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When the Legend Becomes Fact, Print the Legend

The Classical Hollywood era, also known as the golden age of Hollywood, which spanned five decades, is widely considered to be one of the most important time periods within the history of cinema. Many films from this time have come to be considered some of the greatest ever made, per the British Film Institutes most recent 2012 “The 100 Greatest Films of All Time” poll, with *Vertigo* (1958, dir. Alfred Hitchcock) and *Citizen Kane* (1940, dir. Orson Welles) holding the top two spots. Within the discourse of this era, one will often hear the names of Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Billy Wilder, Frank Capra, and William Wyler. There are two other names, however, that play a huge role in shaping this era: John Ford and Howard Hawks. Both directors are highly regarded within the film industry as two of the best to ever live. Their influence was not only recognized within Hollywood, but across the globe as well: A new wave of filmmaking was inspired by them in France in the 1960s. To this day, many of their films are studied and analyzed on an in-depth academic level by scholars across the world.

Both Hawks and Ford started their careers at a time when directors were still figuring out a discourse for the art. Once they were given the keys to their own films, they both created a visual and artistic language that was unique to them. This language carried into the types of genres both directors explored. Ford, as many scholars know, is most known for making westerns and Hawks, though he explored many including the western, is most known for his screwball comedies. Though the two directors had their differences in their approach to making

their films, the two seemed to have had an influence on each other. In fact, a lot of Fordian tropes can be seen in Hawks films and vice versa: in a way, their films talked to each other; not only in which stories were being told, but how these stories were shot, edited, what the types of characters were being represented, who played said characters, and the type of environment these characters were in. Although they both used many actors in their films, there was one actor in particular who the two used. That actor, John Wayne, who, like Ford, was well known for his influence on the western genre, went on to have a successful career that defines both Hawks and Ford.

The 1920s saw a significant transition in Hollywood. Sound was introduced leading many studios to change the way their films were being made. The Great Depression also led to a significant change in what movies were made: screwball comedies, gangster/crime, horror, and musicals. This paved the way for more directors and actors/actresses to find stardom. The 1930s saw even more change. Early 30s films were very wild. This “Pre-Code era” that many film historians reference it as, lacked a great amount of censorship. Directors, and studios, were able to do as they pleased without any repercussions.; however, it was the Hays office, led by William Hays, sought to censor these films. The gangster genre was notorious for this. One film in particular, *Scarface* (1932, dir. Howard Hawks), infuriated Hays who demanded many script revisions of the film. In the film, Hawks glorifies the violence within it becoming most evident at the end with the death of Tony Camonte (Paul Muni): the main character. In his book *Howard Hawks*, author Robin Wood describes Hawks portrayal of Tony’s character as being “funny and touching because he is an overgrown child, emotionally arrested at an early stage, with no sympathetic awareness of others and no self-awareness.” (1, pg. 54-55). Tony is immature and inexperienced. He hides behind his gun without thinking of the consequences of his actions. It

isn't until the very end when he starts to realize who he is, does he then die. This is the nuance of the character that Hawks essentially glorifies. It is what Hays wants to stop.

In 1934, Hays finally puts his foot down and changes Hollywood completely. Films are now entirely censored and forced to abide by the Hays Code, better known as the Production Code. The gangster genre died down significantly, though not completely. In place of it was a B-list genre that was made often but was not a source of high profit: the western. This is thanks to a man who started out making westerns in the silent era. The man, John Ford, went on to make dozens of westerns throughout his entire career. One of them being *The Iron Horse* (1924, dir. Ford) which stars George O'Brien. It was one of Ford's first featured film and most influential westerns in the silent era. The film was well acclaimed by critics and audiences at the time. Though it was very popular at the time of its release, the film tends to be overlooked in many academic discussions on Ford, this has a lot to do with the fact that Ford was still learning his own artistic style at the time. Although Ford made many films after *Iron Horse*, it wasn't until 1939 when he finally put everything he learned over the years together to make what many critics will call his masterpiece, *Stagecoach* (1939, dir. Ford). Though his film *The Informer* (1934, dir. Ford) was highly acclaimed at the time of its release and even to critics today, *Stagecoach* elevated Ford's career to new heights.

Stagecoach, starring John Wayne and Claire Trevor, follows a group of strangers who travel via stagecoach from Tonto, Arizona Territory to Lordsburg, New Mexico. The group consists of a prostitute (Trevor), an alcoholic doctor (Thomas Mitchell), a whiskey salesman (Donald Meek), a cavalry officer's wife (Louise Platte), a gambler (John Carradine), a banker (Berton Churchill), and a fugitive (Wayne) along with driver Buck (Andy Devine) and shotgun Marshal Curley Wilcox (George Bancroft). To this day, *Stagecoach* is highly regarded as one of

the greatest western's ever made. Some consider it to be Ford's masterpiece. It took Ford about a year to find a producer willing to take on the script. Eventually Walter Wanger stuck to the script and was willing to produce it under a few circumstances: Gary Cooper would play Ringo and Marlene Dietrich would play Dallas. Ford had other plans, however. He was adamant on keeping Wayne. They eventually compromised with Wayne getting the role and Trevor playing Dallas.

This was Wayne's first major role; though he starred in Raoul Walsh's *The Big Trail* (1931, dir. Walsh) eight years prior, but the film was a huge box-office failure and was not well received amongst audiences and critics, something that Wayne felt was his own fault. He was known as a B-list western actor and stuntman before Ford casted him in *Stagecoach*. He was used primarily as an extra early on in his, and Ford's, career. It is also fitting that Wayne, in his first A-list film, is starring in the first A-list western film as well. Wayne, and the genre as a whole, would go on to find success over the next two decades that followed. Wayne's rise to fame had reached unmatched heights during the 1940s and 1950s. Only a handful of other actors at the time shared similar amounts of success as he did. Many of his most well-known performances came under the direction of Ford. The two collaborated on over a dozen films together over the course of five decades, starting in the late 1920s up until the mid-1960s. Without his role in *Stagecoach*, and especially without the help of Ford's direction, Wayne probably would not have garnered the same amount of success.

