation' (1971: 450). I will suggest that the Vietnam parallel is not only effective as a like-for-like comparison, dependent on the articulation of a crystal-clear political message, but that it carries a demystifying and particularizing power which seriously destabilizes the western's traditional use of space and place. For, as Andrew Britton explains, the western is not accustomed to particularity and specificity: 'the ideological conflicts and tensions embodied in the genre [...] do not correspond to real historical conflicts, but there is, nevertheless, a nonsymmetrical fit between them such that the development of the one may conduce dangerously to the appearance of certain elements of the other' ([1981] 2008: 88). I understand the Vietnamization of the western to be an example of this potentially destabilizing alignment, and one in which the 'certain elements' (to which Britton alludes) that become too closely correspondent are best understood ecocritically.

'Places in movies', writes Joseph W. Reed, 'are located in our cosmos or in the cosmos of the movie – or else in a blend of the two. For instance, when John Ford moves the cavalry or the stagecoach or the wagon train round and round in Monument Valley it is not moving through Arizona, nor does he want us to think of it there' (1989: 95). As Reed reminds us here, the western has a strange relationship with place. It is both defined by location and reluctant to be restricted to geographic particularities, endlessly fascinated by the dynamics of West–East clashes but largely ambivalent about distinctions *within* the West. Vietnamization, perhaps unsurprisingly, makes this relationship even stranger. On the one hand adding another layer of confusion about the setting of the film, Vietnamization simultaneously has a clarifying, solidifying effect; it urges us to interpret the action as happening in a verifiable place, rather than on a mythological plane. If the traditional western and its locations could be seen as providing metaphors for America at large, what happens when that side of the metaphorical equation is replaced by a specific contemporary circumstance? The particularity of the Vietnam situation doubles back, and westerns are subsequently more particular about their explicit subject matter too. So, when connections are drawn between the massacres depicted in westerns such as *Little Big Man* and *Soldier Blue* and comparable US atrocities in Vietnam, the impact is not one-way. The historical tragedy is particularized: the massacres are instigated and suffered by individual people in historically actual places – the

western can no longer operate according to the broad historical strokes that were most natural to it.

In January 1970, the *Calgary Herald* ran a piece assessing the political pertinence of *Soldier Blue*. It begins as follows: 'And what has the US Cavalry vs. Indians tale of Joseph E. Levine's presentation of *Soldier Blue* to do with the age of Aquarius? "A helluva lot," says the star of the film, newcomer Peter Strauss, "since it's about youth, love, minorities and un-just war"' ('Star Says Film Still Pertinent', 10 January 1970: 56). Molly Plowright of the *Glasgow Herald* concurred, describing how the film's controversially violent climax 'expresses in an appalling, blood-soaked climax what so many feel about Vietnam' (1971: 8).[2] *Soldier Blue* follows the story of the passionate and worldly-wise Cresta (Candice Bergen) as she educates the naïve and hapless Honus (Peter Strauss). Honus, who begins as a proud and patriotic soldier, is an embodiment of all that is ignorant and simplistic in the western, and he is gradually convinced of the depravity inherent in the code he once swore by. Honus's lesson is at the same time a lesson for the western, and thus a lesson for the audience of the western, addressing their generically grounded assumptions and prejudices. The western, in the guise of Honus, is contained within *Soldier Blue*, and is forced to come to terms with a humbling material reality.

The climax of this process, singled out by Plowright and many other review-ers, takes the form of a massacre that not only strives for graphic reality in its depiction of horrifying violence, but is itself based on an actual historic episode, the infamous Sand Creek massacre of 1864. The whole film is punctuated by moments of chastisement for Honus, as his hopelessly romanticized outlook on the West is systematically undermined. A brief snapshot of these goes some way towards communicating how determined *Soldier Blue* is to ground Honus in a material – as opposed to a mythical and ritualistic – realm. During their first meet-ing, Cresta shocks Honus by casually taking off her clothes, because 'it's as hot as hell'; Cresta instructs Honus not to hang around the battlefield making elegiac speeches about the fallen, because it is getting dark; Honus foolishly gets trapped by Cheyenne warriors, and only manages to repel them thanks to Cresta's inter-vention; Cresta, starving, spots a goat, which Honus insists on shooting himself – and misses; Honus seriously endangers himself and Cresta by ritualistically burning a wagon full of stolen rifles, which are destined for use against US cavalry ('What do you want, a medal?' is Cresta's bitter rebuke); following the brutal massacre, Cresta (a dead child in her arms) looks up at Honus accusingly, asking, 'Got a prayer, Soldier Blue? A nice poem?'. It is hard to imagine a more thorough

refutation of the western's moral code, ranging as it does from the niceties of social etiquette to fundamental tenets of loyalty, faith and duty. And most significantly for this analysis, each instance signals a trust in physical practicalities and actualities over and above the hollowness of prayers, codes and ungrounded values. 'This is happening, here and now' is Cresta's recurrent conviction. If the Vietnamized western had a mantra, perhaps that would be it. At the final massacre, the nature of Honus's tough lesson could not be more aptly expressed; where he once muttered received platitudes, he now vomits.

