No Longer Printing the Legend:

The Aporia of Heteronormativity in the American Western (1903-1969)

DISSERTATION

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades des
Doktors der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)
am Fachbereich II Sprach-, Literatur- und Medienwissenschaften der Universität Trier

vorgelegt von

Tobias Michael Schank

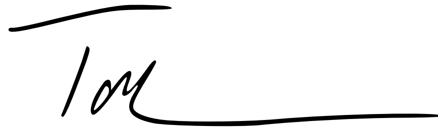
Erstgutachter: Prof. Ralf Hertel
Universität Trier

Zweitgutachterin: JProf. Franziska Bergmann
Universität Trier / Aarhus University

Eingereicht am: 22. Juli 2021
Verteidigt am: 29. März 2022

Eidestattliche Erklärung:

Hiermit erkläre ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und nur mit den angegebenen Hilfsmitteln verfasst habe und die wörtlich oder dem Inhalt nach aus fremden Arbeiten entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht sind. Ferner versichere ich, dass ich die gleiche Arbeit noch nicht für eine andere wissenschaftliche Prüfung eingereicht und mit der gleichen Abhandlung weder bereits einen Doktorgrad erworben noch einen Doktorgrad zu erwerben versucht habe.



Saarbrücken, 28.02.2023

Ort, Datum, Unterschrift

Acknowledgments

No single mind is ever the sole author of any idea or project. In order to learn about, let alone attempt to make sense of the world we live in, we must engage with it, gain perspectives, and let them shape us. I am privileged to say that my existence – and to that point, the existence of this dissertation – has been shaped by many inspiring and caring people, and their perspectives.

To my wife, Isabell. If it had not been for your empowering interventions, your challenging remarks, and your unconditional support, this project would have never seen the light of day. You believed in me when I did not. You opened doors when I felt like they were closing right in front of me. Without your dedication, endurance, calm, comfort, sincerity, and unwavering positivity, I would not be the person that I am today. Without your curiosity, keen mind, and unerring judgement, this text would not be what it is today. You are the strongest person I know, and I will always look to you for guidance and inspiration.

To my parents, who always assured me of their support and their belief in me. I am well-aware of the sacrifices you made to get me this far, and words fail me to express my gratitude. You have always been the invisible-yet-palpable safety net in my life, and a stalwart haven to return to, wherever you were. Home is where you are. Thank you.

To Dr. Uli Jung, who – in his own words – "set me up for this ordeal," and in a gesture of unparalleled selflessness, loyalty and dedication to higher education saw it through with me. I am forever grateful that you encouraged me to begin and follow through with this project. You went out of your way and beyond to support me, even if it came at the expense of your own health. You showed me the respect of a colleague regardless of seniority or other pretenses. This dissertation has benefitted immensely from your inexhaustible knowledge on film, and I will forever think back fondly to our inspiring midday conversations.

To Prof. Gerd Hurm and JProf. Franziska Bergmann, who provided me with exactly the kind of supervision that I required. You allowed and enabled me to conduct my research freely and without prejudice, and offered me wisdom and direction whenever I required it. I have learned so much from our exchanges, and it is in no small part because of you and your forgiving counsel that I discovered so many hidden lessons off the beaten path. Thank you for leading by example, and for showing me the merits of interdisciplinary research.

To Prof. Ralf Hertel, who immediately and unconditionally adopted this project when illness and circumstance compounded its completion. Thank you for keeping an open mind about my arguably outlandish reading of the literary canon, and for allowing a bit of punk to – at least momentarily – enter the curriculum.

To Dr. Frank Meyer, Dr. Agnes Schindler, and all of my former colleagues at Trier University's Graduate Center (GUT), who not only provided me with a steady source of income

but were a reliable and trusted port of call for any scholarly or personal inquiry. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise, and for allowing me to prioritize my own advancement as a researcher even when it went against your interests as employers and colleagues.

To Dr. Eva-Maria Windberger and Dr. Britta Colligs, as well as all the wonderful people who helped shape the colloquium for literary studies that we founded at Trier University back in 2017. You have productively and constructively accompanied the growth and development of this project, and it is in no small part due to the heartfelt empowerment and constructive feedback of this group of brilliant emerging scholars that it has finally come to fruition.

To my phenomenal friends and co-conspirators at Jesus College, Oxford, especially Anna Sapuntsova, Bee Jones, and Sam Wainwright. You have broadened my horizon in a time when I thought I had reached an impasse. You welcomed me as an ally to your causes and taught me the spirit of productive dissent. Through your challenging, playful, imaginative and always supportive reflections on me and my work, this project has reached a level of complexity and nuance that I myself had not thought possible. Thanks to you, I dared to stray from the path.

To Prof. Astrid Fellner, who took me under her wings in the final days of my PhD and has been a constant source of inspiration ever since. I am humbled by your commitment to both academic excellence and research integrity, and I have nothing but the greatest respect for your and your team's tireless efforts to facilitate actual change through research and education.

To Arthur Tylor Richards, who expertly proof-read my manuscript in an exercise of incredible stamina and kindness. I am forever grateful for the countless comments, corrections, and recommendations you made. Thank you for your polite and modest outrage over my over-use of alliteration, your witty and informed annotations, and your patience with my incorrigibly convoluted phrasing. Your assistance has been invaluable.