Wayne's character in *Stagecoach* was a complex one to say the least. Though he was the hero of the film- as emphasized by the famous dolly in shot when he is first introduced into the film- he was driven by vengeance: his father and brother were murdered by Luke Plummer (Tom Tyler). He breaks out of jail in order to track him down and kill him, eventually doing so. Tag Gallagher responds to this archetype in his book *John Ford: The Man and His Films*, in regard to

the time period, “one wonders how Ringo got past the Hays office: for the movie certainly seems to excuse and even to laud Ringo’s avenging his brother by calling out and shooting down three men in the streets” (2, pg. 150). Ringo eventually finds Luke, who is accompanied by his two brothers. Dallas’s objects to the confrontation, but he confronts the brothers anyways, ultimately winning a three-against-one shootout. This reckless act should have killed Ringo, but instead he emerges victorious. This is a much more optimistic outcome for such a character than someone like Tony Camonte. Both characters have very similar personalities: they are single-minded thinkers who do not actually think rather they do, all they seem to be good at is handling a gun and shooting it, and their youth, inexperience, and primal-like instincts drive each character’s decision making. Their child-like personas are the reason why audiences sympathize with them; essentially, they can do no wrong. In the end though, it is Tony who dies in a shootout while Ringo lives. Ford mythologizes his heroes rather than simply killing them off like Hawks did in *Scarface*. Once Ringo has killed the Plummer brothers, he returns to Dallas, whom he wants to run away with and marry. Curley, who arrested Ringo earlier when they found him stranded along the road after his horse became lame, decides to let him “escape” with Dallas. A “ride off into the sunset” type of ending for him. *Stagecoach* boosted Wayne into stardom, and he never looked back.

Over the next decade, Wayne starred mostly in western films. He collaborated with John Ford on two more occasions in *The Long Voyage Home* (1940, dir. Ford) and *They Were Expendable* (1945, dir. Ford). With World War II happening over in Europe and the Pacific, Wayne did not enlist. He stayed home and focused on his acting career; something he later regretted and one that Ford never let him forget. The western genre grew into one of the most

popular genres in the industry and at the center of it all was Wayne. In 1946, Hawks approached Wayne with a starring role in his next feature length film, *Red River* (1948, dir. Hawks).

Following his release of *The Big Sleep* (1946, dir. Hawks), starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, which was not a critical success at the time, Hawks decided to make a western film, though not his first. The story follows Thomas Dunson (Wayne) as he leaves his lover Fen (Coleen Gray), who is later killed by an Indian attack, to start a cattle ranch with his friend Nadine Groot (Walter Brennan). He finds a young boy, Matthew (Mickey Kuhn) whom he takes in as his own son. The three men build up their livestock over the next 14 years. They create their own cattle brand, the Red River D, with Matt unable to get his name added to the brand until he is worthy of it. Eventually, the three men build up a successful ranch, but fall into poverty. They decided to head north into Missouri where they can potentially find a profit. Dunson hires a bunch of men to help him with all of the cattle. It is this moment that we know Wayne to be the hero: he will lead this train to Missouri and save his men and cattle from harm's way. Hawks had other plans in mind. He did not care that Ford turned him into a hero in *Stagecoach*.

Thomas Dunson is another complex character that Wayne plays, even more so than Ringo the Kid. Dunson is driven by grief: he blames himself for Fen's death. The first scene of the film is him leaving the wagon train, but not before she tries to stop him. "I decided last night" he says. "I decided too, I want to go with you" she responds, "I know you have work to do Tom, but I want to be part of it. I love you." She gives him the opportunity and he wants it, but ultimately, it's "I've made up my mind." He gives her a bracelet that once belong to his mother as a way to remember him. They plan to meet up with each other later on in life and raise a family together. Long after Tom has ridden away from the train, a group of Indians attack it,

killing everyone. Later that night, that same group of Indians attack Tom and Nadine, but they survive, and Tom finds the bracelet he gave Fen on one of the Indian's wrists. They then run into the young Matthew, whom Dunson takes as his son, the one he now cannot have with Fen. This grief and emotion carry on in the later scenes when Dunson and his men are driving the cattle north. The cattle does not only represent his success, but what could have been: raising a family with Fen. He cannot risk making it to Missouri without his cattle; doing so would make Fen's death all but meaningless. He *has* to make it, no matter what. This is why we see him lash out against his men. One scene shows him pull out a whip that he intends to use against one of them, Bunk Kenneally (Ivan Parry), who started a cattle stampede that ended up killing Dan Latimer (Harry Carey Jr). Another instance shows Dunson shooting and killing three of his men for trying to rebel. His leadership becomes dictator-like, and we start to feel his anger building up. It makes us begin rebelling against him ourselves; our emotional connect with this character is broken. Clearly this isn't the same guy from earlier who we sympathized for. This is someone completely new even though he is the same guy. It becomes clear that Dunson is not the hero of this story, instead it is Matt (Montgomery Clift), his "son".

