

The Hunt for the Wild Bunch

Stone, Rob

DOI:

[10.1080/24741604.2024.2313878](https://doi.org/10.1080/24741604.2024.2313878)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Stone, R 2024, 'The Hunt for the Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema', *Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24741604.2024.2313878>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

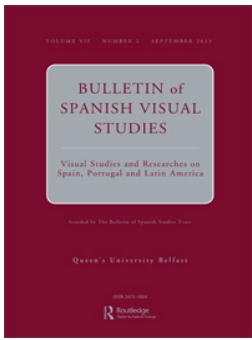
Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.



The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema

Rob Stone

To cite this article: Rob Stone (19 Mar 2024): The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema, Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies, DOI: [10.1080/24741604.2024.2313878](https://doi.org/10.1080/24741604.2024.2313878)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24741604.2024.2313878>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 19 Mar 2024.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema

ROB STONE 

University of Birmingham

It used to be that the genealogy of World Cinema was considered in terms of root and branch with influences and appropriations extending from a trunk that was commonly supposed to be Hollywood. More recently, that way of arborescent thinking in terms of root, stem and branch has been criticized for being monolithic, hierarchical and subjective, and thus an obstacle to be overcome by the de-Westernization and de-colonization of World Cinema. Attempts at delineating and elaborating the dynamics of World Cinema include Dudley Andrew's 'An Atlas of World Cinema',¹ Hamid Naficy's accented cinema,² the exploration of transnationalism by Saer Maty Bâ and Will Higbee,³ the peripheral cinemas of Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones and Belén Vidal,⁴ the latitudinal and longitudinal framework of

1 Dudley Andrew, 'An Atlas of World Cinema', *Framework. The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 45:2 (2004), 9–23.

2 Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 2001).

3 Saer Maty Bâ & Will Higbee, 'Introduction', in *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, ed. Saer Maty Bâ & Will Higbee (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–15.

4 Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones & Belén Vidal, 'Introduction: A Peripheral View of World Cinema', in *Cinema at the Periphery*, ed. Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones & Belén Vidal (Detroit: Wayne State U. P., 2010), 1–19.

The Routledge Companion to World Cinema,⁵ Lúcia Nagib's framing of World Cinema as realist cinema,⁶ my own notions of cinemas of citizens and cinemas of sentiment⁷ and the theorizing of World Cinema in conjunction with World History by David Martin-Jones.⁸ One fact on which all these approaches concur is that Hollywood becomes just one of many cinemas of the world that make up a world of cinemas or World Cinema. De-Westernizing and de-colonizing can be so determinedly oppositional, however, that they risk engineering a reverse-current polemic, flipping Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's trope of 'the West versus the rest'⁹ so that the battle becomes 'the rest versus the west', which demonizes but still centres Hollywood. This video essay—'The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema'—was created for the Centenary Symposium of the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* held in Queen's University Belfast in September 2023.¹⁰ It theorizes, constructs and illustrates a mode of analysis that exploits the potential of video essays in Film Studies. In addition, by way of considerations of alternative genealogies in World Cinema and the work of Carlos Saura, it contends that videographic criticism can be a vital, progressive component of contemporary scholarship.

Debates over World Cinema and the worth of videographic criticism are not separate from the evolution of critical thinking, which contrasts considerations of root and branch with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the rhizome as the moment of connection that makes for vibrancy and growth.¹¹ Rhizomatic thinking denies any hierarchy, centre and total. It has no particular unity and is open-ended but still sequential. The language and structuralist ideas it deploys in the form and content of analysis tend to be sequential too: subject-verb-object, sign-signifier-signified. When describing alternative genealogies in World Cinema, none the less, rhizomatic thinking is useful to *imagine* evolution, expansion, legacy, influence, appropriation, creativity, homage and trespass. This practice still remains subject to arborescent thinking, however, which reinforces hierarchies of what comes

5 Rob Stone *et al.*, 'Introduction: The Longitude and Latitude of World Cinema', in *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema*, ed. Rob Stone *et al.* (London/New York: Routledge, 2017), 1–20.

6 Lúcia Nagib, *Realist Cinema As World Cinema: Non-Cinema, Intermedial Passages, Total Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam U. P., 2020).