To my bandmates in both *We Changed our Name* and *Neverland*: music has always been a way for me to convert negativity into something positive and beautiful (although I must admit, beauty lies in the eye of the beholder). For me to be able to scream my heart out, I have always relied on your talent as musicians, as well as your patience, understanding, and love as friends. You keep me sane.

To all the wonderful people I have had the great joy of sharing fantastical adventures with: thank you for indulging my eccentrics and enduring my insufferable acting. Our games of *Dungeons & Dragons* have been an inspiring outlet for my wandering and meandering mind, and a safe space for my inquisitive soul. You have taught me many an unforeseen lesson, some of which shine through between the lines of this dissertation.

Finally, to our child, Bruno. Knowing that you would come into our lives during the final months of this project gave me all the motivation that I needed to complete it. You mean the world to me. This and everything I do will be for you.

For Bruno

Contents

1. Introduction 1
2. State of the Art 22
3. Theoretical Framework 33
3.1. Hegemonic Masculinity 34
3.2. The Social Habitus: Towards a Constructivist Understanding of Hegemonic Masculinity 38
3.3. Destabilizing Gender 40
4. Analysis 47
4.1. Foundation (1903-1929) 47
4.1.1. Nascent Heteronormativity: THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (1903) 50
4.1.2. Constitutive Intersectionality: THE REDMAN'S VIEW (1909) 62
4.1.3. Excursion I: THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS (1920) 76
4.1.4. Formularization and Mythification: HELL'S HINGES (1916) 80
4.1.5. Conformization and Normativization: THE VIRGINIAN (1929) 97
4.2. Depression (1930-1938) 122
4.2.1. An Inconsistent Critique I: CIMARRON (1931) 126
4.2.2. Contingent Calamities: THE PLAINSMAN (1936) 145
4.2.3. Excursion II: WELLS FARGO (1937) and ARIZONA (1940) 167
4.3. Mobilization (1939-1946) 171
4.3.1. As-Good-as-New Men and Women: DODGE CITY (1939) 174
4.3.2. An Inconsistent Critique II: STAGECOACH (1939) 193
4.3.3. Excursion III: THE WESTERNER (1940) and THE OUTLAW (1946) 205
4.4. Readjustment (1947-1951) 210
4.4.1. Between Triumph and Trauma 210
4.4.2. *Film Noir*, the Western, and the *Noir*-Western 217
4.4.3. Searching the Ruins: PURSUED (1947) 222
4.4.4. Retreat to the Fort: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949) 238

4.5. Containment (1952-1961) 264
4.5.1. Heterosexuality as Compromise: THE NAKED SPUR (1953) 270
4.5.2. The Absence of Consensus: THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (1960) 299
4.6. Liberation (1962-1969) 323
4.6.1. Nostalgia: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962) 323
4.6.2. Apocalypse: THE WILD BUNCH (1969) 352
5. Conclusion 375
6. Filmography 381
7. Works Cited 387

1. Introduction

Reporting on the doubts and misgivings cast by President Donald Trump about the widespread implementation of a vote-by-mail system during the COVID-19 pandemic in anticipation of the 2020 U.S. presidential elections, German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* introduced their coverage of the U.S. postal system's idiosyncrasies and developments with a picture of a cowboy riding a stagecoach. The picture is a promotional still taken from John Ford's 1939 Western STAGECOACH, and the cowboy in question is John Wayne (Fig. 1.) Clad in full cowboy garb and looking apprehensively out of a stagecoach, Wayne is framed by George Bancroft on the left, sitting in the coachman's seat, and Louise Platt on the right, sitting inside the stagecoach looking out.

Macht – Wahl – Post

Amerika – Als John Wayne 1939 für den Film „Stagecoach“ mit einer Postkutsche über die Leinwände fuhr, hätten wohl nur wenige gedacht, dass ihr zum damaligen Zeitpunkt technisch schon deutlich weiter entwickelter Postdienst einmal so in die Negativschlagzeilen geraten könnte wie heute. Finanzielle Engpässe sind das eine. In Corona-Zeiten, wenn mutmaßlich viele Menschen ihren Wahlzettel der Post anvertrauen werden, wird es aber sehr schnell höchst politisch. Und weit und breit kein John Wayne, der für Ordnung sorgt. Dafür aber viel Informatives auf den **Seiten 3 und 11**. Foto ddp

Fig. 1. Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. 20 Aug 2020. Page 1.

Tellingly, except for a brief reference to the film in the teaser below, the reader is given no additional information on STAGECOACH or the historical context within which it appeared, let alone anything on Bancroft and Platt, that would explicate why, apart from the (unstated)

semantic connection between the image of the stagecoach and the textual reference to the U.S. postal service,[1] the picture was selected to lead the story. In fact, the following articles on the upcoming election, absentee ballots, and the history of the U.S. postal system abstain entirely from making another connection to the film, the actors, or the image, suggesting that the picture showing the stagecoach and cowboy John Wayne were deemed fit to lead the paper's coverage, because of its ostensible quality to distill into one eye-catching, emblematic image the essence of the articles that follow: the longstanding, seemingly inseparable historical connection between the U.S. postal service and U.S. democracy. Correspondingly, the picture is headlined with a sequence of portentous nouns to substantiate the visual information: "Power – Election – Mail" ["Macht – Wahl – Post"].