By the end of the film, after taking command of the wagon train and leaving Dunson behind, Matt meets a girl of his own. His men see a wagon train in the distance being attacked by Natives. They swing down to their rescue. One of the women in the train, Tess Millay (Joanne Dru), a dance hall girl, falls for Matt who then falls for her. They spend the night together, but in the morning, he leaves her; leaving behind the bracelet Dunson once left Fen. It is in this moment we realize this woman's importance: She *is* Fen; though, not literally. She is a metaphor to her. This is later emphasized when Dunson's himself finds Tess and her wagon train. He finds out she is wearing his mother's bracelet and the two talk. The conversation starts off harsh, she

knows he is going to kill Matt and he tells her that he will no matter what she says. He realizes she is in love with him and she reiterates what Matt told her when he left: the same thing Dunson said to Fen when he left her. Although this is an emotional moment for Dunson who is now facing his past all over again, he is still set on killing Matt. But he continues to open up to Tess. He admits that all he has ever wanted was a son, his own blood, but he had Matt instead. Their conversation continues and reveals the connection Tess has to both Dunson and Matt. She wants to be with Matt the same way Fen wanted to be with Dunson. So much so that their knees feel like they have knives in them. It is now Matt who is in Dunson shoes. And although our emotional attachment to his character happened much earlier in the film, this particular scene becomes evident on why it happened.

Dunson eventually makes it to Missouri. Matt, knowing he would eventually meet him again, must face off against his hate filled fatherly figure. Dunson's eyes are filled with rage and his body language is looking to kill. The tracking shot that Hawks uses in this moment as Dunson makes his way through the cattle not only makes us feel the tension building up, but puts us right there with him; we are stuck just like Matt. This is something Hawks does multiple times throughout the movie: He doesn't care about romanticizing the past in a way that Ford did with his movies, all he cared about was that these events were happening within the frame and so he put his audience in the emotional moment with these characters. Dunson approaches Matt and tells him to draw. Silence. "I said draw." Matt doesn't respond. "Then I'll make ya." He fires four shots around Matt, the last one knocking his hat off. We fear for Matt. We *want* him to fire back and kill Dunson, but he doesn't. Dunson smacks him around. Finally, Matt throws a punch, a sigh of relief. He wails on Dunson who throws punches back. The two fight until Tess, who came with Dunson, fires a shot in their direction, startling the two. She tells them to stop, she

can't handle seeing them fighting. Dunson then tells Matt to marry her and that when they get back to the ranch, he is going to add an "M" to their brand. Matt is worthy. We realize Dunson always viewed Matt as if he were his actual son. He wanted to hand everything he built over to Matt, like a king handing the throne to his first born. And for one final moment, we can emotionally attach ourselves to him again, maybe he isn't the bad guy after all. But it does not make us forget all of the horrible things he did before.

The way that Wayne portrayed such a character was new to audiences at the time. Everyone knew him as an American hero, as Ringo the Kid. After *Red River*, however, they knew Tom Dunson too. According to famous film critic Roger Ebert, in his review on *Red River* he mentions that, "critic Joseph McBride says John Ford, who had directed Wayne many times, saw 'Red River' and told Hawks, 'I didn't know this son of a bitch could act!'" The two eventually went on to collaborate on more films. Wayne was cast in all three of Ford's cavalry movies: *Fort Apache* (1948, Ford) where he portrays respected captain Kirby York who was expected to take command of his cavalry post before it was given to another man, *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1949, Ford) which he plays aging cavalry captain Nathan Brittles who is tasked with one final mission of handling a bunch of revolting Natives before he retires, and *Rio Grande* (1950) where he is cast as now promoted Lieutenant Colonel Kirby York. He later portrays an American, Sean Thornton, as he returns home to Ireland in Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952), which was a personal film to Ford. Those films all portrayed Wayne as another American hero; however, looking back upon Wayne's career, his portrayal of those characters are not nearly as emphasized or discussed like those of Ringo the kid, Tom Dunson, and Ethan Edwards.

After making *The Quiet Man* with Ford, the two reunited to make *The Searchers* (1956, Ford), a film that has gone down as one of, if not, the greatest western ever made. The film, starring Wayne as Edwards and Jeffrey Hunter as Martin Pawley, is much more Hawksian in terms of character development than any of his other previous works. The story follows Ethan Edwards (Wayne) and Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) as they search for their nieces Lucy and Debbie over an eight-year period after both were abducted by Comanches. This sounds like the perfect opportunity for Wayne to come in, save the kids, and be the hero of this story. Ford, however, thinks otherwise. The character of Ethan in no way resembles the archetype of Ringo the Kid. Instead, Ford looks at Hawks character Tom Dunson for a basic identity: A hateful man who boils his anger inside himself until he lets it all out in a violent fit of rage. It is the type of John Wayne that we are not used to seeing, but ironically it is one of the most famous; We remember him as an American hero, but we remember Ethan and Dunson all too well.

When we are first introduced to Ethan, we know him as the uncle to girls Lucy and Debbie, and also the brother of Aaron, whose house he returns to after being away for some time. He is just as excited to see his nieces and nephews as they are to see him. He lifts Debbie, whom he mistakes for Lucy, into the air in excitement. Ford's way of introducing Ethan's character is done in a not so Fordian way. In fact, we learn about him in a very Hawksian way; that is, the way he interacts with the characters around him and how the other characters react to him tell us everything we need to know. Ethan clearly has a troubled past and there is something about him that speaks to the audience, but it isn't clear right away. Aaron's reaction to his arrival is one of uncertainty. It's easy to question why this is, especially as his kids are excited to see him, but once Martin, Aaron and Martha's adopted son, walks through the door and Ethan's entire demeanor changes, it becomes clear why Aaron reacted in such a way. This is where Hawks

