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Writing 39 B

RA Final Draft

RA: The Super Western Hero

What is the first thing that comes to mind when we think about the Western genre, cowboys, guns and heroes? If so then we have identified three conventional elements of the Classical Western. The Classical Western was one of the most popular genres during the 50s. However, society changed due to World War 2 and few adjustments had to be made to the keep up with the demands of the post world war society. This gave rise to the Super Western. The Super Western was built upon the conventions of the Classical Western. A Western would not be a Western without a cowboy/hero figure or violence involved. Nevertheless, what separates the Classical and the Super Western genre are the characteristics and the motifs of the hero. Many conventional elements of the Super Western originated from the Classical Western, but the ultimate difference among them was the plot of the genre, which made their heroes behave in different manners. A hero is a person who will do good will and place his life in risk for the well being of others. We can easily identify a Conventional Western hero as one who serves the community with no benefit out of it, contrary to a Super Western hero who is motivated by a hidden intention or a financial gain. Two particular movies identify the characteristic of the Super Western hero: *Unforgiven* and *Dead Man.* The two show the evolution of the Classical Western Hero to the Super Western Hero. Cormac McCarthy’s novel *Blood Meridian* is a perfect example of the Super Western hero and proves how money plays an important role in determining of what type of hero we are going to have. Since we have identified the distinctions between a Classical Western Hero and a Super Western Hero we can now prove the evolution.

Out of the Super Western movies that we have seen the hero in most if not all have been motivated by hidden intentions or motifs that justifies their heroic actions. Their heroic actions can either be for money, vengeance or simply for his own safety. These “heroes” are portrayed best in Anti Western movies such as *Dead Man* and *Unforgiven*. *Dead Man* stars Johnny Depp as the protagonist of the movie that holds many unconventional components, even the way that Johnny Depp’s character, William Blake is presented to the audience. The conflict of the movie begins when William arrives to assume the position of an accountant in the city of Machines. However, a misunderstanding occurs and William is thrown out like trash and without any money he is unable return to Cleveland. About five minutes after this occurs he has a confrontation with a man who shoots him; in self-defense William kills him. Consequently, a bounty is placed on his head. Bounties are another conventional element of the Super Western an in this movie it is essential to the plot of the movie. William meets a Native American called Nobody who teaches him how to defend himself from the bounty hunters. Both men form an unconventional bond amon. The two men share the same enemies: “stupid white men” as Nobody calls them throughout the movie. The smartest decision that any person can make is to form an alliance with your enemy’s enemy. “I was then taken east, in a cage. I was taken to Toronto. Then Philadelphia. And then to New York. And each time I arrived at another city, somehow the white men had moved all their people there ahead of me. Each new city contained the same white people as the last, and I could not understand how a whole city of people could be moved so quickly” (*Dead Man*). The beginning of the this dialogue “I was then taken east, in a cage” and the offensive racist comments that Nobody makes throughout the movie implicitly state that Nobody has hatred towards the white race. The Super Western is a mysterious genre where two men can join an alliance under certain circumstances. Hatred exists in all of us. Even the most noble and compassionate person in the world will come across a situation or an event that leads them to hate another person or a whole race in general because of the way that the majority behaves. Just like in Nobody’s situation, he was abused and tortured by the white race, thus it resulted in his hate. “In a cage,” there is no valid reason why a human being should be in a cage, no just reason. The Super Western genre joins men together over the basis of survival needs.

The are many conventional elements of the Super Western Hero in this particular movie that are shown best by two elements. The first one being that William Blake has no experience with weapons which is proven in two individual scenes: one at the beginning of the movie when he flinches with every shot and the second when he kill the man after several missed shots at close distance. The second element is that he is actually not defending no one else in particular other than himself, yet again he portrayed as a hero. This is unconventional for the Classical Western because there is no damsel in distress, but accepted as a Conventions of the Super Western. As stated in the “Essay Criticism of the Western Genre In Jim Jarmusch’s Film Dead Man”, in the Western genre, women aren’t regarded as vital elements, yet at the same time their contribution is usually to play damsels in distress and show the humane side of the manly hero.” They are essentially needed to prove the good side of the hero. William Blake somehow becomes a “badass” assassin and is able to kill all “stupid white” bounty hunters that are after him. The Super Western genre introduces us to a new type of hero, a hero that does not necessarily defend anyone other than himself but is seen as the hero of the movie.

Theoretically, there is a valid reason for this. The presented plot revolves around the betrayal and disposal of William Blake by John Dickinson (the one that had originally hired him and has now placed the bounty on his head). We are therefore psychologically forced to feel sorry for William Blake and see him as the as the victim prosecuted for the bounty hunters. When the victim in any sort of situation is victorious over the prosecutor our mind unintentionally labels these characters as heroes. It is perfectly seen when William kills the bounty hunters. We feel self-relief and pleased that William Blake is able to survive and kill the “Bad Guys”. The audience identifies William Blake as the “Good Guy,” thus the hero of the movie The Conventions of the Super Western hero in *Dead Man* prove that there is no necessity for a Western hero to save anyone person specifically to be seen as a hero, psychological matters can force us to see them as hero’s even if they posses no heroic attribute as William Blake did in the introduction.