This is peculiar. Because not only does John Ford's Western STAGECOACH deal in no way with the postal service or the grueling efforts of connecting the embryonic nation from coast to coast with a steady, reliable form of communication,[2] but apparently the paper's intent was to evoke and suggest historicity – the old West as a synecdoche for the historical genesis of America. It seems rather odd, then, that the newspaper would choose a pictorial reference to the West*ern*, not *the West*; that is, to a genre, at home in the literary and visual arts, that notoriously dealt with the fictionalization of history. Bearing no relevance to the actual content of the paper's subsequent reporting, the invocation of the Western, it seems, suffices to convey a complex network of discourses, including the intricate and tense negotiation of power, the establishment, perpetuation, and defense of democracy, as well as the unique and rapid development of a nation connected from East to West. Yet more to the point, the image inadvertently, and perhaps unwittingly, reveals the amalgamation of these discourses in public perception into a complex semiotic network, in which history and myth, historiography and folklore, the West and the Western, the stagecoach and STAGECOACH, or, to reference another John Ford Western, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962), fact and legend are confusingly intertwined and have become virtually synonymous.

But there is another peculiar facet to the picture's referentiality, contained in the introductory paragraph below the picture, which reads:

> When John Wayne in 1939 rode the stagecoach across the cinema screens in STAGECOACH, few would have thought that the at the time cutting-edge postal service would ever have as bad a press as these days. Financial shortages are one thing. But in times of the Corona virus, when presumably many people will trust the postal service with their ballots, things become political very quickly. And there is no John Wayne to provide law and order. For more information, see pages 3 and 11. (*FAZ* 1; Transl. T.S.)

[1] The German word for stagecoach ["Postkutsche"] literally translates to "mail coach" or "postal coach".

[2] With that in mind, James Cruze's THE PONY EXPRESS (1925) or Fritz Lang's WESTERN UNION (1941) would have made better examples, albeit less familiar ones.

The part I am interested in is the second-to-last sentence, juxtaposing as it does the symbolic significance of John Wayne with the establishment, or restoration, of law and order. Given the enduring status of John Wayne as an epitome of American identity (cf. Wills 11-27) and given that this status entails and reflects a very specific conceptualization of gender (cf. Meeuf 2-3), it stands to reason that the newspaper's teaser is attempting to make a provocative connection between John Wayne as the paragon of a strong, stable, authoritative, and intelligibly masculine American identity (cf. Weidinger 12), and the absence, or distortion of that image under the presidency of Donald Trump, respectively. After all, as Stanley Corkin has illustrated, U.S. popular political culture has a history of invoking the immortal spirit of John Wayne to precisely that effect, among others (cf. 219).[3]

What is the newspaper's summoning of the myth of John Wayne, then, but a reminder that law and order, just leadership and the gender configurations that go with it, are void in the historical reality of today?[4] What is it but a revealing testimony to the "imaginative power" that has suffused both popular perception and reception of the Western, wherein myth regularly outlives historical fact (cf. Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western* 13)? What is it but an equally revealing observation that these dynamics have prominently resurfaced under the presidency of Donald Trump, arguably like never before (cf. Seeßlen, 8-9, 13)? What is it but an inadvertently cynical, or deliberately polemical concession that the complexities of facts cannot (and ought not) be explained by the reiteration of a simple, if alluring legend, both with

---

[3] Jim Kitses raises a similar point in his introduction to *Horizons West: Directing The Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*, noting that "[t]he habit of other nations' leaders to critique American foreign policy as driven by cowboy attitudes testifies to the persistence with which this dominant icon of America colours perceptions and behaviour" (21).

[4] Finding parallels between Trump's rhetoric and the lasting symbolic power of John Wayne, Chris Beem, writing for the *Democracy Institute* of *Penn State College of the Liberal Arts*, notes about the endorsement of Donald Trump's presidential campaign by John Wayne's daughter Aissa during a visit at the *John Wayne Birthplace Museum* in Winterset, Iowa, days before the Iowa Caucus: "In accepting the endorsement, Trump said this: 'When you think about it John Wayne represented strength, he represented power, he represented what the people are looking [for] today because we have exactly the opposite of John Wayne right now in this country. And he represented real strength and an inner strength that you don't see very often, and that's why this endorsement it meant so much to me.' Trump has thus signed on to a vision of John Wayne's America – a time when America possessed this strength and swagger and was therefore more productive, more inventive, and more powerful. In a word, great. This vision also presents a lost ideal of American manhood – an ideal that Wayne himself defined: 'I want to play a real man in all my films, and I define manhood simply: men should be tough, fair, and courageous, never petty, never looking for a fight, but never backing down from one either.' When Trump talks about making America great, this ideal defines not only what he wants to restore for our nation, but who he himself claims to be. […] The John Wayne vision of manhood is one that Donald Trump wants to recapture and restore. It is one that he both presents and which he purports to embody. But it cannot be understated how dramatically Donald Trump fails in this regard. Donald Trump is presenting a model of manhood that he cannot begin to live up to. Where the John Wayne model calls for quiet self-confidence, honesty, courage, and fortitude, Trump is self-centered, self-important, boorish, and childish" (note: Beem's article has since been removed from the internet. The quote is taken from a digital copy I secured on 16 December 2016). My point being here not to gauge between the social acceptability or coherence of both "models of manhood" but to illustrate the popularity and publicity of relating Donald Trump to John Wayne in terms of gender.

regards to politics and conceptualizations of gender? What is it but an unobtrusive and topical reminder that we are yet to fully understand the significance of the Western as a lasting cultural-historical artifact and prolific locus of discourse for the assessment and understanding of American identity?