If the Vietnamized western reacts against the genre's traditionally abstract or mythological characterizations of place, it is a reaction most clearly evident in the closing moments of *Soldier Blue*. As the grossly victorious cavalry leave the battlefield an elaborate crane shot turns away from them and moves downward, before tracking along – at ground level – a makeshift graveyard. We hear the following narration:

> *On November 29 1864, a unit of Colorado cavalry numbering over seven hundred men attacked a peaceful Cheyenne village at Sand Creek, Colorado. The Indians raised an American flag, and a white flag of surrender. Nevertheless the cavalry attacked, massacring five hundred Indians, more than half of whom were women and children. Over one hundred scalps were taken, bodies dismembered, plus numerous reports of rape.*

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (John Ford, 1949) also features a voice-of-God narrator opening and closing a story about the US Cavalry, and like *Soldier Blue* it makes an historical example of their actions. And yet these superficial similarities only make the differences between the films more telling. Here are the closing words of Ford's film:

> *So here they are, the dog-faced soldiers, the regulars, the fifty-cents-a-day professionals, riding the outposts of the nation. From Fort Reno to Fort Apache, from Sheridan to Stark, they were all the same, men in dirty-shirt blue, and only a cold page in the history books to mark their passing. But wherever they rode, and whatever they fought for, that place became the United States.*

What is particularly important here is not so much the stark distinction between (revisionist) critique and (classical) celebration, but rather the terms that that are

taken up to argue each point. In *Yellow Ribbon,* we are invited to think less about individual places or actions than about a general sense of historical progress. What we have just seen may not have actually happened anywhere, the film suggests, but its broad spirit permeated a whole period and a vast country. *Soldier Blue,* in arguing that the US military must be held accountable for its physical and tangible actions (historical and contemporary), regardless of the nation's vague ideals, turns to specifics. The final crane shot, moving down from the cavalry towards the graves, also wills the western to remain (or become) accountable to its grounded, literal source.

To return to the evocative language of the *Glasgow Herald* review: 'So it's farewell to John Ford, the greatest cavalry director of them all, his romanticism with its yellow ribbons fading in the West, and down to the severed limbs and spurting blood of actual massacre' (Plowright 1971: 8).

The Fugitive Film

Vincent Canby, writing in *The New York Times* in 1974, drew attention to what he saw as an emerging narrative trend in Hollywood cinema. The article was called 'Fascinated with Young Couples on the Lam', and Canby's description began as follows:

> *Two by two they ravage the landscape, drinking soda pop and chewing enough gum to stick a bull elephant to the sidewalk. Children-on-the-run, aliens in their own lands, bringing out the worst in the prose of the Sunday supplement writers and whipping up the imagination of a restless citizenry. By some odd coincidence the three best American films to open in New York so far this year are about young couples who go beyond the law as easily and heedlessly as people embarking on summer vacations. (1974: 115)*

The affinities between *Badlands, Thieves Like Us* (Robert Altman, 1974) and *The Sugarland Express* (Steven Spielberg, 1974), Canby's three examples, amount to far more than an 'odd coincidence' and instead go some way towards constituting a coherent cycle or genre: the fugitive film. The importance of the fugitive film to New Hollywood soon becomes evident when one considers how comprehensively it encompasses many key tropes and themes of the period: intense

generational conflict, countercultural ideologies, ambivalent depictions of violence and loose and inconclusive narratives. Thomas Elsaesser's New Hollywood diagnosis in 'The Pathos of Failure' ([1975] 2004), although concerned with the 'journey motif' in quite a general sense, posits a number of fugitive films as key representative examples. Approaching this genre ecocritically, I will look at the way the fugitive film has at its centre questions of geography and habitation, which in turn allows us to rethink the much-touted 'rebellious spirit' of New Hollywood and its invocation of hippie sensibilities as something akin to an environmental sensibility.

Relatively little has been written on the fugitive film. An article by Marsha Kinder (1974) in *Film Quarterly* considers some of the wider implications of those same three films discussed by Canby, and offers something of a 'compare and contrast' approach with other contemporary trends and cycles, particularly the cop movie. (The study thus places a significant amount of emphasis on figures of law enforcement and not just the fugitives themselves.) Kinder also stresses the strange brand of nostalgia permeating the films, which are all set in the relatively recent past, and ultimately sees them all as variations on the 'original' of *Bonnie and Clyde* (while still recognizing prior models such as *You Only Live Once* (Fritz Lang, 1937)). The clearest generic antecedent of the fugitive film is almost certainly film noir, or at least a subset of noir. Frank Krutnik traces a number of 1940s crime-film cycles, including 'the outlaw-couple film' (1991: 213–226). Although he restricts his study to this decade and emphasizes themes of law and order, Krutnik identifies certain characteristics which point towards the kind of ecocritical study that will be performed here on the New Hollywood incarnation of the fugitive film. For example, discussing *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950) – perhaps the most direct influence on *Bonnie and Clyde* – Krutnik suggests that the central couple are characterized as 'forcefully carnal', observing how other characters within the film regard them as animal-like; elsewhere, he notes how the mise-en-scène of *Shockproof* (Douglas Sirk, 1949) stages a transition 'away from the work and home spaces which had dominated earlier, to location-shot scenes set in transitional spaces' (1991: 219). In the scheme of Krutnik's study, these are little more than asides, but they do offer an important reminder that the fugitive film, although clearly interested in socio-cultural themes of criminality, class, institutional corruption and gender politics – in her study, Kinder concludes that the fugitives' rebellion 'is culturally determined' (1974: 10) – also has a tendency towards questions of naturalness.