influence comes in. The scene takes place at night when the family is eating dinner together. It is important to note the blocking of this scene, where everyone is sitting: Aaron is sitting at one end of the table, his wife Martha at the other, Lucy and her younger brother Ben sit to the right of Aaron, while Ethan and Debbie sit on his right with an empty chair and plate directly to the left of Aaron. Everyone is joyous to see Martin when he comes in except Ethan who is uneasy about his presence. When Martin says “Evening, Uncle Ethan. Welcome home, sir”, he ignores him. Instead, he stares at him in uncertainty, as if he already does not like him. Martin sits down next to him. The shots of this action emphasize the character’s separation. Martin swings around his uncle Aaron, the frame ending where his empty chair is and right before we would see Debbie who is next to him. The next shot is of Ethan, who is still on edge, and Martha. It is clear that Ethan does not want to be in the same space as Martin. The reactions of the other family members seem to know this and understand why, but as audience members we do not. It becomes clear as Ethan says to him, “Fella could mistake you for a half-breed” (Half white and half native). “Not quite. I’m eighth Cherokee. And the rest is Welsh and English” He responds. Aaron then tells Martin that Ethan saved him when he was a baby under a sage clump. His parents had been murdered. “It just happened to be me. No need to make more of it.” Ethan savagely says. The family is appalled by his comments, and audiences are left to wonder what Martin did to Ethan, if anything. We learn much more about Ethan’s character through dialogue than we do his actions. Ford is more known for showing rather than telling, but it is the interaction that tells us instead of actions. This is something Hawks is most famous for in his films.

The next day, a group of Texas Rangers, headed by rev. captain Samuel Clayton (Ward Bond), ride to the Edwards ranch. They explain that their neighbor’s, the Jorgensen’s, reported a

burglary to them: someone stole their cattle. Clayton has Aaron and Martin swear an oath to the Rangers. Ethan walks into the room and he strikes up a conversation with Clayton. It is revealed that the two know each other: they fought on the side of the Confederacy a few years prior. Ethan tells Aaron to stay behind and that he will take his place. "Stay close, Aaron" he commands him, "It might be this is rustlers. Might be that this doddering old idiot ain't so far wrong. Could be Comanche." The reverend tries to swear Ethan in as a ranger. "No need to. Wouldn't be legal anyway." "Why not? You wanted for a crime, Ethan?" This triggers a concerned look in both Aaron and Martha, who tries to change the subject by offering coffee. Ethan asks the reverend, "You asking me as a captain or a preacher, Sam?" "I'm asking you as a Ranger of the sovereign state of Texas." "You got a warrant?" "You fit a lot of descriptions." Ford drops the ball, in a very Hawksian way, on Ethan's racism. Instead of us witnessing Ethan perform an act of racism/discrimination, Ford tells us indirectly. That last line of dialogue tells us that Ethan has a history of attacking, or even killing, minority groups. The reactions of both Aaron and Martha also tell us that they are well aware of these acts. These acts of violence do not phase Ethan either as he walks away reminding the reverend, "I took [my oath] to the Confederate States of America. So did you, Sam."

Ethan rides off with the Rangers in search of the stolen cattle. They find one the bulls dead. Ethan realizes that this was only a distraction and that the Comanche are plotting a "murder raid" upon either the Jorgensen's home or his brother's. Most of the Ranger's head back to the Jorgensen's while Ethan stays behind to rest his horse, but Martin rides back alone. The scene cuts back to Aaron's home where he sense's the Comanche's presence: doves fly out of a bush and there is a slight reflection of the moonlight in the distance. The family prepares to fight. They send Debbie away to hide by the spot they buried her grandma. She hides there, but their

dog follows. He barks. She kneels down next to grandma's grave when the shadow of a man covers her and the tomb in darkness. It cuts to a medium close-up of a Native staring down at her. She blows into his horn, signaling the start of the attack. The shot fades to black. The next morning, Ethan rides back to the home. He passes Martin whose horse became lame on his trek back, but instead of picking him up, he rides right past him, not a single care in the world. He rides up a small hill in a wide shot and then it cuts up close to his face, the horror, the anger in his eyes until it cuts to the home up in flames, destroyed. And for the remainder of this scene, Ford and Wayne are not only think of Uncle Ethan reacting to his family's death but of Tom Dunson witnessing Fen's death from a distance. Both deaths could have been avoided had both characters stayed behind. Instead, Wayne must watch as the ones he loves die a slow painful death, unable to save them.

When Ethan approaches the burning home, he calls out for Martha whom he loved and wanted all along. He wanders some more and finds her bright blue dress all burnt and laying on the ground outside. We come to believe that she was raped before she was killed. Ethan looks up to a shelter area next to the home. As he walks into the doorway, he collapses. Her burning corpse lays there, though we do not see it. And in a moment of silence, Ethan's body in total silhouette, we sense the sorrow and the rage beginning to build up inside of him. At first, he lets it out on Martin, who has just arrived and wants to go inside the room where his aunt's body lies. Martin tries to force his way into the room, but Ethan stops him and punches him, knocking him hard to the ground. It is one small act, but we can get start to get the sense that Ethan does not like Martin because of his native heritage. His anger builds up into the next scene in which Clayton is praying their souls away at a funeral outside their home. Ethan cuts off his prayer, telling him to get to the "amen" part. The tone of his voice is not one of sorrow, rather it is one of