We have established that heroes in the Classical Western genre are characters who posses heroic attributes, not necessarily super powers but good will and nobility. However, in the Super Western Genre the good samaritan changes completely to a character who will only do good in exchange for economic gain. This is best shown in *Unfrogiven,* an American Western film staring Clint East Wood, William Munny as an outlaw and a killer who undertakes the job of a hero to avenge the abuse caused to a woman in exchange for a bounty. Under the establish circumstances he is therefore seen as the hero. The plot of the movie revolves around a “prostitute” who has been severely scared by a man. Her fellow prostitutes decide to avenge her by setting a bounty on the two men who did the harm. The alteration in the title of a “hero” can be seen perfectly. As stated in the article “The Psychology of Heroism” heroic actions are voluntary, they are don’t in the service of the people, and it involves risking ones one life, and done without the need for a recompense or material gain. If a person has the will to do good then there is no necessity to be paid for the service. However, William only accepted the job for the bounty, for a financial gain.

If we recall William Munny was an outlaw and a killer, “Ned, you remember that drover I shoot through the mouth and his teeth came out the back of his head.” We can identify the flaws of William, he was a ruthless killer and didn’t feel remorse towards anything he did. However, he then proves the change that he has partaken “I ain’t like that no more. I ain't the same, Ned. Claudia, she straightened me up, cleared me of drinkin' whiskey and all.” This portion of the dialogue shows the change that has occurred in William Murry. “Just 'cause we're goin' on this killing, that don't mean I'm gonna go back to bein' the way I was. I just need the money, get a new start for them youngsters” (*Unforgiven*). There are two significant contradictory elements in this dialogue. The first one is that he confesses that he is only preforming the job for the money. The second part however, the most essential element to this dialogue is why he needs the money, “get a new start for them youngsters.” Once again the psychological control can change the mind of a person. This confession, of pure heart and nobility makes William Munny be seen as the hero. The simple fact that William Munny has placed his life in danger to provide his kids with a better and “new start” is more than enough to prove that he has changed. The audience therefore sees William Munny as a hero even though he kills everyone.

We can define a true hero as an individual who places his life over the well being of others without expecting anything in return, in other words a Classical Western hero. When contrasting the Classical Western hero and the Super Western hero we can easily say that the barrier among the two that makes them different is the motivation, why they are doing what they are doing. The Super Western hero can be seen as a ruthless, revengeful character who only uses the title of the hero/sheriff to achieve his goal or a monetarist profit. *Blood Meridian’s* plot revolves around a monetarist profit just as *Unforgiven*. We have a group of characters who journey and make a living out of Indian scalps. This is first introduced to the audience when we are presented to a character named Glanton “His name is Glanton, said Toadvine. He’s got a contract with Trias. There to pay him a hundred dollars a head for scalps and a thousand for Gomez’s head” (83). This contract constitutes to the Industry of Scalps in which the Mexican Government paid private parties to kill Apaches and Comanche’s. Can we truly identify these characters as heroes? Their actions show the contrary, they are sick, ruthless, and inhumane characters for accepting such a job to not only kill another human being but also claimed their scalps as receipts for payment. This here is the Super Western hero, a ruthless and inhumane character who takes the name of hero to take the life of another human being. But no one criticized them. On the contrary society in the Super Western praised, idolized and hosted parties in their honor. “One hundred dollars” the price Trias placed on the life of one Apache or Comanche and the terms that Glanton accepted the contract. The crew was idolized and praised by the town of Trias “In this manner they passed through the standing portals of the governor’s palace…They were promised full payment in gold at the dinner to be held in their honor that evening at the Fiddle and Stephens Hotel and with this the American sent up a cheer and mounted their horses again”(83). It is a true and sick disappointment to see what society has come to. Idolizing murders, paying them in gold and honoring them, as hero’s is the Super Western ideology on a hero.

To praise, idolize and call a persons a hero for killing another human being is inhumane and soulless but even so Glanton’s crew along with the judge and the kid and every one of the men are heroes. There is a high chance that we would reconsider our opinions if we knew a little background information of the Scalp Industry. The Scalp Industry was a result of the ruthlessness first created by the Apaches and the Comanche’s. “Between 1835 and the 1880s, Mexican authorities paid private armies to hunt Native Americans, paying per kill and using scalps as receipts. The practice began when the Mexican government could no longer provide adequate protection to its citizens from the marauding Apaches and Comanche’s”(*The Scalp Industry*). If the Apaches and the Comanche’s behaved in such manner and caused destruction to society then they had to be stopped at all cost even if it meant elimination. We would never draw a parallel between killing and hero because the two are two fall under different categories. However, in this case the two fit in one category, which is the sacrifice and murder of a few to save thousands of innocent lives. The same can be said about all the men that William Munny killed in the movie *Unforgiven,* their deaths are essential to the safety of others.The Super Western hero is paid to kill in order to avenge or save the lives of innocent defenseless people as what occurred throughout *Blood Meridian.* Even if we do not want to admit it, the reality is that society has come to an era in which, its either the well being of individual needs and wants, over those of others. The instincts and the ideology of the survival of the fittest, in terms of defeating the enemy before the enemy attacks is present in all of us. Therefore, it is a proven fact that Glanton’s and each man the in the crew the Judge, the Kid, Toadvine and every other man in the crew is a hero, a Super Western Hero by means of killing the Apaches and Comanches before any further harm was done.