Indeed, the Western genre has been crucial to the exploration of the conflicting dynamics that make up American identity. Described by one of the earliest film critics, André Bazin, as "the American film par excellence" (*What is Cinema? Vol. II* 140), the genre was not only constitutive for the evolution of American cinema or crucial for the global success of the Hollywood film industry, but also a stalwart host for the spectacular, adventurous, and not rarely self-critical exploration of the mercurial American soul. Transposing sensitive contemporary issues to quasi-historical settings at the *frontier* – that ephemeral cultural construct of the North American West (cf. Rünzler 10) –, the Western produced, reflected on, and endowed meaning to a distinct, historically variable vision of American identity.

As such, the Western has naturally attracted the interest of scholarship. There is a vast body of literature that has, beginning as early as the late 1940s, chronicled, reviewed, and dissected the American Western from a myriad of perspectives. And while this scholarship has produced a plethora of groundbreaking studies that have altered not only our understanding of the Western but also of cinema and American culture at large,[5] there still seems to be a surprisingly strong and lasting conviction among researchers that the Western was, as one researcher puts it, "a masculinist genre: made by male directors, primarily targeting a male audience, capturing male protagonists" (Liebrand 10; Transl. T.S.; also cf. Weidinger 20), or, to cite another researcher, that "[t]he Hollywood Western codified American identity as mainly white and male, largely accepted racial supremacy as a given, romanticized aggressive masculinity and, ultimately, eulogized resistance to regulated society as the truest mark of manhood" (Coyne 15). That is to say: despite the perpetual reassessment that scholarship of the Western has undergone in the past 80 years, the opinion that the genre was structurally conservative in terms of retaining, defending, or stabilizing the cultural hegemony of straight, white men seems to prevail in the contemporary assessment of the genre. Commenting on this development, Jim Kitses writes in his introduction to the New Edition of *Horizons West*, reprinted in 2012:

> Correcting an ideologically innocent criticism of the past, a strong consensus fuelled by feminism and psychoanalysis now finds the genre guilty of bad faith. From this perspective, the feminine in the genre exists to validate masculinity as the dominant norm. Encounters with the Indian, regardless of whether the latter is seen as savage or noble, ultimately function only to secure white identity. […] Such ideological readings of the Western, currently predominant, can inevitably be narrow, ignoring

[5] I will elaborate on this in a more extensive survey of Western scholarship below.

other values and appeals. […] For decades, race and gender were overlooked as critics celebrated film as art and entertainment. The pendulum has swung back with a vengeance: much criticism, scholarship and commentary now speaks with one voice. (21)

For all the valuable ideological-critical insights that have been gained from such research, this widespread unanimity, as Jim Kitses insinuates, is potentially problematic, because by that token scholarship is running the risk of losing track of the diversity and ambiguity contained in its source material. If studies do acknowledge that the Western has always thrived on contradictions and confusions (cf. Pumphrey, "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath" 52), especially in its proclivity to expand on discourses of sexual, gender, racial, ethnic, class, and cultural identity, they commonly conclude that the genre frequently denies the paradoxical foundations onto which equally paradoxical cultural ideals have been piled.

Jacqueline Levitin, for instance, describes in her article "The Western: Any Good Roles for Feminists?" the "western formula," with reference to Henry Nash Smith and John Cawelti, as "an artistic device for resolving problems rather than confronting their irreconcilable ambiguities" (102), thereby seemingly invoking Hollywood's characteristic "invisible style" (Benshoff & Griffin 24; cf. Bronfen & Grob, "Einleitung" 26), in which the primacy of continuity, causality, and, above all, closure ostensibly guarantees to comprehensively undo all complications and contradictions (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 24-25; cf. Bordwell & Thompson 108-10). However, Levitin's observation arguably does not discriminate between the ideological intent she assumes the genre to have and the reality it produces.[6]

My point being, that the Western only purports to resolve irreconcilable ambiguities; it does not actually resolve them. In Hollywood cinema and in the Western, "[c]larity is paramount" (Berg 88), but this clarity is constructed over and against ambiguity, which must be constructed first, if only to be – more often than not – disavowed, rebuffed, eliminated in order to retroactively confirm clarity (cf. Wood, "RIO BRAVO & Retrospect" 189). This means that ambiguity is still present, is not invisible. Conversely, this means that clarity, too, is always already marked, is always already constructed. Ambiguity is done away with and rendered invisible only after the fact, because in privileging and naturalizing clarity, the Western conceals the origins of ambiguity. Scholarship must be careful not to do the same.

At the start of this study, therefore, lies an epistemological observation: Based on the literature that I have consulted in the preparation of this study, it seems to me that over the years, many scholars have prioritized and prepended in their discussions the Western's alleged objective of finding a strong and stable identity. Thus, they have often assumed the same kind of teleological self-evidence that they suspect the genre to have; they "have

[6] Levitin's study dates to 1982, but presuppositions like hers prevail even in more recent scholarship. See, for instance, Martin Weidinger's study *Nationale Mythen – Männliche Helden* (14-15).

constructed that which they intend to critically analyze" (Lünenborg & Maier 106; Transl. T.S.). Put differently, it seems like the perception of the Western as a vehicle for the univocal affirmation and unilateral stabilization of American identity, specifically in terms of sexuality, gender, and ethnicity, in large part reflects only the ideological presuppositions from which studies embark to confirm that perception.[7] But, as Stuart Hall suggests with regards to cultural identity and cinematic representation, "we should think […] of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (704), thus allowing ourselves to acknowledge contingencies for what they are, rather than curtailing the heterogeneity and diversity of identity constructions to fit a poignant, univocal counter-hegemonical narrative. To invoke Michel Foucault, scholarship of the Western has commonly described "the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'," thereby obscuring the important observation that simultaneously and equally, "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (*Discipline and Punish* 194).

