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James Mangold's *3:10 to Yuma* and the Mission in Iraq

THOMAS A. HORNE

“Our Nation Has a Mission”

THOUGH THE UNITED STATES NO LONGER USES Western films to discuss national issues, the films' relationship to American history, or their place in national mythologies, occasionally a Western is released that reminds us of their power. Director James Mangold's *3:10 to Yuma* (2007) is such a Western. It is, I want to argue, an Iraq War Western. And since it is a remake of the 1957 *3:10 to Yuma*, it is able to place the mission in Iraq in the context of two other American missions—the settling of the West and the Cold War.

In 2003 the United States undertook the liberation of Iraq under the banner of the most deeply held belief of American patriotism, that “Americans are a people set apart, a people with a providential mission” (McKenna 6). America needs missions in order to affirm its sense of itself as exceptional, alone among the nations of the world favored by God. In film, which so often displaces the political with the personal, the idea of America's exceptional mission is often conveyed through stories of exceptional Americans. It is the heroic individuals of our art who often carry the meaning of our national destiny. In the willingness of these characters to act courageously, we see a

model for national action. And we see in their virtue and triumphs the promise that a virtuous America will be successful.

A number of anti-Iraq War films focused specifically on the nature of heroism in that conflict in order to deny that war the legitimacy that heroism can bestow. *In the Valley of Elah* (2007) and *Redacted* (2007) dealt with soldiers who lost their humanity fighting in Iraq, and *Hurt Locker* (2009), more ambiguously, reduced heroism to an adrenaline addiction. As a character says in *In the Valley of Elah*, “you shouldn't send heroes to places like Iraq, [where] everything is fucked up.”

No genre is more famous for creating heroes and incorporating grand, national themes in the personal stories of Americans than the Western. Mangold has said that “Westerns are about our great mythical landscape, our Mt. Olympus, in which all of the great American themes are played out in this kind of fever dream” (“James Mangold” A15). And although the Western returns again and again to the same myths, it does so, according to Mangold, to place the events of the day in that mythic landscape. “Westerns have a tradition,” he noted in an interview, “of being able to gracefully and easily fold into their subtext ideas about the moment” (Esther 28).

The continued influence of the cowboy narrative was integral to the way George W. Bush presented himself, the war on terror, and his war in Iraq. It was immediately after 9/11 that he likened Osama Bin Laden to a Western outlaw whom he “wanted dead or alive.” More significant was his “mission accomplished”

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announcement. In a culture used to the updating of the Western hero to fighter pilots in *Star Wars* (1977), *Top Gun* (1986), and *Space Cowboys* (2000), for example, the link between Bush stepping out of the jet in full fighter uniform and the symbolism of the Western hero could not be missed. His speech on the aircraft carrier that first day of May in 2003 continued the Western theme his visual presence tried to establish. He called Iraq an “outlaw regime,” invoked the cavalry goal of “bringing order to parts of the country that remain dangerous,” used the language of Manifest Destiny to announce to the world that “our nation has a mission,” and at the end tied America’s mission to God (as well as to the Western captivity narrative)—“To the captives, come out,” he said, quoting from Isaiah 49:9.

But just as Western films have long provided mythic examples of courageous men who subdue vicious outlaws, as in the original *3:10 to Yuma*, which could be used to support American policies such as the Cold War, they also have a history that dates at least to the Vietnam War of debunking the myth of the Western hero and the idea of American exceptionalism that the hero carries. Mangold’s *3:10 to Yuma*, seen as an anti-Iraq War film, is in a tradition that includes the anti-Vietnam War Westerns *The Wild Bunch* (1969), *Little Big Man* (1970), and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), to name just three. Mangold, then, retells the story of the original film in such a way as to deny its use to the cause of American exceptionalism and the mission in Iraq. And more generally, he provides that rare artistic effort, unheroic and cautionary, that disrupts the expectations of the mission narrative in order that some might imagine a mission failing.