7 Rob Stone, 'Cinemas of Citizens and Cinemas of Sentiment: World Cinema in Flux', in *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema*, ed. Stone *et al.*, 267–78.

8 David Martin-Jones, *Cinema against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (London/New York: Routledge, 2019).

9 Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994).

10 My thanks to Gemma McKenna for assistance with the screening of the video essay in Belfast and the subsequent elaboration of this article.

11 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. & foreword by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum Impacts, 2004 [1st French ed. 1980]).

first and what comes next and what comes after that in terms of how one might explain the evolution, diversity and multiplicity of World Cinema. Thus, the challenge of avoiding inflexible monolithic framing, evading hierarchical binary shaping and preventing biased histories from dominating explanations of World Cinema remains unresolved. Rhizomatic thinking is effectively multi-directional in spatial terms, spreading and budding and ‘thinking’ in a nomadic style to make sense of a subject, and it is apt, therefore, to question authorities and destabilize established power structures; but it can also mistake diversity for multiplicity.

When contrasting rhizomatic thinking with arborescent thinking, Deleuze and Guattari compare the latter to tracing and contend that rhizomatic thinking is akin to mapping. They read the metaphorical act of tracing in terms of assuming a pre-established point of view that results in the copying of a pre-existing model and they argue that this is not creative, whereas mapping is the search for something new. Nevertheless, it is arguable that in the Anthropocene era, when there is nothing left on Earth for humanity to explore, mapping only describes what is already there. Mapping does not discover anymore, it cannot experiment and it does not invent unless it is enforcing colonial domination. On the other hand, tracing involves superimposition, which may be subject to inexactitude, embellishment, error, interpolation and even imaginative disregard for what lies beneath. Thus, it is possible to diverge from Deleuze and Guattari (which they themselves encourage as doing so demonstrates rhizomatic thinking) because tracing is a superimposition that includes a temporal element of comparison and contrast that mapping erases, ignores or hides. Consequently, it is this temporal element—the superimposition—that is missing from attempts to map World Cinema. As the video essays that deploy simultaneous multiplicity and complement this article attest, however, the integration of superimposition by means of a flow of comparison and contrast (i.e., juxtaposition) reveals how alternative genealogies in World Cinema might be revealed by the form and content of videographic criticism.

The purpose of simultaneous multiplicity in the video essays that are integrated into this article is to allow for the assemblage and viewing of different—and similar—films at the same time. Simultaneous multiplicity underpins my article ‘World Cinema between the Rock of the Unknowable and the Hard Place of the As Yet Unknown’,¹² co-written with Luis Freijo, as well as my use of the critical framework of Cubism, which is the art of simultaneous multiplicity, to make sense of the cinema of Richard Linklater.¹³ It also inspires Freijo’s drawing from the simultaneity of the languages on the Rosetta Stone as the model for a geometric equation that gives transnational

12 Rob Stone & Luis Freijo, ‘World Cinema between the Rock of the Unknowable and the Hard Place of the As Yet Unknown’, *Transnational Screens*, 12:1 (2021), 1–22.

13 Rob Stone, *Walk, Don’t Run: The Cinema of Richard Linklater* (New York: Columbia U. P., 2013).

purpose to genres such as the western in World Cinema.¹⁴ Split-screen video essays such as Catherine Grant's *Matches* (2016),¹⁵ which explores the extent to which *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1988) references *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954), can make homage and intertextuality explicit; but the video essays that this article describes have the task and purpose of revealing alternative genealogies in World Cinema by running films onscreen simultaneously in order to reveal one film's 'tracing' of another. Any attempt at a description of simultaneous multiplicity in writing or speaking is subject to linearity and sequencing, so *just* writing and *only* speaking are inadequate, but videographic criticism not only makes this possible, it also marks a vital new stage in enabling novel modes of analysis. That is to say, video essays have liberated a new way of thinking through film.

The possibility and potential of representing and perceiving simultaneous multiplicity is evident in the first video essay entitled 'No Trespassing: From Manderley to Xanadu' (2017). This work acknowledges the fact that Alfred Hitchcock made *Rebecca* (1940) a year before Orson Welles made *Citizen Kane* (1941) but it deploys simultaneous multiplicity—running and watching and thereby juxtaposing the opening and closing scenes of both films simultaneously—to reveal that Welles is guilty of trespass.