Another aspect of the fugitive film singled out by Krutnik, at least in *Shockproof,* is the instability and erasure of identity, which features more prominently in an essay on the fugitive film by Corey K. Creekmur. In 'On the Road and On the Run: Fame and the Outlaw Couple in American Cinema' (1997), Creekmur argues that the fugitive film has curious but significant parallels with the show musical; they have similar structures which fluctuate between movement and stasis, they both offer the simple pleasure of watching two strong individuals team up and work together, and they display comparable anxieties about public recognition, be it fame or infamy. He goes on to suggest that later fugitive films such as *Wild at Heart* (David Lynch, 1990) and *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994) 'acknowledge and perhaps satirize a society in which fame and infamy are finally indistinguishable' (1997: 101), taking to an extreme an interest in communication technology which was present, if latently, throughout the genre's history. The second part of this chapter will examine something akin to 'technophobia' in New Hollywood fugitive films and argue that this tendency, rather than simple anti-establishment posturing, actually suggests an acute concern with issues of environmental entitlement. Before that, it is necessary to identify a little more clearly what constitutes a fugitive film, and what aspects of the genre call for an ecocritical appraisal.

Fugitive films have at their centre a small team, often a heterosexual couple (*Thelma & Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) is a significant exception to prove the rule), whose commitment to one another grows stronger and stronger in direct relation to their worsening fate. As circumstances conspire against the couple, the interpersonal relations seem to solidify before our eyes, in conscious defiance of social judgements. Describing what she sees as the dominance of melodrama in Hollywood cinema, Linda Williams identifies one key feature of this mode as the recognition of the hero's 'hidden or misunderstood virtue' (1998: 54). The examples she offers – Andrew Becket (Tom Hanks) revealing his torso to a jury in *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) and Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson) breaking down under the weight of remorse and regret in *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) – both stage that recognition as happening, decisively, *within* the film. Fugitive films offer an interesting variation on this, whereby societal judgement is hedged or fudged; 'normal people' may be won over, but figures of authority invariably are not. (An interesting variation on this is the kidnapped policeman in *The Sugarland Express,* whose physical closeness to the outlaws provides him with a privileged view of their goodness.) The emotional adventures

traced in *Badlands, Thieves Like Us, Bonnie and Clyde, Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975) and *The Sugarland Express,* to name but a few, are brought to a close by figures of social authority, the mechanical automization of their behaviour serving to underline the attractive spontaneity and naturalness of the couple.

However, it would be misleading, and unhelpfully simplistic, to suggest that the films endorse crime as romantic and condemn forces of law and order as blandly repressive; after all, it is not in the act of committing a crime that the couple prove themselves worthy of our affection – the crimes are as often as not presented as lapses or freakish transgressions, rather than decisive actions. Instead, it is the physical movement beyond repressive environments that these films endorse and celebrate. The couple's flight (or at least their desire to flee, in *Dog Day Afternoon*) is a recognition on the part of the film that power operates spatially, and it forces the characters to become increasingly aware of and sensitive to their environments as they flee socio-spatial repression. Vivid examples include Kit (Martin Sheen) fishing in *Badlands* or Bowie (Keith Carradine) spending the night hugging up to a dog in *Thieves Like Us*; 'roughing it', as an heroic trajectory, demands a good degree of environmental sensitivity, or at least a realization of its importance. In his ecocritical interpretation of American road movies, Pat Brereton describes *Easy Rider* and its ilk as a genre in which nature is 'portrayed as a utopian space for narcissistic self-fulfilment or, alternatively, a site of paranoia' (2004: 105); in the fugitive film, there is instead an emphasis on 'natural' as a mode of behaviour rather than a location. These are films in which the qualitative differences between different sites are not as meaningful as the manner in which people choose to engage with those sites.

Fleeing Sites of Repression

When fugitives flee, they tend to flee a lifestyle of order and control and immerse themselves in something quite different. Jim Thompson gives a sense of this new lifestyle in richly suggestive terms in his novel *The Getaway*, which Sam Peckinpah filmed in 1972:

> *Flight is many things. Something clean and swift, like a bird skimming across the sky. Or something filthy and crawling; a series of crablike movements through figurative and literal slime, a process of creeping ahead, jumping sideways, running backward. It is sleeping in fields and river bottoms. It is bellying for miles*

along an irrigation ditch. It is back roads, spur railroad lines, the tailgate of a wildcat truck, a stolen car and a dead couple in lovers' lane. It is food pilfered from freight cars, garments taken from clotheslines; robbery and murder, sweat and blood. The complex made simple by the alchemy of necessity. ([1958] 2005: 111)

We are given here a strong sense of the spatial and environmental experience of the fugitive; the escape is not just an exercise in social exile, but a geographical experience also. That the films' characters turn to this is, of course, significant, but it should also alert us to the importance of what they choose to abandon and reject; what, and where, are these people fleeing from, and what does that tell us about their (notoriously vague) desires? When the fugitive films are looked at alongside one another, it soon becomes clear that what I will call the sites of repression are invariably characterized as artificial and physically restrictive – they generate frustration and alienation through a rigid control of space and movement, thereby prompting the fugitives to seek the opposite of this in their subsequent escape/quest/journey. The never-ending lines of identical rubbish bins in the opening scenes of *Badlands* and the prison complex in *The Sugarland Express* are clear examples of this. The geographer David Harvey argues that 'the intersecting command of money, time and space forms a substantial nexus of social power that we cannot afford to ignore' (1990: 226). Fugitive films critique this 'nexus of social power', and this critique has significant ecocritical implications. These films identify the arbitrariness of 'conventional' space–time rules, reminding us that top-down structures need not have the final say on our environmental behaviour. Describing how medieval merchants first discovered the now ubiquitous concept of 'the price of time', Harvey paints a picture which chimes resonantly with the dynamic of the fugitive film: 'Symbolized by clocks and bells that called workers to labour and merchants to market, separated from the "natural" rhythms of agrarian life, and divorced from religious significations, merchants and masters created a new "chronological net" in which daily life was caught' (1990: 228).