“Man Meets His Fate”

The simplicity of director Delmer Daves’s original film certainly lent itself to mythic interpretation. The three main characters (the rancher, the rancher’s wife, and the outlaw) confront one another in a harsh natural setting. As the film opens with shots of the parched earth and

arid landscape, Frankie Laine sings in the background of “buzzards circling, cattle thirsting for rain,” and an environment where “man meets his fate.” Dan Evans, the rancher, and his two sons, rounding up their cattle, come across a stagecoach being robbed by the infamous outlaw Ben Wade. Outnumbered and needing to protect his sons, Dan is impotent to stop the robbery. Dan’s inability to take action against the outlaw is the subject of conversations with his wife and sons throughout these first few scenes. “Are you going to let them . . . ?” the son asks his father as they watch the stagecoach being robbed. “Not much I can do,” the father replies. When they arrive home, his wife picks up this line of questioning. “What did you do?” she asks. Dan says, “What could we do? There were twelve of them.” His wife continues that it was terrible that all he and the boys could do was “watch bad things happen.”

Dan’s helplessness is not confined to stopping the outlaws. He is also unable to do anything about the drought that threatens his ranch. In desperation, he goes to Bisbee, the closest town, in a futile attempt to borrow money. By happenstance, he becomes involved in the capture of Ben Wade and reluctantly (for as Robert Ray has pointed out, all American heroes are reluctant) agrees to take Wade to the Yuma prison for \$200, the amount he needs to buy water. But Dan is not yet a hero, since he is thinking only of himself and his family. He must undergo more insults, which occur at his house, in front of his wife and sons. During the few hours Wade and his captors spend at Dan’s ranch, as part of a diversion, Dan’s wife serves dinner to everyone. First, the Evans boys tell Wade about their mother’s father, who was a prosperous sea captain in San Francisco and who, they say, would shoot Wade if he were present. Presumably, Dan worries about living up to the standard of masculinity set by his father-in-law. Then, since Wade’s hands are tied, Dan is reduced to doing woman’s work because he must cut the meat served to Wade. Wade emphasizes Dan’s demeaned status and further humiliates him when he prolongs Dan’s female task by asking him to cut away

the gristle on his steak. Throughout this scene, to Dan's great distress, since he can do nothing about it, Ben seeks to charm Alice with compliments and stories.

Without difficulty, Dan, Butterfield (the owner of the stagecoach company), and Alex (a drunk who also needs \$200) arrive in Contention, where the train to the Yuma prison will stop at 3:10 p.m. Alex rides to the edge of town to watch for Wade's gang, and Butterfield sets out to find deputies to help. Dan is left alone with Wade in the hotel's bridal suite, the only room available. And like so many before him, as Simon Petch points out, it is here that Dan becomes a man. Since Dan took the job of escorting Wade to the train only for the money, Wade assumes that Dan will set him loose for even more money. He offers Dan \$400, then \$7,000, and finally \$10,000 to let him go. But Dan refuses. Desperate to earn the respect of his family, he will not be bribed. Nor will he allow Wade to be killed by the brother of the murdered stagecoach driver. Dan insists that Wade have a fair trial. Dan's sense of justice is now associated with the ideals and institutions of his country—that is, the rule of law.

When his wife arrives in town and makes her way to the hotel room, she passes the dead body of Alex, who had been shot and then hung in the hotel's lobby. Now, confronted with the real costs of the mission, she loses her courage and pleads with Dan not to go through with his attempt to put Wade on the prison train. Their exchange is, I think, the most important in the film. Alice fears that Dan may be taking Wade to try to impress her, implicitly recognizing her earlier criticism. Now she apologizes for anything she might have done that could be motivating him and tells him that she loves her life. Confronted with Dan's moral courage and willingness to exert his control over the outlaw Ben Wade, she adopts the proper role of an obedient wife. Acting according to the moral law, then, first enabled Dan to subject the outlaw to justice and then reestablished the natural hierarchy in his family.

Because we are in the mythic world of heroic missions, where "there is a relationship

between the human and the natural world," Dan's actions resonate in nature (Pye 201). As Alice enters the hotel, we hear a very loud clap of thunder. When Alice and Dan meet, Dan asks if she heard the thunder, obviously pleased that rain might fall. But Alice didn't hear it and replies, "Dan, there is no thunder." Only men who act according to moral laws, it seems, experience the deep order of the natural world. Alice can hear only Dan. And although Dan invokes the sacrifice of Alex and the need for public order to justify his actions, the most significant reason he gives is "I just have to." He even makes clear that he is not acting to become a hero, perhaps because adopting that as a motive would suggest an undue interest in the way others would view him. Dan has reached the point where he chooses to do what is right simply because it is right, and not because of the consequences that it may bring.