Pertaining to representations of gender, following the advent of Queer Theory in the 1990s, scholarship has begun to address this issue and revaluate categories of (cinematic) representation hitherto regarded as "invisible", "unmarked" or "naturalized" (Carroll 1-2; Ingraham 131), thereby redressing the stabilization and "reification of gender binarism" (Lünenborg & Maier 106; Transl. T.S.) that invariably ensued.[8] This is a project yet to be comprehensively applied to an analysis of the American Western.

This then, combined with the observation of the topicality of Western mythemes in popular culture, jointly constitutes the impetus for this study and adumbrates its methodology: to revisit the Western from a different perspective in order to facilitate a better understanding of American culture, which I hope to achieve with an analysis and interpretation that equally respects the normativizing and productive power of the genre.

To that end, I will predicate my analysis on a constructivist, performative understanding of gender as predominantly proposed by Judith Butler's theory of *gender performativity*.

I will begin my theoretical deliberations, however, with an examination of another theoretical model: Raewyn Connell's model of *hegemonic masculinity*. *Hegemonic masculinity* has provided a productive and prolific theoretical background for several interdisciplinary studies in recent years (cf. Schößler 136-7), including gender-specific film analyses (Hißnauer & Klein 28-31; also cf. Berkenkamp 14-22), particularly for Connell's development of a pluralistic, relational conceptualization of gender that specifically foregrounds the significance of socio-cultural, historically variable contexts. Connell's model of *hegemonic masculinity*

---

[7] Helmut Korte has shown that the preconception of a "hegemony-stabilizing function of mass media" originated in ideological-critical research of the 1960s (18; Transl. T.S.).

[8] Similar projects followed with regards to cultural and ethnic identities (see, for instance, Richard Dyer's "White").

provides a promising vantage point to formulating a constructivist theoretical framework, because it conceptualizes gender as detached from the bodies of individual subjects (cf. Schößler 137). Furthermore, it graphically illustrates the significance of gender norms and social practice, and it highlights the hetero-patriarchal apparatus that regulates them.

Since Connell's model, however, does not conclusively expound the structural homology that links the two (gender norms and social practice), I will draw additional inspiration from a modification of her model of hegemonic masculinity by German sociologists Michael Meuser and Sylka Scholz, who propose to augment Connell's model with Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualization of the *masculine habitus* and the *libido dominandi*. Arguing with Bourdieu that gender norms and social practice are inseparably connected, Meuser and Scholz suggest conceptualizing *hegemonic masculinity* as a generative principle in order to highlight its self-perpetuating effect. As Bourdieu specifies in his argument as one pivotal effect of the *masculine habitus* the obfuscation of the social construction of sexed bodies, his deliberations in turn also help crystallize gender and gendered power structures as the discursive effect of a confusion of nature and culture. According to his reasoning, the ubiquity of male domination, which suffuses the social world in meticulously designed divisions between men and women and fundamentally rests on the reification of that division in sexually defined, dimorphously sexed bodies, clouds our perception of that division – as well as the domination of men that it effects – as socially constructed.

To further that observation, and to make it accessible for an analysis that not only seeks to discern the normativizing and naturalizing effect of *hegemonic masculinity* but also strives to point out its immanently subversive, productive potential, I subsequently take to Judith Butler's deliberations on *gender performativity* and the *heterosexual matrix*. As Butler describes "that [gender] identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result" (*Gender Trouble* 34), the philosopher and linguist proposes to think gender to be regulated and produced by an economy of strategies of construction, on the one hand, and naturalization, on the other. Our understanding of what we perceive as dimorphously sexed bodies, as male and female, is fundamentally informed by presuppositions of gender binarity, of masculine and feminine, refuting an allegedly natural origin of sex (cf. Schößler 101-2). Except that the social imperative of heteronormativity – that is, the societal mandate that an intelligible gender identity can only result from performing gender in coherence with the sex of the body that is assumed to precede the performance (masculinity originating in the male body, femininity in the female body) – conceals the constructedness of sex, as it establishes and perpetuates the notion that gender resulted causally and naturally from sex, that culture was but an expression of an alleged anatomical reality.

This, then, constitutes what I will refer to in my following analyses as the aporia of heteronormativity: the paradoxical dynamic that the construction of an intelligibly gendered

subject fundamentally requires the unintelligibly gendered abject in order to be perceived as intelligible. In order to be recognized as the expression of a pre-cultural sex, this pre-cultural sex must be constructed within a gender binarity. In order to produce gender intelligibly, heteronormativity requires ambiguity, which it then conceals. This production is as much an expression of normative power as it produces the possibility to displace or even disrupt that normative power (cf. Schößler 100).

These theoretical preliminaries, which I will clarify and expand on below, will help extricate and make visible the conflicting dynamics inherent to the Western, in which strategies of normativization, naturalization and the gender hegemony those strategies effect, are just as palpable as the potential to subvert, the proclivity to self-examine and criticize, the inability to coherently stabilize. Rather than attacking and reclaiming select phenomena within a hegemonic system, I will address the paradoxical structures that produce hegemony – akin to the general premise of Gender Studies, to "make gender visible as a universal category of societal power" (ibid. 15, Transl. T.S.) in order to achieve "a new configuration of [gender; T.S.] politics […] from the ruins of the old" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 203). In other words, this theoretical framework will allow me to reveal the presence and productivity of both heteronormativity and gender contingency, the relation to one another I understand as "possible forms of freedom" inherent to forms of power (Strüver 72, with reference to Foucault "Das Subjekt und die Macht" and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*; Transl. T.S.).