Jim Thompson's description of flight, although some way from what might be thought of as 'agrarian life', operates according to a similar distinction. Fittingly, the opening-credit sequence of Sam Peckinpah's adaptation of *The Getaway* (1972) is perhaps the starkest example of how fugitive films depict an initial environment utterly void of such 'natural' instinct. The very first shot is of a deer

looking into the camera, framed in such a way that we have no idea about the setting or location, other than that the deer is on grass. Then, after successive cuts to more and more deer, the camera reveals fences, walls and an observation tower, culminating in a slow zoom out which allows us to see the vast prison complex in which the animals are caged. The final zoom out is accompanied by a crescendo of harsh, industrial sounds, the origin of which is not revealed until a short while later, and yet the way in which this noise audibly overpowers the animal sounds ensures that we draw connections between the imprisonment we see and the relentless utility we hear. What is perhaps most interesting about this first minute or so is the trouble taken to articulate repression as an anti-natural force, something based on borders and barriers which operate over and against (presumably innocent) creatures. There is nothing exceptional about a prison appearing as a restrictive institution, but there are different ways of envisioning that restriction – sometimes the emphasis might be on sub-cultural norms and rituals, or on the rough discipline handed out by prison officials. Both of these play a part in the development of this sequence in *The Getaway*, but the emphasis on spatial control is unmistakable. One particularly vivid sequence cuts between lines of prisoners being herded through a gate onto a line of trucks, guards mounting horses in order to surround and escort the trucks, and Doc (Steve McQueen) growing ever more frustrated with a game of chess – which he despondently abandons. Its unforgiving grid is presumably not serving its purpose as an enjoyable distraction, but instead reminding him of his predicament.

The equivalent predicament in *Aloha, Bobby and Rose* (Floyd Mutrux, 1975) is nothing like as stark as a prison cell, and is more the accumulation of mundane and irritating frustrations than containment as such, but the overall dynamic is of a piece with *The Getaway*. Bobby (Paul Le Mat) has a soul-destroying job and looming debts, while Rose (Diane Hull) faces the daily challenges of single parenthood. Even less so than most fugitive couples, they are not drawn to the 'rhythms of agrarian life', and yet it is nevertheless significant that while on an errand for his boss, it is a sudden and unexpected downpour of rain which proves the catalyst for Bobby 'finding' Rose, and for their adventure to begin. In comparison to *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Sugarland Express* and other fugitive films, *Aloha* has a curiously defeatist tone, the agony–ecstasy dynamic of the genre tipping very much in favour of agony. This must partly be attributed to the fact that the couple enjoy a sense of physical escape only very briefly. During these scenes, the couple – and the camera – are continually bathed in sunlight, providing a kind

of visual 'answer' to the pervasive neon lights which dominate the opening (and ending) of the film. In one sequence, the couple's drive is delayed as a flock of sheep crosses the road; no direct problem arises, but Bobby's impatience is ominous. Never an empathetic character, his inability to embrace adventure hinders the buoyant emotional trajectory which is normally a feature of the fugitive film, and it is glimpsed most clearly in these small gestures of annoyance, of unwillingness to adjust to new places and new environments. Bobby was aware enough of the problem, but seems oddly unwilling to embrace the solution.

The establishment of repressiveness in *Bonnie and Clyde* is subtle and succinct, and yet it still holds a good deal of sway over the drama that follows. 'One of the many pleasures of viewing *Bonnie and Clyde*', suggests Matthew Bernstein, 'resides in appreciating how much of the film's density and complexity can be related back to this opening scene' (2000: 101). The short scene begins in Bonnie's bedroom and shows Bonnie (Faye Dunaway) looking for something to distract her; we see a close-up of her putting on lipstick, as if preparing for an adventure of some sort, only to learn that she is in fact naked, and with nowhere to go and nothing to do. She lies on her bed, beating her hand against the bed frame. (The room and the bed look curiously similar to Holly's in *Badlands*.) Factory sounds can be faintly heard, not unlike those that dominate the opening of *The Getaway*, and it is only when Bonnie looks out of the window that she finds any hope of something 'better'. Clyde (Warren Beatty), for his part, has something of the guardian angel about him in the early stages of the film, appearing magically to save Bonnie from boredom, and even bringing with him a rich understanding of what Bonnie wants to escape. With a strange mix of arrogance and tenderness, he diagnoses everything that is wrong with her life, from her monotonous job to her unhappy record with men, summarizing her malaise as a case of spatial frustration. 'So you go on home and you sit in your room and you think "when, and how, am I ever gonna get away from this?" And now you know.'