Overhearing this conversation and watching the way Alice looks up into the face of Dan is Ben Wade. It is always somewhat of a mystery why Wade allows and, at the very last minute, actually helps Dan to put him on the train to prison. His own comment—that he does not want to be in Dan's debt since Dan saved him from the stagecoach driver's brother—seems insubstantial for a man who has broken so many rules. Of course, one explanation is that Wade is confident that he can break out, as he has done before. But when the camera focuses on Wade as he hears Alice apologize and submit herself to Dan, we note the intensity of his expression. I think that for just a short while, long enough to make it to the train, he too recognizes Dan's place in the moral order and cannot help but submit himself to that order. Perhaps the many times in the film when Wade's humanity has been exhibited suggest a man waiting to be led from lawlessness.

In *Gunfighter Nation*, Richard Slotkin focused on the centrality of the Western hero's use of violence to complete his mission and the process of moral regeneration. This 3:10 to Yuma is no exception. Early on we learn from the sheriff that Dan is the best shot in town. And while Dan and Ben Wade are in the hotel room,

there is much discussion about whether Dan would use the gun he holds on Ben. It is important that Dan convinces Ben he would. And at the very end, to guarantee their escape, Dan shoots the gang's second in command.

3:10 to Yuma is, according to the theme song, the story of Dan Evans's fate or destiny, which turns out to be his redemption. Because Dan was portrayed at the start as no better than anyone else, his story could be the story of any American; it could be the story of America itself. To become a man, the moral ideal around which the film is organized, he must overcome his timidity and materialism by standing up for justice, defeating the outlaw, and defending the law, even if this requires using violence. In 1957 this narrative would have been associated with America's defining mission, the settling of the West; its recent success in World War II; and its current mission, the Cold War. It was not enough for Dan to be a good father and husband; he had to be willing to fight evil, even when others of less courage urged him to give up. That it is impossible to imagine how Dan could actually get Wade to the train without getting shot by the seven members of Wade's gang only adds to the heroic feat. But the limits of normal life have never stopped a hero. The result of Dan's heroism is the defeat of unruly nature, wilderness, and lawlessness, through the restoration of the natural, patriarchal order in himself, his family, and his society. In a final visual reference to courage and manly potency, the film ends with the train carrying Dan and Wade entering a tunnel, Alice waving, and the rain falling.

The Deadly Outlaw

In 2007, in the depths of the second Iraq War, with the television coverage of that conflict tarnishing America's latest mission and its heroes, James Mangold directed a brilliant remake of Delmer Daves's classic. I take the death of Dan Evans at the end of the film to be the last in a series of images that constitute a skeptical reappraisal of America and its missions.

Mangold's *3:10 to Yuma* opens with the two

Evans brothers in their bed, the older brother striking a match to illuminate the dime novel *The Deadly Outlaw*, which is on a table next to him. Everyone in the family is awake and alert to a possible threat to their ranch. That threat becomes real when fire engulfs their barn. Dan Evans (played by Christian Bale) rushes out of the house but is hit from behind by one of the men who set the barn on fire. Dan is told that he has one week to repay his debt, or the house will be burned. Struggling to get up and to put on his boot, we see that he has an amputated foot. His oldest son, William (Logan Lerman), the one reading the dime novel, has rushed past his father and gone into the barn to rescue the horses. He is about to take a shot at the fleeing men when Dan grabs him and says, "I'll take care of this." His son replies, "No, you won't."

This scene does not exist in the 1957 original. The simplest way to express the difference between the way these two films open is to say that the original establishes unmediated nature (the parched desert landscape), timeless and unhistorical, as the reality in which the story takes place, and its values are affirmed, whereas the remake is set within a human-constructed, historically situated society. The dime novel being read by the son reminds the audience that people in actual societies experience the world through the categories of art and myth and that the myth of the settling of the West as "a national mission ordained by God" will be one of the topics of this film (Jones 22). The burning of the barn because of a debt brought on by a draught establishes economic relations as mediating the struggle with nature and alerts the audience to the importance that property relations will play in this film.