NO TRESPASSING:
From Manderley to Xanadu

Rob Stone, 'No Trespassing: From Manderley to Xanadu' (2017)

English version.

<https://vimeo.com/stonerob/Trespass>

14 Luis Freijo, 'De-Westernising the Western: Remapping Genre and Nation in World Cinema', Doctoral dissertation (University of Birmingham, 2022).

15 Catherine Grant, *Matches* (2016); available online at <<https://vimeo.com/178181337>> (last accessed 14 December 2023).

One might argue that this video essay simply reveals the sequence of events—that Welles copied something that Hitchcock had made earlier—but the video essay is also treating a historical cause and effect as if they were subject to simultaneous multiplicity. This is because the form and content that makes up the meaning of the video essay is both composed of and subject to two elements: flow and juxtaposition. The split screen shows these films happening at the same time, as being subject to simultaneous multiplicity, even as our intellect might sort the clips into a sequential, historical order. The video essay thus effects a paradox: the two clips happen at the same time and the two clips happen one after the other. Before video essays allowed for the exploration of such simultaneous, multiplicitous flow and juxtaposition, our understanding of films and the filmmaking apparatus was always subject to sequencing: we would watch one film and then the other, sometimes many years apart, and rely on our memories to compare them. Now, however, we can not only see *Rebecca* in *Citizen Kane*, but we can also see *Citizen Kane* in *Rebecca* too. *No Trespassing: From Manderley to Xanadu* is thus the prototype that feeds into this article's titular video essay, one that considers the dialogue and debt that exists between Carlos Saura's *La caza* (1965) and Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) in order to revise or perhaps *alternativize* a genealogy of World Cinema.

The influence of Saura's film is admitted by Peckinpah and noted by John Hopewell:

It is doubtful whether in Spain in political terms [Saura's] films did much more than preach to an already converted minority. (For foreign audiences Saura's films may have been more illuminating: Sam Peckinpah once told Saura that seeing *La caza* changed his life).¹⁶

This fleeting indication of a rhizome (point of contact) inspired Marsha Kinder to compare *La caza* with *The Wild Bunch* in order to seek distinctions between American and Spanish representations of violence (2000). Her analysis is grounded in a root-and-branch sequencing that renders this rhizome largely irrelevant to her consequent concern for determining 'how [violence] functions with cultural specificity in American cinema of the late 1960s'.¹⁷ Kinder states that:

[Peckinpah's] work provides a uniquely productive cross-cultural comparison with cinematic representations of violence in Spain [...]

¹⁶ John Hopewell, *Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema after Franco* (London: BFI Books, 1986), 76.

¹⁷ Marsha Kinder, 'Violence American Style: The Narrative Orchestration of Violent Attraction', in *Violence and American Cinema*, ed. J. David Slocum (New York/London: Routledge, 2000), 63–100 (p. 68).

because his use of extreme violent representation in films like *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and *Straw Dogs* (1971) generated intense cultural debates at the time of their release, which resonated with larger social debates then in progress over whether violence should be considered a legitimate means of social-political change.¹⁸

Kinder then quotes Stephen Prince when claiming that Peckinpah is

[...] the crucial link between classical and postmodern Hollywood, the figure whose work transforms modern cinema in terms of stylistics for rendering screen violence and in terms of the moral and psychological consequences that ensue.¹⁹

This begs the question, however, that if all this can be seen in *The Wild Bunch* and these essential elements can be traced back to *La caza*, then is not Prince's assertion better applied to Saura? That is to say, is not Saura the figure whose work transforms modern cinema in terms of stylistics for rendering screen violence and in terms of the moral and psychological consequences that ensue?