The Super Western genre uses psychological dominance over the audience to make the most malicious outlaw appear to be a hero. In all three Super Westerns, *McCarthy’s Blood Meridian, Dead Man and Unfrogiven* psychological possession’s over the audience is important to establish the new Super Western Hero. The Super Western Genre portrays the protagonist as a character that murders for his own safety, the safety of others or for a financial. The audience involuntarily accepts this character as the hero because of the other characters are causing even more harm, what our “hero” does is put an end to the harm they are causing by killing them before they cause any more harm.

Annotated Bibliography

McCarthy, Cormac. "Chapter 6." *Blood Meridian*. New York: Random House, 2001. 83. Print.

Cormac McCarthy, one of many major novelist, story writers of the nineteenth century and author to one of the best selling novels of its time, Blood Meridian, in which through it provides us with examples of the Super Western Hero. McCarthy constructs the foundation of the novel around our main character “the Kid” as he is identified who joins a crew of men who work under the Scalp Industry. McCarthy uses a variety of rhetorical devices such as manipulation of emotions by the use of psychological terms, metaphors and character interactions through violence. There truly is no limit to McCarthy’s audience, it can range form high school students to college to anyone who enjoys western violent stories.

"Criticism of the Western Genre in Jim Jarmusch’s Film Deadman." 123HelpMe.com. 19 Nov 2013   
    <http://www.123HelpMe.com/view.asp?id=25623>.

This essay identifies various unconventional components of the Western movie *Dead Man.* This essay was written to identify the unconventional elements that occur in the movie. The examples provided in the essay are key unconventional elements of the Western, but conventional components of the Super Western. This essay is essential to prove one of my arguments. Its fairly easy to understand and comprehensive enough to provide the reader with an intake on the movie is they have not yet seen it.

"The Psychology of Heroism." *About.com Psychology*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Nov. 2013.

# Kendra Cherry B.S in Psychology from Idaho State University has identified that the origins behind the definition of a hero in her article “The Psychology of Heroism.” Kendra had been bullet down what makes a person a hero using her intake provided by her major and surveys that she had conducted. In order to prove the importance and the controversy of the title of a hero Kendra provides her readers with an example of heroic situation that took place on January 2, 2007. Psychologically matters make this heroic situation stand out, thus Kendra is able to the set the foundations for her definition of what a hero is which, can be accepted or challenged depending on the reader. It fairly difficult to narrow down a specific audience for Kendra audience can range from professionals to students who want to learn the true definition of a hero.

*Dead Man*. Dir. Jim Jarmusch. Perf. Johnny Depp. Miramax Films, 1995. Film.

*Dead Man(1995)*

This is a Super Western movie that shows the characteristics of the new Western hero. The movie introduces the protagonist William Blake (Johnny Depp) an accountant from Cleveland Ohio who arrives to the town of Machine to take the role of an accountant. However, a misunderstanding occurs that results in William Blake to be thrown out. That same night after meeting a woman William Blake has a confrontation with a man who he kills in self defense. The plot of the movie results from this very action. Shortly after a bounty is set on William Blake’s head. The purpose of which is to show how certain circumstances can force a man to change. This whole movie center on how William Blake changes from an accountant to a hero by means of psychological elements that are essential to prove the transformation of the Classical Western Hero to the Super Western Hero.

*Unforgiven*. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Prod. Clint Eastwood. By David Webb Peoples. Perf. Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, and Morgan Freeman. Warner Bros., 1992. Film.

*Unforgiven (1992)*

An American Super Western movie that is revolves around a bounty. The movie stars an ex-outlaw William Munny (Clint Eastwood) who accepts the bounty of 1,000 dollars to kill a man who violently assaulted a woman with a knife. The plot of the movie shows how the flaws of a man can lead him to change. We can truly see the change in William Munny an ex outlaw killer who confesses that has only taken the job for the money to provide for his children. This whole movie centers on how William has transformed from a killer to a hero, which is ironic to say because he is killing. But in reality he is killing the villains of movie, thus he is identified as the hero. The purpose of the movie is to show that even though a man was once an outlaw/killer there is hope for him to change and become a hero. The Super Western Genre allows this very element and if perfectly exemplified through the William Munny’s character in *Unforgiven.*