The change from struggle against nature to the struggles that occur within more complicated social settings is not new to Westerns. In fact, it was virtually in the beginning of the Western as we think of it—narratives built around cowboys and outlaws—that the town became a more typical locale than the wilderness. After 1875 the Western dime novel was more likely to be set "against a societal backdrop,

usually a mining camp or frontier town complete with stagecoach or railroad line, banks, newspapers, and saloons” than to be set against the wilderness (Jones 124). The purpose of the town setting was to introduce “a microcosm through which to criticize social institutions and to explore the pressing conflicts of a more advanced, urban culture” (Jones 126). Though the 1957 *3:10 to Yuma* spent a few minutes in Bisbee and then moved to the town of Contention, the action there was mostly confined to a hotel room and then to conspicuously empty streets. Not only does the 2007 remake populate these towns with people and businesses, it also adds a long segment that follows Dan and his party from Bisbee to Contention.

Mangold uses this thicker social setting to place his story in an American West long on greed, violence, and powerful corporations and simply refuses to allow the audience to indulge in nostalgic or romantic views of American history. This more critical view of American history has been at the heart of the antiwar Western. The actual existing America, these films implicitly argue, is in no position to tell any other country how to behave. In *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), perhaps the most critical Western, a mining company ran the town. But in the new *3:10 to Yuma*, it is the railroad that is at the root of Dan’s problems. With the railroad coming to town and needing land, it turns out that Dan’s property is worth more with him off of it, which is why the man who has loaned Dan money is trying to make sure he fails. In the original *3:10 to Yuma* Dan’s enemy was a harsh nature in the form of the drought and the outlaw; here Dan’s enemy is big business and a system of property rights that allows some to impoverish others.

In this *3:10 to Yuma* the railroad is not a symbol of progress, nor does the fact that it transports outlaws to prison make it a servant of justice. When Wade (Russell Crowe) is first arrested, Butterfield (now a “shiny shoes” employee of the Southern Pacific) lists all of the economic damage Wade has done. Wade points out that his gang also killed people but that Butterfield never mentions them, sug-

gesting that human life is no more important to the railroad than it is to Wade. At the dinner table at Dan’s, in a discussion of killing that includes Dan’s sons, Wade suggests they ask for the opinion of McElroy (a new character added by Mangold, played by Peter Fonda), who works for the Pinkertons and has been hired by the stagecoach to guard the payroll. According to Wade, McElroy has killed “many men, women, children, miners, and Apaches.” The reference to killing miners is certainly an allusion to the historical role of the Pinkertons in infiltrating unions and breaking strikes. Later, on the trip to Contention, Wade tells Dan he once saw McElroy kill “thirty-two Apache women and children” when McElroy was under contract to the Central Railroad. Mangold has said that he wanted to “lift the veil” on the practices of the railroad and to ask the audience to compare the railroad’s moral status with that of Wade (Esther 29). Of course, Mangold’s critical view of the railroad is part of a tradition, which can be seen in the early and sympathetic chronicles of Jesse James’s “defiance . . . of the iron horse” (Slotkin 138) as well as in Sergio Leone’s 1968 classic, *Once Upon a Time in the West*.

This film also reminds the audience that the racism of America’s march west was not confined to crimes against Native Americans. As Dan’s party, chasing Wade, who had escaped the night before, comes upon a railroad crew laying tracks, we see the near-slavery conditions of the Chinese immigrants who built the railroad. And in a reference to George W. Bush-era policies, we catch sight of lawmen who work for the railroad torturing Wade. The railroad seems to constitute its own government, certainly more powerful than any other government we encounter in the film, with its own armed forces, treasury, and slaves. Yet this is the company that Dan is risking his life for. If we take seriously the idea that this film is a comment on the war in Iraq, it is not a stretch to see it suggesting that young Americans in Iraq die for corporate America, especially big oil, just as Dan Evans will die for the railroad.