The aim of this study, then, is to reveal the Western as a locus of discourse for the exploration of gender, where the conflicting dynamics of identity formation and the power structures that both govern and produce them become visible, as do the possible forms of resistance and subversion that are inextricably tied to that power (cf. ibid. 72). This means that this study will conjoin elements of film analysis and discourse analysis – a methodology that has recently gained traction particularly in German interdisciplinary research (cf. Weidemann 477-8), because it facilitates and foregrounds an investigation of the relation between film and culture, between cinematic representations and the societal norms that inform them (cf. Hißnauer & Klein 41), between the societal power structures films reflect and the social reality they enunciate and help shape (cf. Weidemann 477-8; cf. Peltzer & Keppler 10, 12).[9]

As such, this study draws a great deal of inspiration from Michel Foucault's discourse analysis, laid out in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and subsequently applied and developed throughout his oeuvre. In particular, Foucault's suggestion to recognize in analysis rather than withhold, to emphasize rather than trivialize, to accentuate rather than assimilate, irregularities and ambiguities is of great importance to the project at hand. His proposal to think and acknowledge in analysis "the unity of the discourses" of a particular subject or field as "the

[9] For a succinct definition and explanation of the interplay of social and medial constructions of reality, as well as its relevance for interdisciplinary film studies, I refer to Peltzer & Keppler (4-12).

interplay of rules that define the transformations of these different objects, their non-identity through time, the break produced in them, the internal discontinuity that suspends their permanence" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 36) will guide this analysis; for it promises to reveal the Western as a locus of discourse characterized by ambiguity, intrinsic contention, and contradiction. This study, then, is an attempt to describe gender representations in the American Western as a "[*system*] *of dispersion*" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 41; emphasis in original). Accordingly, I will treat the cinematic construction of gender as "a multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching, but never completely stable effects of domination are produced," giving equal weight to the way discourse of gender, the effect of which I understand as the *heteronormative matrix* (see below), "transmits and produces power […], but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 102, 101).[10]

With regards to film, such a methodology has been proposed by Christian Hißnauer and Thomas Klein (cf. 41), as they suggest abandoning neo-formalistic or strictly hermeneutical methods of film analysis for a discursive approach (cf. 42). Following their example, this study will focus on both *text* – film as text; text as cultural artifact (cf. Schößler 15) – and the specific spatial and temporal *context* in which a given text was created (cf. Hißnauer & Klein 42; cf. Göttlich 36; cf. Neale, "Questions of Genre" 173; cf. Winter, "Ethnographie, Interpretation und Kritik" 46; also cf. Korte 22). This entails the consideration of several aspects that lie outside the text but nevertheless substantially influence its production and reception (cf. Hinßnauer & Klein 36-40), while still respecting the idiosyncrasies of the medium and its specific means of artistic expression (cf. ibid. 42).[11]

Having the American Western as its subject of research, this study, too, must respect the idiosyncrasies of genre, as a set of "conventions, regulative principles that constitute a historical succession" (Faulstich 200; Transl. T.S.), as "processes" that "may […] be dominated by repetition, but […] are also marked fundamentally by difference, variation, and change" (Neale, "Questions of Genre" 165).[12] German film researcher Werner Faulstich emphasizes

---

[10] Similar methodological understandings that also endorsed and utilized (elements of) discourse analysis have informed a great deal of theoretical deliberations that will become relevant throughout this study. See, for instance, Homi K. Bhabha's search for ambivalences or slippages in practices of *colonial mimicry* in discourses of colonial rule (cf. 122), or Queer Theory's endeavor to adduce, disclose, and apply strategies of performative subversion as a means to "[protest] not just the normal behavior of the social but the *idea* of normal behavior" (Warner xxvii; emphasis in original). Correspondingly, this study will frequently branch out to cognate theories to indicate the complexity of intersectional research and by the same token add complexity to my own analysis – recognizing that this endeavor at times requires a form of heuristic reduction (cf. Kerner 239).

[11] Similarly, Thomas Weidemann has succinctly demonstrated the conceptual link between such a discursive approach to film analysis and such components of more traditional film analysis that incorporated the significance of contexts to their observations (cf. 479).

[12] For the intents and purposes of this study, this brief but functional definition of *genre* will suffice. For the inspiring and productive debate on the mechanisms of genre, I defer to Steve Neale (*Genre*, 1996;

the significance of genres as categories that may direct both the perception and analysis of films (cf. ibid. 200). He consequently proposes a triad of question that ought to lead any genre-specific film interpretation:

> First: What remains unaltered in a given film in relation to other films of the same genre, what are the constants that indicate genre belonging? Second: What changes in relation to the other films, what are the variables that imply historical genre development? Third: What are the societal reasons for this variation, how significant is the impact of aesthetical change immanent to the genre? (ibid. 200-01; Transl. T.S.)

While the first two questions are of great import to this study's attempt to chronicle a genealogy of the genre's exploration of gender, it is especially the third aspect of Faulstich's elaborations that demands special attention, as it corroborates Hißnauer and Klein's proposal for an approach that harnesses for analysis both textual and contextual factors.