As always in such discussions, the question must be asked as to why it is that Hollywood always legitimizes the debate. Why does a thing not exist until it is 'Made in Hollywood'? Kinder starts her chapter by stating that 'while writing on the cultural specificity of violence in the context of Spanish cinema, I was inevitably confronted by the question of what is culturally specific about Hollywood's violent representations'.²⁰ Why 'inevitably' and why, moreover, should it be a problem with *La caza* that 'it was not well known in the United States'?²¹ Kinder repeats the claim by Hopewell (that Sam Peckinpah once told Saura that seeing *La caza* changed his life) and corroborates it by reference to the filmmaker Ricardo Franco; but then, perhaps because she is unable to see the simultaneous multiplicity of these films in practical terms, she downgrades the connection—the rhizome—by accepting what a single Spanish critic named Pablo del Amo, who 'knew *The Wild Bunch* well' said in 1992: that he 'saw no similarities to *La caza*'.²² Kinder also adds an allusion to Saura being 'unable to see' the influence of *La caza* on *The Wild Bunch* either.²³ Thus the rhizome that (barely) exists between *La caza* and

18 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 63.

19 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 63–64. Kinder is quoting Stephen Prince, *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of Ultraviolent Movies* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1998), 2.

20 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 63.

21 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 64.

22 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 64.

23 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 64.

The Wild Bunch in written film history is not only subject to sequencing, appropriation and colonization, but to subjectivity and the vagaries of memory too. After all, neither Kinder nor del Amo state how many years passed between their viewing of one film and then the other, nor indeed which of the films they saw first. Consequently, Kinder turns away from *La caza* to seek evidence in *The Wild Bunch* of ‘what Peckinpah had learned from Saura’s film and how he had managed to culturally reinscribe it with American specificity to the point that it was unrecognizable’.²⁴

Denied the simultaneous multiplicity that a video essay offers, Kinder and del Amo are arguably ‘blindspotted’ by the infamous violence of *The Wild Bunch*. Blindspotting occurs when a generic trope obscures everything else of interest and value.²⁵ Kinder’s focus on the violence above all else leads her to conclude that:

The life-changing lesson [Peckinpah] learned from *La caza* (and applied not only to *The Wild Bunch* but to his other films that followed) was how to use violence to structure not merely an individual sequence but the stylistic and narrative design of the entire film—that is, to use representations of violence as a series of rhythmic eruptions that orchestrate the spectator’s emotional response.²⁶

Her point is valid but subject to a sequentiality that sees *La caza* and Saura fall away when the revolution instigated by Peckinpah and *The Wild Bunch* takes hold. Kinder claims that the eruption of violence in *La caza* is ‘the cathartic act of exposing it as the legacy of fascism’ and she asserts that the violence in *The Wild Bunch* is ‘orgasmic rather than cathartic, erotic rather than revelatory, for Peckinpah positions the spectator to desire rather than fear its eruption’.²⁷ Kinder rightly contextualizes the violence of both films alongside that of many films about violence of the late 1960s such as Jean-Luc Godard’s *Pierrot le Fou* (*Pierrot the Fool*) (1965) and Gillo Pontecorvo’s *La battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*) (1966). Writing empathetically about films of this period, however, Kinder *fears* the return of the violence of the Spanish Civil War and yet *desires* its impact on the America that is at war in Vietnam. To expand upon this, it might be said that in *La caza* the violence in 1965 is latent (like the violence that underpins the Spanish society that has been subject to the Francoist dictatorship since the Civil War), whereas in *The Wild Bunch* the violence is manifest (as is the violence that defines American foreign policy in Vietnam and in 1969 is

24 Kinder, ‘Violence American Style’, 64.

25 Stone & Freijo, ‘World Cinema’, 12–13.

26 Kinder, ‘Violence American Style’, 65.

27 Kinder, ‘Violence American Style’, 66.

deployed at home against civil rights protestors too). What matters for Kinder is that 'Peckinpah reinscribed Saura's orchestration of violence to address his own cultural context', but now that simultaneous multiplicity is possible in a video essay, we might open the dialogue between both films to questioning.²⁸

The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema

'The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative
Genealogies in World Cinema'

English version

<https://vimeo.com/stonerob/Hunt>

28 Kinder, 'Violence American Style', 67.

La Caza del Grupo Salvaje: Multiplicidad Simultánea y Genealogías Alternativas en el Cine Mundial

La caza del grupo salvaje: multiplicidad simultánea y genealogías
alternativas en el cine mundial.