“All That a Man Needs”

Why would Dan undertake this impossible task? As in the original film—and probably true to the motivations of many who enlist in the military today—Dan is desperate for money. He is also desperate for the respect of his wife and sons, a respect that seems to depend on his ability to live up to the mythology of masculinity circulated by the dime novels. “I’m tired of watching my boys go hungry. I’m tired of the way they look at me. I’m tired of the way you don’t,” he says to his wife. But Mangold adds an additional motivation, one that may have resonated with George W. Bush, who believed his father had made a mistake in not deposing Saddam Hussein in the first Iraq War. The amputation revealed in the very first scene resulted from a wound suffered in the Civil War. It was not, however, the wound of a hero, for it occurred during a retreat when one of his own men accidentally shot him. “Try telling that story to your boy—see how he looks at you,” Dan says. It is clear that Dan’s pride, perhaps even more than his foot, was hurt in that previous war and that he is trying to regain his self-respect as well as the respect of his family by undertaking this new, impossibly dangerous task. He is incapable of taking the advice that Wade offered: “Don’t muddy the present with the past.” Mangold’s desire for the audience to identify Dan’s situation with that of soldiers serving in Iraq is clear when he adds the detail that Dan served in the Civil War only because his state militia was called up for national service.

Since many of the Americans who supported the Iraq War saw America’s mission in religious terms, as President Bush expressed in his quotation from Isaiah during the “Mission Accomplished” speech, it is worth noting that it is Ben Wade and McElroy, the two most violent men in the film, who are quickest to invoke Christ—“to justify murder” (Esther 29). Wade repeatedly quotes the Bible, and McElroy admits proudly it is the only book he has ever read. McElroy’s religiosity and his willingness to kill Apaches evoke cynicism even from Wade. “Byron fig-

ured Jesus wouldn’t mind. Apparently, Jesus wouldn’t like the Apache.” Dan’s only comment about God is “I been standing on one leg for three years, waiting for God to do me a favor, and he ain’t listening.” But also present, besides the hypocrisy of Wade, the fundamentalism of McElroy, and the agnosticism of Dan, are the religious sentiments of Alice (Gretchen Mol), Dan’s wife. At the dinner table before the trip to Contention, she insists that “grace is for everybody,” even the outlaw Ben Wade. Here are religious sentiments that challenge Wade, McElroy, and perhaps George W. Bush, in that they recognize the common humanity of friend and enemy, rather than divide the world into the godly and the heathen.

Perhaps Mangold’s most interesting plot change from the original is to make Dan’s oldest son, William, rather than his wife, the center of attention. We are introduced to William as a reader of *The Deadly Outlaw* and can suppose that the idea of masculine heroism he has learned from this literature is part of the reason he has so little respect for his father. As William watches Wade’s gang rob the stagecoach, we can see that he is fascinated. Though Dan tells William he cannot go to Contention, William disobeys and follows. Dan naturally assumes William is following him, but Wade may be closer to the truth when he asserts that William is actually following *him*, Wade, so alluring is the reputation of a deadly outlaw. This short exchange establishes one of the central issues in the film—will William follow in the footsteps of his father or model himself on Ben Wade?

The fight between Dan and Wade for the soul of William is seen in a conversation around the campfire. Wade regales William with stories of Dodge City. He tells William he went there for the first time at just about William’s age and describes the gambling, the drinking, and the women that are available—“all that a man needs,” he says. To break the spell of Wade’s tale, Dan asks how many men he has killed and how many families he has destroyed. William takes it all in but is clearly impressed with Wade.

In the original *3:10 to Yuma* the question was whether Dan would become a man—that is, have the courage that Alice lacked. The question posed this way reiterated “the classic opposition [between women and men] from which all Westerns derive their meaning” (Tompkins 48). Though Gaylyn Studlar (43–74) rightly sees many Westerns as having more complicated gender relations than Tompkins does, in the case of the Delmer Daves original, Tompkins’s formulation works well. But Mangold’s focus on William avoids the simple opposition of male and female and asks instead what type of man William should become. This allows for some of the most aggressive characteristics of manliness to be seen as part of the outlaw personality, leaving room for the husband/father/rancher to be developed differently. The capacity for violence, in particular, changes in value. Against femininity, in the circumstances of the movie frontier, the capacity for violence becomes a defining part of manliness. However, when husband/father/rancher manliness can be compared to outlaw manliness, violence can be presented more problematically, and courage may take on a different meaning.