anger. His eyes are filled with hatred, in the sense that Dunson's eyes were filled with hatred as he was approaching, and looking to kill, Matt. He wants to go searching for Native's so that he can seek vengeance for his family. And although it may seem as if he wants to save Debbie and Lucy, his main goal is to kill the Native's, which becomes more evident later on. But we do not feel a disconnect with Ethan here, we almost understand him entirely. The Rangers plus Ethan and Martin ride off in search of the missing girls. They stumble upon a dead Native whose body is buried beneath a rock. Brad Jorgensen, Lucy's fiancé played by Harry Carey Jr, slams a rock onto it. Ethan calls out, "Why don't you finish the job?" and he takes out his revolver and shoots the body twice. His face is not one of grief either. This act isn't necessarily for vengeance, but instead one of joy. By shooting the already dead Native, Ethan feels pleasure. The reverend asks him what good it did him, to which he admits "By what you preach, none. But what that Comanche believes... ain't got no eyes, he can't enter the spirit land. Has to wander forever between the winds." Although this was not the Native who killed his family, nor is it entirely clear that this Native was involved at all, we as an audience makes an intellectual guess that he was, Ethan still believes the Native's deserve an eternal hell, even after their passing. He believes that he is the one who should bring this hell to them. All of this occurs not even within the first 30 minutes of the film. This is a stark contrast to *Stagecoach* where Wayne's character isn't even introduced until Ford had established all of other main characters. And in *Stagecoach*, the first shot we are shown of Wayne indicates that he is the hero of this film, something that is never put into question, wherein *The Searchers*, the first shot of Wayne does not do that. Though it is easy to assume that he will be the hero in this film, Ford puts that idea into question almost right away.

The Ranger's eventually back away from Ethan and Martin. They lost too many men in a shootout with some Native's and must recoup before heading out again. This does not stop Ethan from continuing his search for his nieces. Eventually, Ethan finds Lucy buried in a mountain pass. She was raped and brutally murdered, building up more hatred towards the Native's within Ethan. Come winter, they stumble upon a military, cavalry fort. The cavalry, having taken some Native's hostage and saving a few white women they found in the tribe, allow Ethan and Martin to see if Debbie was amongst those rescued. To their dismay, none of the women, who have adapted into the Native culture, are Debbie. The women do not speak English anymore. They have all gone crazy, lost their sense of reality. "It's hard to believe they're white" One of the officers says. "They ain't white..." as Ethan says, "... anymore. They're Comanche." He stares at them in disgust. Ford even uses the same shot he used to introduce Ringo: the quick dolly into a close-up of his face. This time, however, we do not get the sense that he is the hero. His expression is one of anger and, to an extent, worrisome. If and when they find Debbie, will she be like these women? Is he going to have to kill her too?

The two make it to a bar in New Mexico, where they find out from a man the exact location of Scar's camp. They ride out to the camp and find Scar, his expression is that of hatred towards the two men, likewise from Ethan, who is ready to gun him down. They sit down in his tepee which is filled with Scar's many wives. One of his wives then stands up and shows the two men the many scalps Scar has cut off from the white men he has killed. They look up and notice it is Debbie. She is dressed in all native clothes and jewelry. Their worst nightmare has come true. And for Ethan, it's his biggest fear: he now has to kill her. Debbie is Ethan's last remembrance of Martha; she is to Ethan what the cattle was to Dunson. Without her, he must give up Martha completely just like how Dunson would have had to give up Fen had his cattle

not reached Missouri. But because Debbie has assimilated into the Native's culture, she is already dead to him. All he has to do is end her life to save her from being a part of it. Ford alludes back to *Stagecoach* with this. Towards the end of the film, the stagecoach is attacked by a group of Apaches. They fight off their attackers as much as they can, but they ultimately run low on ammunition. The gambler, Hatfield, looks over to a scared Mrs. Mallory, who just earlier gave birth to her child. Hatfield puts his gun up to her head and cocks the gun, but he is impaled by an arrow. What Ford was intending with this moment is that Hatfield was ultimately saving Mrs. Mallory from being captured by the Apache and being taken in as a sex slave/wife. In *The Searchers*, however, Ethan is not given the opportunity to "save" Lucy, who assimilates into the Comanche tribe. "These are my people" she tells them. Ethan pulls out his gun, but Martin stands in the way. Ford, if he has not already, breaks out emotional attachment with Ethan in this moment. Debbie is standing right there and instead of trying to save her, he makes the decision to try and kill her. Ford shifts our connection to Martin, the same way Hawks shifted our connection to Matt when he took over the cattle from Dunson's tyrannical rule. But it is not Martin who saves Debbie. She is saved by a Native warrior who fires an arrow at Ethan, impaling him and making him miss his shot. The two men retreat. They set up a small camp to rest. Ethan writes out his will and giving it to Martin: He plans on giving all of his property to Martin since he does not have any "blood kin" anymore, openly admitting he does not consider Debbie to be family.

They return to the town where they meet up with Clayton and the Ranger's. With the help of the Ranger's and the 7th Cavalry, they storm Scar's camp the next day. Martin goes in early and saves Debbie from being accidentally killed in the raid. The Ranger's storm the camp, killing all Native's in sight. Ethan finds Scar dead in his tepee, where he then cuts off his scalp as

a prize. He exits the tepee and finds Debbie standing right outside, and he pursues. Martin tries to stop him, but nothing is getting in his way. When he finally catches up with her, he picks her up, lifting her over his head; the same way he did when she was a little girl at the beginning of the movie. And suddenly, his tone changes, and again, our emotional attachment, like Dunson, slowly comes back. Although we sympathize with Ethan again in this moment, it does not forgive what he almost did. Ethan Edward's is Ford's version of Tom Dunson.