But much is revealed – physically, environmentally – even before Clyde makes this explicit. In the opening scene, after Bonnie comes to the front of her house to flirtatiously admonish Clyde, they begin to wander along the street, and the film soon cuts to them walking along the town's Main Street. Their movements are at once playful and aimless, full of pauses, diversions and sidesteps, and the suggestion is that Clyde's presence allows Bonnie to view her everyday environment anew. These moments bring to mind Michel de Certeau's observations in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) concerning walking and its implications: 'Walking,

Figure 3.3   'A mobile organicity': *Bonnie and Clyde* (Warner Bros. / Seven Arts)

which alternately follows a path and has followers, creates a mobile organicity in the environment' (1984: 99). Walking emerges as an environmentally creative activity, even a statement:

> [I]f it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g. by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements. (1984: 98)

De Certeau is here referring specifically to urban life, and the potential for pedestrians to creatively resist the repressive spatial strictures of the city. I would argue, however, that a similar pattern of spatial resistance can be seen in the fugitive film, even if cars usually replace feet and the resistant action happens without, as opposed to within, the city. Bonnie and Clyde's meander in this sense becomes a rather poetic prologue – similar ones can be seen in *The Getaway* and *Zabriskie Point* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1970) – setting the tone for their rebellious spatial practices: driving wildly across fields and hiding out in makeshift rural dens. It is not necessary to catalogue all the moments in *Bonnie and*

Clyde where nature acts as a refuge for these alienated heroes. It is important to point out, in fact, that the film complicates this dynamic by having Bonnie begin to pine for her home and mother as events get out of control (although when she does briefly flee the gang, this takes the form of Bonnie running wildly through a wheat field as Clyde and the gang slowly patrol along the road – a rebellion within a rebellion). However, it can justifiably be suggested that Bonnie is seduced by the thrill of transgressing boundaries which are at once physical and social, and that this liberation is concomitant with a deepening connection with natural environments.

It is not insignificant that the film's bloody climax generates a good deal of its shock from the fact that the offending guns are hidden behind bushes – it is the sight of twitching leaves which prompts the penny to drop for Clyde. Bonnie and Clyde are clearly at ease on this open country road, lovingly sharing an apple, and their betrayal takes on a greater degree of bitterness because of the site of the execution. One imagines that if they had been gunned down on a city street, their fate would not seem quite so cruel. Moments before their death, Bonnie and Clyde look into the sky and smile at the sight of birds flying. There is every reason to interpret this symbolically (not least following the eating of the apple), and yet the moment makes perfect sense with regard to the rest of the film in its most immediate and basic rendering; the sight of birds flying freely in beautiful sunlight makes Bonnie and Clyde happy. This small moment, much more than the (in) famous shooting that immediately follows, offers an important insight into the ambiguous hopes and motivations of not just Bonnie and Clyde, but the many fugitives who would follow them.

New Hollywood fugitive films are of course not unique in playing upon these dialectics of good-nature-versus-bad-urbanization or individual-liberation-versus-social-conformity. If anything, these distinctions seem not only common-place but also potentially problematic from an ecocritical point of view – the natural world as a source of thrills is hardly a conscientiously ecological premise. However, what is present in these films is not a simple preference for innocent nature over corrupt civilization, but rather a frustration with socially authoritative definitions of space, and a desire to regain some sort of agency – even responsibility – with respect to our surroundings. A brief counter-example will help illustrate the difference between the two. At the climax of *The Asphalt Jungle* (John Huston, 1950), Dix (Sterling Hayden) collapses and dies of gunshot wounds in the incongruous setting of Kentucky farmland, surrounded by horses. Like the

fugitive heroes, Dix longs for a life away from that which he has known, and he too flees the city in order to find that new start. And yet there are important differences; he seeks nature as a prize, a narcissistic confirmation of his goodness and a nostalgic reclamation of his family's history. It is an end rather than a means; a trophy rather than a process. This is not to condemn *The Asphalt Jungle* for its use of nature motifs, but rather to contrast that very use with what seems to be happening in the fugitive films, which generate a kind of ecological energy from the way nature is sought but never grasped. In this genre, nobody becomes 'at one with nature', like Jeremiah Johnson, but they seem to strive for new environmental experiences. They do so clumsily and unwisely, subconsciously and inadvertently, but the films provide a structure whereby the attempt is clear to see. In fugitive films, the natural world has important qualities which are systematically denied us in industrial capitalism, but those qualities are perhaps not to be won or obtained. *Bonnie and Clyde* and the films that followed show a lifestyle which demands the utmost environmental sensitivity – and we are invited to endorse that lifestyle.

Seeing and Controlling the Environments

Corey K. Creekmur suggests that a fear of the act of naming and identification runs throughout the fugitive film (1997: 97). I would like to develop that slightly, and propose that *the means of identification* are themselves seen as threatening and even morally regressive. Media, aerial transport and surveillance combine to form a kind of unholy trinity, appearing in the fugitive film as predatory, inhumane and fundamentally unnatural.[3] More often than not, these three become almost interchangeable, each one essentially bypassing time and (especially) space in order to exert power over those who journey across the land more directly. Analysing the importance of this trend in the fugitive film, the following will draw on the work of Paul Virilio, especially his interest in the surveillance aesthetic in cinema, as well as a number of theorists concerned with the political implications of landscape aesthetics.[4] Although such approaches help to contextualize some important features of the fugitive film – those relating to environment and entitlement – they tend to assume the complicity of an image or film with optical/environmental subjugation, and perhaps underestimate the potential films have for containing or staging such subjugation and ultimately positioning themselves against it.