Compare, for example, Mangold’s *3:10 to Yuma* to the classic *Shane* (1950). In that film, the young boy watching the shoot-out at the end is not traumatized; in fact he helps Shane with a well-timed warning and clearly idolizes him. Shane may have wanted to warn the young boy off gun-fighting, but so heroic and therefore alluring was Shane’s ability to use violence that it seems unlikely any young man took home that official message. To make certain that message romanticizing violence is not taken from this film, Mangold has Dan die.

As the moral focus of the film turns to William, the lessons of the dime novels he reads gain in significance. In raising the question of the value of literature’s mythic representation of the West, this *3:10 to Yuma* joins a list of other extraordinary Westerns. Two John Ford films, *Fort Apache* (1949) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962), explicitly explore the difference between events as they actually happened and their mythic representation in the press. More

recent is Clint Eastwood’s masterpiece, *Unforgiven* (1992). In this film, a writer of dime novels, Beauchamp, travels with the gunfighter “English Bob,” whose exploits he chronicles. But by the end, English Bob has been exposed as a fraud, the stories Beauchamp has written as lies, and the vicarious thrills Beauchamp has experienced from being around violence as contemptible. Edward Buscombe has pointed out that “Beauchamp’s fascination with violence comes uncomfortably close to that of the film audience itself” (54). When the young man who begins the film recruiting William Munney (played by Clint Eastwood) to become an assassin actually kills his first man, he becomes sick, loses his bravado, and vows never to shoot a man again. Munney’s killing spree, done under the influence of his first drink (or drinks) in eleven years, is sickening. Since the violence in Mangold’s *3:10 to Yuma* is similarly gruesome and pointless, it also should be seen as a criticism of Western films that glorify violence as well as a criticism of the use of those Western myths to justify, for example, the war in Iraq.

“Seeing the World as It Is”

Five men started out to take Ben Wade to Contention and to put him on the train to Yuma. Another two were part of a diversion. Those two have been killed (one burned alive), as have three of the main party. Thus, when Dan arrives in Contention, he has with him only Butterfield and William. Butterfield goes to find deputies, and William is sent to be a lookout. As in the original, then, Dan and Ben Wade find themselves together in a hotel room, though not the bridal suite, another indication that traditional manliness is not the moral center of this film. Again, rain clouds can be seen over Bisbee. But instead of being a reward for Dan’s virtue, the rain establishes the pointlessness of Dan’s actions. If he had just waited at home, his cattle would have had water, and he would have been able to pay off his debts.

Dan’s wife doesn’t appear in this version to urge Dan to give up and go home. That role is played by William. He returns to the room

to announce that Wade's gang has arrived in town. With his father he watches from the hotel room as Charlie Prince, the gang's second in command, offers \$200 to any man who shoots Wade's captors. Although the streets of Contention were deserted in the original, they are filled in the remake—and given the townsfolk's eager response to Charlie's offer, apparently with violent and desperate men. Unlike the cowardly burghers in *High Noon* (1954) and the original *3:10 to Yuma*, whose self-interest keeps them indoors, these people are ready to kill for a price. Again, the deputies assembled by Butterfield, at the sight of so many against them, back out of their commitment. But in keeping with the idea that the American West was a meaner place than portrayed in the original, as the deputies leave the hotel unarmed, they are all killed. Seeing this butchery, Butterfield also backs out. By now, William has seen enough to have lost his dime novel infatuation with deadly outlaws. Like the young man in *Unforgiven*, William has begun to see through "his own gullibility, vanity, and lust for sensation" (Buscombe 35). He implores Wade to call off his men because he thinks Wade is "not all bad." Wade refuses. Faced with the likely murder of his father, William suggests that he and his father just go home.

When William tries to talk his father out of continuing his attempt to deliver Wade to the train, Dan responds by invoking the memory of Doc, a member of the original group who was killed trying to bring Wade to justice, and the need to give his death meaning. In the original the same conversation occurs, with Dan invoking the death of Alex to explain to Alice why he had to continue. This common use of the dead to sanctify a war is inspirational when it motivates the hero to succeed. But in the case of Mangold's *3:10 to Yuma*, the fact that Dan and so many others die carrying on the fight in the name of the dead suggests a critical appraisal of this argument. As Chris Hedges, war correspondent and author, has pointed out, the invocation of the dead has the result of ending rational discussion. "The cause, sanctified by the dead, cannot be questioned without dishonoring those who gave up their lives . . .

doubts are attacked as apostasy" (Hedges 145). The result of this argument is that bankrupt policies continue, and the dead are allowed to call out for more dead.