The film ends with Ethan returning Debbie to the Jorgensen's home. The entire Jorgensen family watches as they approach. They are ecstatic to see Debbie back. Ethan hands her over to Mrs. Jorgensen who takes her inside. Martin walks in with his lover, Laurie (Vera Miles), the daughter of the Jorgensen's. Ethan does not enter the home, however. Instead, the door closes on him as he walks away. Tag Gallagher offers some explanations for this, "from ones traditional to the western (distant horizons beckon; new duties call; the task is done; the hero belongs to the wilderness), to ones particular to *The Searchers* (Ethan is doomed to wander) [...] And there is the special explanation [...] the arm gesture Ethan makes was the signal gesture of Harry Carey, who often walked away at the end of pictures." (3, pg. 338) It leaves the audience questioning the decision. Gallagher takes another swing at it in another paragraph, "That his walking away *seems* extraordinarily meaningful, that his arm gesture seems an admission of impotence, is perhaps because, in a moment, the hero disappears and only a lonely, aging man is left" (4, pg. 338). Is it that Ethan's character, who was so filled with hatred and racism, is now not accepted back into society? Or is it that Ethan is now just as much a savage as Scar was and therefore does not belong in such a world anymore? Whichever it may be, Ford does not let Ethan enter that home. What Ethan did was taboo, and although he tried to redeem himself, it was too late.

Ford makes Ethan live with his decisions, but Hawks does not with Dunson. At the end of *The Searchers*, Ethan does not enter the house and the door shuts on him. Whereas at the end of *Red River*, Dunson and Matt sit together and share a laugh, signaling that they are friends again. Hawks completely shatters the tragedy aspect of the story and focuses again on the bromance that he tends to focus on in his films while Ford makes a statement on the character of Ethan. What both directors do with these characters, however, is they make them their own villains: they are not the heroes of their respected stories. Both men could not reach their end goal without self-evaluating themselves first. Both Tom Dunson and Ethan Edward's fall into Hawks's definition of a savage. They are no worse than Tony Camonte, but they are no better either. Their way of life is different from "normal" society, and therefore they are considered outsiders. The ending to *The Searchers* leaves Ethan an outsider, quite literally too. Whether it was Ford's initial intention to reflect Hawks's own themes, he ends up doing so. And, although Ethan is Ford's character, there seems to be a huge influence from Hawks and *Red River*. It is fitting then that Hawks's next western film stars Wayne, only this time, he portrays his character much differently.

Three years after making *The Searchers*, Wayne takes the lead role in *Rio Bravo* (1959, dir. Hawks). In this story, John Chance (Wayne) arrests a man, Joe Burdette (Claude Akins) for murder, and he must defend his town from Burdette's brother, Nathan (John Russell), a wealthy landowner, with the help of Dude (Dean Martin), the town drunk, Colorado (Ricky Nelson), a young gunslinger, and Stumpy (Walter Brennan), an aging, old man. The film was greatly influenced by *High Noon* (1952, dir. Fred Zinnemann) to which Hawks and Wayne hated. They hated the movie a lot and felt it had so many things wrong with it. In the film, Sheriff Will Kane (Gary Cooper) must defend his town from a criminal, Frank Miller (Ian MacDonald), but no one

is willing to help him, and so he must fight Miller and his men alone. After he has successfully beat Miller, he takes his badge, tosses it onto the ground, steps on it, and walks away from it. Hawks, according to critic Emanuel Levy, said of the film, “[I do not think] a good was going to run around town like a chicken with its head off asking for help.” It was the ending that set Wayne off. “It was the most un-American thing I’ve seen in my whole life.” He did not believe that a sheriff in the west, who would have fought off Native’s, would be such a coward when it came to fighting four men. They disagreed with it so strongly that Hawks decided to write the script for his next film, *Rio Bravo*, as a way to fix the wrongs in *High Noon*. Wayne, who was three years removed from *The Searchers*, takes on the role of Cooper’s character as the sheriff of a small town, but Hawks revises this role into a more masculine, American hero. The character was a 180 shift from the character’s Wayne portrayed in *The Searchers* and *Red River*.

The film opens up with a relapsing Dude entering a bar looking for a drink. He is spotted standing next to a wooden pole wiping his lips by Joe who tosses him a coin into a vase to get a drink. Chance steps in and kicks it away, saving him from embarrassment. The first shot we see of Chance holds the same meaning at the first shot of Ringo the Kid. Though in this film it is not a dolly in shot. It is instead a tilt up shot of him from Dude’s perspective. Chance is in a position of power with this shot, while the next shot of Dude looking down on him indicates he is not in a position of power. We are reminded of this throughout the film. Another scene that is as evident of this is when Dude, Colorado, and Stumpy are sitting around singing and playing instruments with Chance standing off to the side watching in joy as they play. Chance is the hero of this story right from the get-go. He saves Dude two more times within the movie: one being when Nathan’s men knock him out in the stables and attempt to kill Chance, and another being at the end when Nathan’s men hold Dude for ransom (Dude for Joe). There are multiple instances

throughout the film in which Chance is offered help, he doesn't ask for it. It's a direct contrast to Kane's character who begs for it. Chance refuses to accept help but wherever he goes, he always gets it: from Colorado when he is first held hostage by Burdette's men and from Stumpy during the final shootout between them and Nathan. This makes his character out to be this absolute tough guy, a guy who could take on a whole army by himself, and if he dies then he dies. It's the same attitude as one of Hawks's earlier films, *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939, dir. Hawks), when Geoff (Cary Grant), who runs an airway in the fictional town of Barranca, South America, tells Dutchy (Sig Ruman) that Joe (Noah Beery Jr.), who just recently died while trying to land his aircraft, was simply not good enough at his job. If Chance were to die while fighting Burdette and his gang, then he wasn't good enough, but at least he died with honor.