One can see this at work in, for example, *Dirty Mary Crazy Larry* (John Hough, 1974), in which a determined sheriff pursues three criminals on the run. He does not simply chase them, however, and there is great significance in the *manner* of the pursuit; he constantly consults maps in order to plan their entrapment, constantly barks orders (both real and diversionary) through the police radio and eventually takes to the skies in a helicopter. The fugitives themselves are desperately trying to reach a densely forested area in the hope that the trees will provide cover for them. In an interesting twist, after the sheriff has abandoned his aerial pursuit for lack of fuel, he resorts to a more subtle plan: sending out false radio messages to police officers pursuing in cars, the sheriff tricks the fugitives (whom he knows have access to the radio communication) into believing that they are in much greater danger of being caught than they actually are. Mary (Susan George), one of the fugitives, who is acting as their navigator, desperately scans the map in search of a way out, until Deke (Adam Roarke) – the 'brains of the outfit' – realizes that the trap is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. 'You actually seen any of these units?' he asks his companions, and of course they have not. The access to police radio, which the gang thought was such a coup, actually turns out to be a hindrance, and the map a dangerous distraction. This triumph depends entirely upon the fugitives having absolute faith in their own immediate understanding of the environment, a faith which trumps the pernicious trickery employed by the authorities.

One of the most striking images in *Dirty Mary* is that of the sheriff's helicopter flying almost at ground level in an attempt to overpower and intimidate the fugitives in their car. There is something perverse about seeing these two 'species' of transport, these two separate modes of moving within the environment, clash as equals. This odd mismatch is even more stark in *Figures in a Landscape* (Joseph Losey, 1970), whose opening scene involves a helicopter (the pilots are mysterious to us) chasing down two convicts, who are trying to escape on foot. At certain points, the helicopter gets close enough almost to touch its prey, and once again there is something deeply strange and somewhat terrifying about this prospect. And yet, curiously enough, it is in these moments that the helicopter seems most confused, almost redundant; in both films, it flails around, not able to actually carry through its threatened capture. The helicopter is a technology for the control and surveillance of space, rather than engagement with action and place. Paul Virilio, in *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* ([1989] 2009), is inevitably drawn to *Figures in a Landscape* as an important example of military aesthetics:

> *Combat here is a game in which all the instruments take part in the saturation of space. Those who conduct the hunt visually are concerned to annul space, first on board their means of transport, then with their guns. As for the escapees, they use their weapons not so much to destroy as to establish a distance: they live only in what separates them from their pursuers, they can survive only through pure distance, their ultimate protection is the continuity of nature as a whole. (Virilio [1989] 2009: 25)*

Virilio focuses his attention on the importance of the helicopter with regard to the war in Vietnam which was, of course, raging on in 1970. This is a vital and entirely convincing connection (which holds up equally well with *Dirty Mary*), and yet I would suggest that it is important to acknowledge that those films mobilizing this conflict between different spatial philosophies invariably posit themselves on the side of the pursued rather than the pursuer, a nuance which perhaps gets lost in Virilio's efforts to establish the complicity between cinema, spectatorship and militarism. Taking his cue from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Virilio laments the breakdown of a relationship between what is seeable and what is touchable, a bond 'ruined by the banalization of a certain teletopology' (1994: 7). The present study builds on Virilio's interest in the environmental politics of surveillance (but not his damning of the medium per se), and finds comparable concerns in the fugitive film.

Zabriskie Point makes the bold move of temporarily allowing the fugitive to play the game of empowered voyeur, and knowingly brings out the sexual politics of such empowerment. Mark (Mark Frechette), a runaway radical student (who may or may not have shot a police officer) steals a plane and then, for his amusement, harasses a young woman, Daria, by flying dangerously close to her car. The scene consciously invokes the famous sequence from *North by Northwest* in which Roger O. Thornhill (Cary Grant) is pursued and attacked by a plane while isolated in a deserted landscape. I deliberately describe the culprit as 'a plane' because, as far as the scene is in concerned, there is no identifiable person to speak of, and the anonymity of the attack is central to its tension. For Daria in *Zabriskie Point* that same anonymity is temporarily frightening, but it is soon broken. Before too long, Mark drops a T-shirt from the plane as a playful token of affection, resigning his vertical authority, and when Daria picks it up from the desert ground, she smiles and uses it to wave up at Mark. The gesture marks a transition from harassment to flirtation and affection, and significantly does so

by introducing a physical, tangible item of exchange between the two – exactly what is lacking in the strict subject–object relations exemplified by landscape aesthetics and critiqued in the fugitive film. In the words of Michel Foucault, panoptical discipline has 'the precise role of introducing insuperable asymmetries and excluding reciprocities' (Rabinow 1986: 212). The reciprocity of the shirt is, after all, the means by which Mark manages to communicate to Daria that he is somehow 'on her side', and that his position of topographical power is just a little game; the real him is not so removed, not really complicit in the mechanics of power she suspects and fears. Soon after this exchange, Mark decides to land the plane and join Daria. And soon after that, they arrive (not through design – they are most certainly *not* following a map) at Zabriskie Point. Here, amongst ancient erosional rock formations, they make love. The soft-porn mysticism of this scene invites ridicule, but placed within the context of the scene described above, I would argue that it is actually seeking to offer as direct a possible repudiation of the topographical mastery that Mark fleetingly played with.

The *Zabriskie Point* episode also brings into play questions about the ethics of landscape spectatorship, questions which have generally been associated with political geography and art history and have more recently gained traction in film studies. (Martin Lefebvre's introduction and chapter in his edited collection *Landscape and Film* (2006) are, taken together, an excellent introduction to the subject.) A paradigmatic article here is 'Imperial Landscape' by W.J.T. Mitchell (1994), in which he positions himself within a community of scholars whose sceptical takes on landscape aesthetics can best be understood in opposition to those put forward by the likes of Kenneth Clark. In *Landscape into Art* (1949), Clark endorsed landscape painting as a benevolent expression of man's developing sensitivity to his natural environment. 'Landscape sceptics' are more wont to critique landscape art's pandering to single-point perspective (which they would classify as an essentially hierarchical technique) and expose the power relations which landscape art simultaneously represents and conceals. Mitchell suggests some reasons why landscape painting flourished so particularly in those countries which pursued imperial agendas: 'Empires move forward in space as a way of moving forward in time; the "prospect" that opens up is not just a spatial scene but a projected future of "development" and exploitation' (1994: 17). The police officer in *Dirty Mary* clearly adopts a position of optical privilege which in turn promises, if not exploitation, at least capture and imprisonment.