Speaking more broadly, and extending these methodological ventilations to the wider field of Cultural Studies, in this study I will draw from a network of "construable signs" – historical, film-historical, genre-specific, mythological, political, ideological, economic, social, cultural, epistemological, and so forth – that provide a particular film (as a cultural artifact) with meaning which is made accessible through the interpretation of "context, something within which they [the construable signs] can be intelligibly – that is, thickly – described" (Geertz 14). Individually (of a film) and in its entirety (this study as a whole), these *thick descriptions*, as Clifford Geertz has coined his approach to Culture Studies with reference to Gilbert Ryle, take the form of a "bricolage," as an interpretation of a "pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (Denzin & Lincoln 4).

In the case of this study, this concerns the etiology of the aporia of heteronormativity in American Western films, by way of which this study will map out the etiology of the aporia of heteronormativity in the social world of the United States (between 1903 and 1969).

It remains for me to answer to the structure of this study, specifically to my selection of films and my decision to end this gender-critical investigation of the American Western in 1969. This study covers seven decades of filmmaking in one of the most prolific genres of one of the most productive industries, and therefore comprises a sheer insurmountable number of potential case studies (cf. Hardy, vii; cf. Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western* 13). To strike a balance between representativity and depth of analysis, I have chosen a total of fourteen films (excluding the Excursions I-III) that will be subject to a detailed analysis, while I will frequently cross-reference and illustrate my argument in a vast number of other films in

---

"Questions of Genre," 2000; *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, 2002) and Rick Altman (*Film/Genre*, 1999; "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," 2000).

order to meet the requirements of general accountability as best I can. I have selected my corpus of films based on either their centrality or marginality in the scholarly canon, convinced that my analysis will provide both fresh perspectives on established research and reclaim hitherto neglected works for critical analysis. Therefore, established classics like HIGH NOON (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) or THE SEARCHERS (John Ford, 1956) will not be discussed in detail, while other already well-researched texts like STAGECOACH or THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE receive greater attention. Likewise, highly interesting films for gender-specific analysis, such as THE GUNFIGHTER (Henry King, 1950), JOHNNY GUITAR (Nicholas Ray, 1954), or FORTY GUNS (Samuel Fuller, 1957) could not be included, while other equally interesting and hitherto scholarly marginalized texts like CIMARRON (Wesley Ruggles, 1930), THE WESTERNER (William Wyler, 1940), or THE NAKED SPUR (Anthony Mann, 1953) will be scrutinized. It goes without saying that I do not claim this to be an exhaustive account of the genre's diversity; at the same time, I am confident that my selection is representative of it.

I end my analysis of Western films with the year 1969 for a number of reasons which equally comprise film-historical, genre-specific, mythological, political, ideological, economic, social, cultural, and epistemological factors, all of which are interlaced.[13] Film-historically speaking, the late 1960s constitute the industry's transitioning from Classical Hollywood to New Hollywood (cf. *Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies* 286). Genre-specifically and mythologically speaking, 1969 and especially THE WILD BUNCH (Sam Peckinpah, 1969) epitomize the apocalyptic undoing of the generic Western formula, wherein culminate the tensions and innovations of several years of activism and artistic reflection. Ideologically and politically speaking, the advancement of the Civil Rights Movement, Second Wave Feminism, the Vietnam War and the political transition from the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson to the Nixon administration, 1969 represents a pivotal turning point for the conceptualization of American identity and the real-historical effect of that conceptualization with regards to global and domestic politics. And perhaps most importantly: socially, culturally, and epistemologically speaking, the late 1960s saw the widespread introduction of feminist critique and Critical Theory to the various disciplines of academia in the United States, changing forever the way Americans produced, received, conceived of, and reflected upon gender (cf. Schößler 9; cf. Hißnauer & Klein 22).

Accordingly, the late 1960s constitute a definitive caesura for the way in which Americans explored American identity in art. THE WILD BUNCH emblematizes the climactic watershed to all these combined effects; a definitive caesura distilling a moment in history after which the Western and American culture would never be the same; a site and moment of

[13] I will answer the question of why I begin my analysis with the year 1903 and Edwin S. Porter's THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY in greater detail in my analysis of the film (see 4.1.1.).

"dislocation" (cf. Glasze & Mattissek, "Die Hegemonie- und Diskurstheorie von Laclau und Mouffe" 145, 150).

For all these reasons, an investigation of the Western after 1969 requires a different premise for analysis that respects this unparalleled, paradigmatic cultural shift, during which the Western arguably becomes more fully aware of its status as a pivotal locus of discourse, as well as of the interplay of the variegated constituents that both regulate and produce it. Considering the already copious scope of the project at hand, this is a task this study cannot offer. This may constitute an interesting avenue for future research.

Against the backdrop of these preliminaries, on which I will elaborate below, I will revisit a selection of American Westerns produced between 1903 and 1969 to reveal the myriad of constitutive ambiguities and contradictions that are inextricably tied to, and not rarely precede in the shape of utopian fantasies, the genre's endeavor to find and establish stability and coherence.

