

## Summary

# WANDER FOREVER BETWEEN THE WINDS

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION OF WESTERNS

*Wander Forever between the Winds. Anthropological Study of the Structural Evolution of Westerns* is a book about films that are carriers of myth. The western is a myth in the original sense of the term, which can be described as follows: myth is a narration about sacred things, but sacred things need not belong to the supernatural order. Sacred things are those that are most important for a given society. Myth is also a narration about events that constitute a structure that can simultaneously refer to the past, the present, and the future. The structure of myth can be uncovered by employing structural analysis elaborated by Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss. The first one to apply this method to analyze westerns was Will Wright. The eight chapters of *Wander Forever between the Winds* continue Wright's analysis that he initiated in the 1970s.

Chapter one analyzes the westerns: *Shane*, *Duel in the Sun*, *Bend of the River* and *Yellow Sky* that have the structure of a classical plot; chapter two deals with *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*, westerns that realize the structure of vengeance variation. Chapter three contains the interpretation that westerns which have the structure of classical plot and of the vengeance variation structure employ film to discuss the social contract theory. The documentation presented demonstrates that the philosophical sources of these westerns are Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*.

Interpretation of westerns analyzed in chapters one and two reveals the existence of an anthropological appendix to the social contract to ensure that a society created by the social contract not only will be a society of free and equal but also of white people. I also point out that the earliest sound westerns such as *The Virginian*, *The Big Trail*, and *Cimarron*, realize the original classical scenario that precedes by several years both the structure of classical plot and of the vengeance variation.

Chapter four analyzes and interprets outlaw westerns: *Jesse James*, *The Return of Frank James*, and *The Oklahoma Kid*. These three westerns had their premieres at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s, in the last months of the Great Depression, which began in October 1929. In the outlaw westerns, so-

ciety created by the social contract is divided. The simple and good people are robbed by the rich and ruthless members of society. This dichotomy is a populist interpretation of the social consequences of the economic collapse of the 1930s.

Chapter five analyzes and interprets those westerns that deal with the tyranny of the majority. In this chapter I analyze *The Gunfighter*, *Broken Arrow*, and *High Noon*, which realize the same structure and in the 1950s talked about the tyranny of the majority, of which Alexis de Tocqueville had written in the 1830s.

Chapter six analyzes and interprets westerns with a collective hero: *Rio Bravo*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and *The Wild Bunch*. There are three structural variants: “Mexican”, “conservative”, and one with no specific name. All the westerns with a collective hero are carriers of the mythology of the industrial society, where one of the products of its complex technologies deprive the lone individual of ideal traits. In the 1960s, the ideal individual was knowledgeable, skilled and capable of cooperating with other individuals who are knowledgeable and skilled as well. The “Mexican” westerns are carriers of the myth-ideology of a society engaged in proxy wars in Korea and Vietnam.

Chapter seven considers anti-westerns: *The Ox-Bow Incident* and *Tom Horn*. Anti-western is a western whose constitutive attributes are the lack of structure and realism. The missing structure triggers the effect of realism by comparisons with westerns that do have a structure. Chapter eight analyzes and interprets the film *Unforgiven* of 1992. This Clint Eastwood’s western portrays the antagonism between western and anti-western. At the same time, *Unforgiven* looks back on the history of western and is the final word in the reconstructed structural evolution of the western as a film genre.