And yet, unlike the still images taken to task by Mitchell and others, this film – like other fugitive films – creates a dynamic through which such power can be questioned. The medium of film makes such dynamism possible, allowing critical shifts away from optical authority which were, of course, forever lacking from the conventions of landscape painting. 'Reality was frozen at a specific moment,' explains the geographer Denis E. Cosgrove, 'removed from the flux of time and change, and rendered the property of the observer' (1984: 22). This does not disappear with cinema, but it becomes fundamentally complicated by the possibility of shifting views and various settings. In *Badlands*, for example, we see Holly's father (Warren Oates) painting on a billboard in the desert wilderness a large advertisement depicting a bountiful farm; and later, Kit and Holly pass the time in their woodland hideaway by (respectively) reading *National Geographic* and looking through old stereopticon slides of faraway times and places. In such moments, value-laden landscape images are repositioned in the flux of time and space. If landscape, as Cosgrove laments, is a 'restrictive way of seeing that diminishes alternative modes of experiencing our relations with nature' (1984: 269), then fugitive films emerge as one avenue for the enthusiastic endorsement of such 'alternative modes'.

Elucidating the ways in which New Hollywood fugitive films critique space-conquering technologies, this chapter is focused rather more on surveillance than media because, as I hope to have made clear, it is in these moments that competing ideologies about ways of being in and on the land become central. But it would be a missed opportunity not to reiterate quite how much this emphasis on literal surveillance (helicopters, binoculars, watchtowers etc.) is supplemented by a critique of media communications, with newspapers and radios especially acting as vital catalysts for the tightening net. *Bonnie and Clyde* complicates this dynamic slightly by suggesting that the fugitives themselves are part-architects of their own media circus, but generally speaking mass communication is a stultifying power. In *Thieves Like Us*, the constant presence of radio broadcasts, from news bulletins to the theatrical readings, is an ominous indication of Bowie (Keith Carradine) and Keechie's (Shelley Duvall) failure to move beyond their state of besiegement. They are forever 'within range', one might say. And in one scene in *The Getaway*, Doc enters a shop (to buy, of all things, a radio) only to find his mugshot appear on a number of television screens, as the image of a wanted man. In *Dog Day Afternoon*, much is made of the fact that Sonny (Al Pacino) 'wins over' the public because of his physical proximity to the crowd – the very lack of mediation is celebrated.

Vanishing Point (Richard C. Sarafian, 1971) may initially seem to be an exception to this rule, featuring as it does a sympathetic radio DJ, Super Soul (Clevon Little), who for most of the film functions as the only supporter of the fugitive Kowalski (Barry Newman). But Super Soul's communication with Kowalski positions the DJ more as a spiritual guardian than anything else, and his knowledge of Kowalski's predicament is in any case based on his own undermining of police-radio technology. Kowalski's other guardian, an old snake-charmer and prospector (Dean Jagger), at one point advises him that 'the best way to get away from where you are is to root right in'. Kowalski is trying to elude helicopter surveillance, and the prospector warns him against running, instead advising him to camouflage his car within desert bushes. *Vanishing Point,* then, is founded upon many of the spatial and ethical dichotomies already discussed; it even ends with a news cameraman bearing down upon Kowalski from within a helicopter.

The advice to 'root right in', to not leave one's situation, might initially seem to contradict the basic ethos of the fugitive film, but perhaps it reveals something more nuanced and brings us closer to what is interesting about this genre's value system from an ecocritical perspective. Contrary to first impressions, actual escape is not what is at stake in the fugitive film (Kowalski is at one point advised that he cannot 'beat the desert'), but rather the characters' methods of relating to an environment. According to the logic of the prospector, engaging more fully and more imaginatively with your current surroundings represents its own kind of rebellious independence. Bonnie and Clyde, Mary and Larry, Doc and Carol,

Figure 3.4   Rooting in: *Vanishing Point* (Cupid Productions / Twentieth Century-Fox)

Bowie and Keechie and Mark and Daria all seem to realize this at moments, but only fleetingly. To borrow a phrase from Pat Brereton, 'they miss the signs of their coexistence with and in nature' (2004: 110). Their experiences constitute a haphazard education in the inseparability of power and space, and the tragedy of their stories might not be that they (invariably) die young, but that they did not need to flee in the first place.

Conclusion

In his essay on *Electric Glide in Blue* (James William Guercio, 1973), Mark Shiel examines the film's complex deployment of American-West iconography and its channelling of cultural guilt and uncertainty over Vietnam, as well as its interest in the politics of space, and its 'discrediting of the countercultural enterprise of "back-to-the-land"' (2007: 111). To this extent, Shiel seems to inadvertently argue for *Electric Glide* as a New Hollywood film perched between the fugitive film and the Vietnamized western. Shiel's reading of the film, I would suggest, is centred upon allegory, cultural politics and iconography in such a way that runs counter to my own approach in a fundamental regard, but his study nevertheless sheds light on how this chapter may have exaggerated the separateness and distinctiveness of the two genres in question. I will, then, conclude with some remarks on the crossovers between the Vietnamized western and the fugitive film, and their shared concern with environmental experience and responsibility.