Hawks isn't one to believe in heroes the way Ford does. In *Rio Bravo*, however, he makes a hero out of Wayne, whether or not it was intentional. His presence is intimidating to everyone. One scene in particular has Dude and Chance walking around town at night as a routine sweep of the town to make sure everyone is safe and sound. Nathan has a saloon of his own that Chance walks by. There is a man standing outside smoking a cigarette. The man side eyes him, and Chance stops and stares the man down as he then tries to avoid eye contact. He gets spooked by the sheriff's presence that he stutters to put out his cigarette. Dude, on the other side of the street, watches in amusement. The man eventually starts to step away, but he turns around and faces Chance, locking eyes with him. "Good evening" Chance says to the man. "Yes sir" he responds with and walks back into the saloon. Chance, and audience members, can't help but chuckle. It is that little scene of toughness that makes audience connect with Wayne's character. Eventually the two men make it back to Carlos's (Pedro Gonzalez) hotel, which Chance's longtime friend, Pat Wheeler (Ward Bond), is staying at while he visits town. Carlos

tells him that Wheeler is asking around for people to help Chance, who is trying to stop Nathan's attempts at breaking his brother out of his jail cell. He tells his friend that he doesn't want the help because in doing so he could endanger other people's lives: he would rather himself die than others. Chance is a man with integrity, and he stands by his beliefs. He is everything a man ought to be. He is exactly the type of man Ford loves to portray in his films; he is exactly the type of character Wayne would later portray in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962, dir. Ford).

Though this film says a lot about masculinity and heroism, it has more to say about what it takes to build a community and a family. It is a theme that is a staple to Ford and his films. Hawks is very critical when it comes to discussing society: The society in *Only Angels Have Wings* is cynical and dark, *Scarface* is crime-ridden with a government that doesn't do anything to help alleviate it, and in *Sergeant York* the violence of war is somewhat of a must. But in *Rio Bravo* there isn't as dark of a critique on society. What *Rio Bravo* tries to say about the community is that it can only be at peace when thorns such as the Burdette's are plucked away from it, and until that happens there will always be unrest and a sense of danger. This approach is very similar to Ford's *Wagon Master* (1950, dir. Ford) in which a wagon train of Mormon's must fend off Clegg gang in order to successfully build up their community. The community in *Wagon Master* is still in its primal phase, there is no community yet. In *Rio Bravo* the community is already there. Both films though focus on getting rid of such aspects of society. It is something the society in *Scarface* fails to do and what society at the end of *The Searchers* alludes to when it shuts the door on Ethan. This connects back to Wayne's heroism in the film. The society *needs* Chance. Without him there would be complete lawlessness and the Burdette's would terrorize the town. Chance knows this; he is aware that he is their leader which is why he will defend every citizen in it with his life. It is what reminds us that Wayne *is* an American hero and not a

villain: his image is that of Ringo the Kid and Chance rather than Tom Dunson and Ethan Edwards.

In 1962, Ford released what many consider to be his masterpiece, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. The film stars Wayne as Tom Doniphon, Jimmy Stewart as Ransom Stoddard, and Lee Marvin as Liberty Valance. This film is a self-reflection film for Ford: everything he has made has built up to this film. The western genre was slowly fading out in popularity similar to Ford. Not many people were as interested in going to the theaters to see a western as they were a few years prior. Both Ford and Wayne became a victim to this decline. This didn't stop Ford from making another western. *Liberty Valance* was released three years after *Rio Bravo*, and it was Ford's way of expanding on what Hawks reestablished with Wayne.

The film opens up with Ransom, who is a successful United States senator, and his wife, Hallie (Vera Miles), riding into the small town of Shinbone via train, a metaphor of the changing times not only in this town but in real life, to visit an old friend who has recently passed. It comes to our knowledge that this friend is Tom Doniphon. Ransom is soon harassed by the media who demands to know why he has come to visit their small town; specifically, to visit a man no one seems to really know about. Without any way out of it, he tells them about his friend and why he means so much to him. 25 years earlier, Ransom, a young attorney at the time, is brutally beaten by Liberty Valance and his gang as he is entering the territory. It is then Tom who finds him lying in the woods wounded and alone. He takes him back to his town of Shinbone where Hallie, who was Tom's girlfriend at the time, treats to his wounds. When Ransom wakes up, he tells Tom how he wants to put Liberty Valance in jail. Tom tells him though that in order to stop Valance, he must carry a gun. "I know those law books mean a lot to you, but not out here. Out here, a man settles his own problems" he tells him. Ransom refuses to

wield a gun, he is all about law and order. It is very much fitting for Wayne to be playing such a character: he only knows of the old, traditional ways of handling issues, like he knows the old, traditional ways of Hollywood. Tom does not care much for the law, just like Liberty does not; however, both character's approach it from different viewpoints. The way Tom sees it, this is tradition, one settles their issues with their gun. Liberty sees it as an excuse to create chaos and incite fear amongst the townspeople.