After Dan invokes Doc's death, his concern turns more practical. In the original, by turning down the bribe offered by Wade and seeing that he must do what is right for its own sake, Dan becomes a man. In the American West created by Mangold, this virtue seems impossible, even for a man as decent as Dan Evans. Dan again refuses Wade's money, but only because everyone back in Bisbee would know his sudden wealth only could have come from accepting a bribe. So Dan turns to Butterfield, and "now seeing the world as it is," he drives a hard bargain. He wants \$1,000 paid to his wife and assurances that his land won't be taken and his water will flow. Seeing the world as it is means he has seen the importance of money.

Is this the reason Dan doesn't make it on the train and is killed by Charlie Prince? The point, I think, is not that Dan died because he was not virtuous enough. The point is that even someone as fundamentally decent as Dan Evans, who is as virtuous as we are likely to find, cannot be saved from the consequences of foolish missions amid violent men. Dan Evans has the respect of the audience, his mission seems in the best tradition of American idealism, and the structure of the film deeply invests the audience in the mission's success, yet at the end Dan is shot and killed by a near-psychotic outlaw. It is the mission itself and not Dan's character that this film calls into question. Dan's death in Mangold's film causes us to reflect on the first *3:10 to Yuma* and now to recognize that film as a dangerous fairy tale.

"What Are We If We All Bail?"

By the end of this film, the only result of the mission is that almost everyone is dead. The townsfolk who took Charlie up on his offer have to be shot by him because they are shooting so wildly that they are endangering Wade as well as Dan. Charlie and the gang are all killed at the end by Wade, a little inexplicably, perhaps because he

really is all bad, perhaps because he is not. Yet what is the result of all the killing? Wade puts himself into the jail car, in some way honoring Dan's efforts, probably moved by Dan's desire to appear courageous in the eyes of his sons. Remember that Wade never knew his own father. But Wade's escape is certain. He earlier told Dan he had escaped twice before, and the last sound we hear is Wade whistling to his horse so it would run alongside the train.

So the mission to bring Ben Wade to justice has failed, as missions do when they are undertaken by unprepared people with no realistic appraisal of their chances. Our hero dies, and the railroad and the outlaw both live to profit another day. But William also lives, and he seems to have learned something. After his father has been killed and Wade has shot all the members of his gang, William comes up behind Wade and puts a gun to his head, just as he did on the trail to Contention. At that earlier point in the trip, he certainly would have shot Wade. But after witnessing the bloodshed at the train station, instead of shooting, William puts his gun down and walks away, presumably back to the ranch to help his family. Having seen improbably heroic missions undertaken for the sake of large corporations for what they are, he is not likely ever again to march off under their banner.

But what kind of model would Dan Evans be if he had stayed home rather than undertaking the mission to bring Ben Wade to justice? In an interview, Mangold put it this way: "But what are we if we all bail?" (Esther 29). Of course, Dan never shirked his responsibilities to his family, nor did he refuse to serve in the Civil War when he was called up. And there isn't anything in this film to suggest that if Dan had stayed home, he would have stopped trying to make his town better. But after watching Mangold's film and thinking about the forces that drove Dan Evans to his death, we might ask some questions about the missions our government asks us to undertake. First, we should consider seriously Ben Wade's cynical view of the railroad and ask whether our mission serves our interests or those of the rich and powerful. We might also take Wade's advice

not to muddle the present with the past. That is, we ought to make sure we do not see our current mission through the lens of a previous failure and undertake it only to recover the pride we think we lost in the last war. We cannot let the sacrifice of the fallen blind us to the reality of the present and continue a policy because we do not have the courage to admit its failure to the relatives of those who have already died. We cannot let old myths of frontier heroism lead us to undertake impossible tasks in our own time in order to prove our manhood. We have to recognize there are limits to what we can accomplish without causing more harm than good. And we desperately need to overcome the romance with violence that seems embedded in our national history and public myths and that keep us from achieving modest goals that are within our reach through peaceful means.

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