Bearing in mind the points raised in the first part of this chapter relating to the ecological character of US warfare in Vietnam, the critique of aerial observation found in the fugitive film links in quite directly with anxieties raised in the Vietnamized western. In *Dirty Mary Crazy Larry*, three young fugitives try to evade a helicopter by heading for a densely wooded area; their motivation is topographical rather than emotional or ideological. Whereas the drama of chase sequences is often heightened by the prospect of encountering a political or national border, here the parameters of danger and safety are defined by ecological conditions. (In *The Wild Bunch*, Tector Gorch (Ben Johnson) scorns the arbitrariness of the U.S.-Mexican border: 'Just looks like more Texas to me'.) The David-and-Goliath contest of the Vietnam War might also be recognized as underpinning the fugitive film, a genre in which proportionality takes on an important role. Having sympathized with the crimes and adventures of fugi-

tives, mammoth manhunts become, as far as the audience can see, inhumane and unfeeling. In *The Sugarland Express,* this develops a farcical air, as streams of police cars follow the fugitives in comic abundance – but the Vietnam connection is not necessarily lost; as Marsha Kinder suggests, 'the long parade of police cars pursuing the two criminals […] suggests the kind of overkill that failed in Vietnam' (1974: 5). In his study of US military tactics in Vietnam, James William Gibson uses the grimly evocative term 'bombing as communication' to describe an approach of massive environmental – as well as ethical – inappropriateness (2000: 319). Overkill, a vivid characteristic of the war and the fugitive film, is in both cases carried out at an environmental remove.

If the fugitive film can be thought of in Vietnamized terms, to what extent do New Hollywood westerns harbour the concerns and characteristics of the fugitive film? On a basic level, their narratives often revolve around the exploits of fleeing heroes. *Soldier Blue* is a clear example of this, and *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* is even closer to the fugitive film, given that that the young couple flee together after Willie (Robert Blake) has committed an emotionally excusable act of violence. Their pursuer, Sheriff Cooper (Robert Redford), has the kind of sensitivity so pointedly lacking in fugitive-film law enforcers, to the extent that he becomes aligned with the fugitive, a connection made explicit when, towards the climax of the film, he places his own hand in Willie's handprint. Although Cooper continues to pursue the fugitives, the film endorses the way he does it, using as he does a kind of environmental alertness lacking in other members of the hunting posse. *Willie Boy* also indulges Cooper's suspicious resentment of the press and their role in the manhunt. At one point, Cooper is asked by an anxious reporter, evidently clueless about the territory but enthusiastically following 'the story', 'Where's Ruby Mountain?'. 'Where it always was', retorts Cooper.

The historical setting of Vietnamized westerns, even if they tend to veer towards the later end of the genre's time frame, means that helicopters and police radios are of course absent; the pernicious collapsing and mediation of space does not guide the Vietnamized western as it does the fugitive film. But it is not entirely absent. The (lightly comical) triumph of local knowledge over mass-media ignorance in *Willie Boy* is one small example of this. Another comes in an early scene in *Ulzana's Raid,* when one man, MacIntosh (Burt Lancaster) is shown to have intimate knowledge of the surrounding territory, precisely what is lacking in the stuffy bureaucracy of cavalry hierarchy. Throughout the scene, the Major (Douglass Watson) is framed next to a large map of Arizona, and his hesitancy

about trusting MacIntosh's interpretation of the situation stems from the *way* he knows, or fails to know, his surroundings. The film suggests that place cannot be properly experienced by those who are cooped up in offices and rely upon culturally controlled mediations. The drama *and* the moral high ground are to be found with those determined to trust their senses.

The films that will be explored in Chapter Four do not necessarily share with fugitive films or Vietnamized westerns this overt concern with how characters 'should' engage with their surroundings. If this chapter has explored the dynamics between figures and their landscapes, the following chapter considers the ambiguity of 'where' a film might be said to happen in the first place. Just as the earlier discussion of *Nashville* and *The Godfather* problematized their shared status as national commentaries, so the following interpretation of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) and *Cockfighter* will bring into question their 'framing', namely proposing that they can be productively understood as regional films. Barbara Klinger begins to do this with *Easy Rider*; she explores its engagement with distinctively southwestern US terrain and writes that its 'regionalism acted iconoclastically' (1997: 183), before ultimately concluding that it is first and foremost a film concerned with US nationalism. In the following chapter, it will be argued not only that other films of the period continued *Easy Rider*'s regional emphasis, but also that they did so without reverting to that film's default nationalism. And, crucially, that to do so represents another ecocritical tendency in New Hollywood cinema.

Notes

1. *Shane* is, of course, a particularly reflexive western, and to this extent a poor example of the genre's 'normal' output. However, it is important to remember that revisionist genre films (in this case, Vietnamized westerns) are just as likely to be reacting against a stereotypical or selective version of a genre as they are an historically comprehensive version of one.
2. Incidentally, this response seems to raise still another version of Vietnamization, wherein bloody violence on screen expresses a *feeling about* the war, rather than standing in for the action of US military forces.
3. Perhaps surprisingly, this can be traced right back to *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), one of the key forerunners of the fugitive film, in which the two repressive males travel by plane and helicopter.

4. For an ecocritical development of Virilio's ideas in a contemporary-film context, see Chapter Two of Bozak's *The Cinematic Footprint* (2012).

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