Tom's status within the town is one of high respect. Everyone in the town loves Tom, and to them, he is their protector, almost like a God. This is evident as Tom is the only man in town willing to stand up to Liberty Valance. Others cower away, even the town Marshall, Link Appleyard (Andy Devine). After recovering from his wounds, Ransom starts working with Hallie at her diner in the kitchen. He is a bust boy for them. It is a busy night; everyone is having a good time until Liberty busts through the doors and the entire diner goes silent. Liberty is clearly looking for chaos as he scares off a few people, taking their seats and their food. When he looks over and notices Tom, his demeanor changes slightly, as if he were a bit intimidated by Tom's presence. Ransom, who is in the back at the time, doesn't notice this. He brings out a couple of plates to bring to Tom and newspaper editor Dutton Peabody (Edmond O'Brian), who is the town drunk and recalls Thomas Mitchell's alcoholic doctor from *Stagecoach*. This self-reflectivity of past films is something Ford takes from Hawks who does this quite often with his films. As Ransom walks out of the kitchen, he notices Liberty's silver whip, the same one he used to brutally beat him earlier in the film. Liberty looks up, "Well looky at the new waitress" and he laughs. Ransom tries to ignore him and proceeds to give Tom his food, but Liberty trips him, and he drops everything on the ground. Liberty sits there laughing at him. Tom stands up to defend Ransom, whom he calls Pilgrim. Liberty and his men are startled by him. They jump up

and reach for their guns. “That’s my steak, Valance” he says confidently. “Well, you heard him, dude” Valance says to Ransom, “Pick it up.” Ransom, full of rage, tells him no and tries to attack him. “Pilgrim, hold it. I said you, Valance. You pick it up” His tone is threatening. Tom steps right up to Liberty, squaring him up. But Ransom steps in between them in a crazed fit; He picks up the steak. Liberty walks out, but he spins around quickly to with his hand on his gun. “Try it Liberty! Just try it” Tom is itching for the chance to shoot Liberty, and vice versa, but Liberty relaxes himself and walks out. Instead, he shoots his gun in the air and at nearby buildings. Tom was willing to die over a piece of steak. If it were any other townsman, they would’ve walked away scared. Later on, Ransom is trying to establish the territory as a state, but he would need two delegates to represent it. He makes the people vote on it. Ransom starts the process with who he wants to nominate. “I’d like to nominate a man who I think is the only man in Shinbone who has the right qualifications to lead us in our fight for statehood. [...] I nominate Tom Doniphon.” The crowded saloon roars in applause, people stand up cheering, but Tom denies the nomination. “‘cause I got plans. Personal plans.” And he walks away. These personal plans involve marrying Hallie, which he told Mr. Peabody the night Liberty tripped Ransom at the diner, though, he hasn’t told anyone else. But what Tom is also saying in this moment is that he wants to “retire”. He cannot adapt into the new way of law and order that Ransom is working hard to achieve; he wants no part of it. And so, he wants to walk off into the sunset with Hallie and live a peaceful and quiet life outside of the town. He even starts to build an addition room to his ranch specifically for her. This choice for Tom also alludes to Wayne’s current situation in Hollywood; he does not want to be a part of this new Hollywood that is starting to slowly set in. Ford could have made this film be set in 1962 in Hollywood with Wayne playing himself and the story, still, would be the exact same.

By the end of the film, Ransom, who finally caves in and starts to learn how to handle a gun, challenges Valance in a shootout. Valance, the superior gunslinger, messes around with him, shooting at the light post next to him and then shooting him in his arm. He is ready to shoot Ransom in the head when they both fire their shots, but it is Liberty who falls to the ground. The whole town cheers for hi as they celebrate Valance's death. They praise him as the man who shot Liberty Valance. But we find out later that it was not Ransom who killed Valance, but Tom, who was hiding in a nearby alleyway. In saving Ransom's life though, he loses Hallie who falls for Ransom. She was his everything. Hallie was to Tom as Fen was to Dunson and what Martha was to Ethan. "But... But Tom why did you do it? Why?" Ransom asks Tom. "Cold-blooded murder. But I can live with it. Hallie's happy. She wanted you alive." He tells him. "But you save my life." "I wish I hadn't." We are reminded for a split second of what Ethan Edwards told Martin, "It just happened to be me," when he is reminded that he saved him as a kid, and the bitter hatred Tom Dunson felt towards Matt towards the end of *Red River*. It's sympathy we feel towards him though. Our emotional connection to Tom only gets stronger. If it were not for Ransom, Tom could have retired peacefully, married the love of his life, and rode off into the sunset, like a true western hero. Instead, he doesn't get what he wants, and he dies alone as a forgotten man.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance is not about Tom Doniphon or Ransom Stoddard or Liberty Valance, it's about John Wayne and John Ford coming to accept that Hollywood is becoming younger while they are getting older. It is a self-reflective film for both men. The town of Shinbone is progressing to a new way of life that is foreign to Tom, and if it weren't for Ransom, this would not have happened. But it did, and in both cases, neither Wayne nor Tom can do anything to stop it. Wayne would have to go on being a nobody to new audiences, who cared more for the new, young directors and actors in Hollywood. Tom's death is a metaphor to

the way Wayne's career dies: When Ransom comes back to Shinbone to visit his old friend, the press wonders why he would take the time to come out to Shinbone and visit a simple rancher. Wayne, to audiences, was just a cowboy; that's all people remember him as, before and after 1962. But Ford saw him more than a cowboy; he saw more than Ringo the Kid, Tom Dunson, Capt. Kirby York, Sean Thornton, Ethan Edwards, and Tom Doniphon. The reporter of modern-day Shinbone tears up the story he wrote that Ransom told him. "You're not going to use the story, Mr. Scott?" Ransom asks him. "No, sir" He responds, "This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legends."

Although Wayne was often the star of movies, he couldn't have reached such status without the help of Ford and Hawks. They both used him in such a unique way that it defined an entire genre. Though Ford is often credited with this, it is often forgotten that Hawks was a huge influence on Wayne's, and Ford's, career as well. Without *Red River*, there wouldn't be a *Searchers*. Ford wouldn't have made Wayne become a hate-filled villain without Hawks doing so first. Hawks showed Ford that Wayne could act. Together, both men helped create one of the greatest careers of any actor in Hollywood ever, even if he was only a cowboy.