Spanish version.

<https://vimeo.com/stonerob/Caza>

The video essay reveals its meaning by flow and juxtaposition. In the juxtaposition of the walks taken, before the violence breaks out, by both groups of armed men, for example, there is a similar and perhaps even universal potential for violence. Both walks announce but defer the violence and express duration, which is understood by Henri Bergson as being entirely subject to perception.²⁹ According to Bergson, moreover, there is no past and no future, only a passing present in which we all exist in the same ongoing, eternal and incomplete moment. In this non-fixed point of the passing present, the walk that precedes the violence is also an incursion that symbolizes colonial modernity and signals an exchange between the films. Thereafter, the only real and crucial difference between the violence is that in *The Wild Bunch* American violence is inflicted on others, whereas in *La caza* Spain inflicts this violence upon itself.³⁰ Seen simultaneously in the video essay, which is the apparatus that allows for

²⁹ Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle Louise Andison (New York: Citadel Press, 1992 [1st French ed. 1934]).

³⁰ This difference is foretold in the songs that feature in each film. In the Spanish film (and in the video essay) a character whistles 'Glory Glory Hallelujah', a folk hymn that was sung by *both* sides in the American Civil War, while in the American film the Spanish song that is heard in an earlier scene in a Mexican village is 'La golondrina', another nostalgic hymn but this time one that evokes distance from the homeland.

this, the walks are happening at the same time and at different times in history, and for the duration of the walk the violence is Schrödinger's cat: both happening and not happening. What is important is the porosity of the walk, which reveals not only *La caza* in *The Wild Bunch* but also *The Wild Bunch* in *La caza*, which is where the political, moral and cultural superimposition occurs. It is here that the comparative analysis enabled by simultaneous multiplicity discovers what Jacques Derrida called the trace, which 'is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself'.³¹

Like many video essays, the purpose of 'The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema' is to disrupt the established history and prevailing hierarchy. Its aim is to prompt ethical questions that might allow for the de-Westernizing and de-colonizing of film history. Yet it does not seek to replace the inadequate and inappropriate rigidity of prevailing film history with *another* inadequate and inappropriate rigidity. Rather, it intercedes in order to illustrate an alternative genealogy that should be considered. Neither is this video essay impervious to the rhizomatic extensions of further simultaneous multiplicity: another video essay might juxtapose the freeze frame of the young man at the climax of *La caza* with that which ends *Les Quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows*) (François Truffaut, 1959) and thereby suggest that Saura was seeking allyship with the French New Wave. Another might run the classroom scenes from *Les quatre cents coups* alongside those in Jean Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* (*Zero for Conduct*) (1933). And so on. The catalogue of video essays that results might thereby realize a rhizomatic structure of alternative genealogies that is catalysed by the simulacra of presences, dislocating, displacing and referring beyond themselves to all areas of World Cinema.

To conclude, it might be noted that making films to critique films might be innovative in form but it is not so in approach: scholars of *Don Quixote*, *Niebla* and other novels have been writing books about books forever. What videographic criticism provides is a coming-of-age in film theory and criticism that marks barely ten years of video essays aimed at a hundred or so years of films. This example of a video essay insists that the study of World Cinema requires de-Westernizing and de-colonizing strategies such as simultaneous multiplicity in order to represent the complexity of rhizomatic structures and reveal alternative genealogies. 'The Hunt for The Wild Bunch: Simultaneous Multiplicity and Alternative Genealogies in World Cinema' also makes the particular case that the films of Carlos

31 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans., with an intro., by David B. Allison, preface by Newton Garver (Evanston: Northwestern U. P., 1973 [1st French ed. 1967]), 156.

Saura are essential to the evolution of modern cinema and it suggests, therefore, that such tracings can reveal untold traces of Hispanic cinemas in World Cinema. To this end, the increasing recognition of videographic criticism as a legitimate and progressive form of academic endeavour is also heralded by its publication by the *Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies*, as its sister journal (*The Bulletin of Spanish Studies*) simultaneously celebrates the end of its first century and the start of another.*

* Disclosure Statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

ORCID

Rob Stone  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3621-5794>