In the first section of my analysis, *Foundation* (4.1.), I will demonstrate that the paradoxical interplay of strategies of gender construction and naturalization are constitutive of the developing genre formula. Discussing four films that appeared between 1903 and 1929, namely THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (Edwin S. Porter, 1903), THE REDMAN'S VIEW (D.W. Griffith, 1909), HELL'S HINGES (Charles Swickard and William S. Hart, 1915), and THE VIRGINIAN (Victor Fleming, 1929), I will show that the aporia of heteronormativity – the irresolvable conundrum that those deemed invisible in terms of gender and sexuality must be made visible first, defeating the paralogical conclusion that they were always already invisible – is weaved into the fabric of the genre, as are the tensions that arise as films are unable to unravel the web of conflicting dynamics and produce a coherent, stable American Self.

Beginning with Edwin S. Porter's THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, my analysis will reveal that constructions of an allegedly pre-discursive, fixed, natural sex relied on discursively produced cultural constructions of gender, as gendered spatial domains and specifically gendered codes of conduct that effectively produce an imbalance of power are presented to originate in the seemingly natural, biological dyad of dancing men and women. Except that the normativization and naturalization of the ritualized formation of this heterosexual dyad, which ultimately occasions the sexual binarism, is anchored around the intrusion, temporary destabilization, and instantaneous expulsion of a non-conformatively gendered abject from the evolving community: Thus, the film re-establishes heterosexuality and male hegemony as diegetic and discursive normalcy. At the same time though, the dandy-character, who appears in the eleventh tableau of the film and who will be crucial to my reading of the film, indicates that gender contingency is equally embedded in the genre's formula.

Moving on to D.W. Griffith's THE REDMAN'S VIEW, I will illustrate that the already complex negotiation of gender in the burgeoning Western genre is further complicated by its profound

connection to explorations of cultural identity. In Griffith's film, strategies of normativizing gender are inextricably tied to strategies of normativizing cultural identity, which the film utilizes to portray (and implicitly justify) westward expansion and the systematic disenfranchisement, expropriation, violent displacement, and genocide of Native Americans as the inescapable, inevitable consequence of biological and spiritual predetermination. Situating the film within discourses of gender, colonial rule (with reference to Edward Said's study *Orientalism*), as well as the ideological premises of early American cinema, I argue that the developing Western genre became a significant part in the cultural production of American cultural identity, an identity decidedly white and male. Though the film assumes a peculiar narratological position, simulating empathy with the fate of the continent's indigenous people by appropriating the perspective of a Native American heterosexual couple, the film is evidently invested in naturalizing white male supremacy over and against a non-white, unintelligibly gendered abject. The popular trope of the "vanishing American" (cf. Fiedler 76-77) is therefore inadvertently revealed as an ambiguous character in white American mythology, suggesting as it does at once the cultural hegemony of white Americans because they include Native Americans only as functionalized gender and ethnic abjects, as well as the instability of the perception of that hegemony as natural or preordained, for it fundamentally depends on the construction of that very abject.

In my analysis of William S. Hart and Charles Swickard's HELL'S HINGES, I will show how the aporia of heteronormativity as embedded in the generic formula of the Western crystallizes with the solidification of Hollywood as the univocal center of American film production and the emergence of the star system. Constructing for himself a star persona that comprised authenticity, above all, as well as a fervent Puritan, white supremacist ideology, silent Western icon William S. Hart expanded in his frontier visions on previous generic elements to portray westward expansion as the compelling pursuit and fulfilment of a divine errand. HELL'S HINGES paradigmatically illustrates the reciprocal confirmation of intelligible white masculinity and femininity as such through ritualized performances of heterosexuality, on the one hand constructing heteronormativity over and against sexualized, gendered, and racialized abjects, and, on the other hand, concealing this construction in purporting that the heroic couple's mutual transformation can only be elicited as they appeal to each other's innate virtues. As such, HELL'S HINGES contains an articulated version of masculine and feminine ideals, the latter of which amounts to a vision of white femininity that is both central and peripheral to the film: central, as the intelligible white woman confirms qua her gender performance the intelligibility of the white man (thereby, essentially, masking gender performance as the natural expression of sex), which bestows her with incredible symbolic capital; peripheral, because her gender performance (in both method and goal) functions exclusively to supplement and legitimatize white male authority, which, conversely, undermines her symbolic capital. HELL'S HINGES can

only resolve these conflicting dynamics by extending the transformative frontier encounter *ad infinitum*, asking its protagonists to forevermore repeat the process of ritually confirming heteronormativity, thus signaling both its hegemonic status and structural fragility.

I will conclude this section with a brief survey of the Western epics of the 1920s and a detailed analysis of Victor Fleming's THE VIRGINIAN, a film that in many ways represents the temporary completion of the genre's formula. Pivoting on the sexually ambiguous star persona of Gary Cooper, who stars as the eponymous Virginian, THE VIRGINIAN constructs an intimate, homoerotically charged relationship between Cooper's hero and his best friend, Steve (Richard Arlen). I will show that THE VIRGINIAN goes out of its way to portray and subsequently locate outside of social orthodoxy the relationship between the two men. As the film juxtaposes this relationship with the hero's intensifying romance with Molly Wood (Mary Brian), I argue that much of the film's drama hinges on the hero's oscillation between homosexuality and heterosexuality as integral elements to the formation of either an intelligible or abject gender identity. I will show that, ultimately, THE VIRGINIAN confirms heteronormativity, while simultaneously dramatizing the emotional constraint caused by the social obligation to comply with sexual and gender norms. THE VIRGINIAN thus exemplifies the genre's frequent, emphatic, and by now formulaic utilization of discourses of gender and sexuality to negotiate the (in)stability of American collective identity, at once illustrating the hegemony of heteronormativity and revealing the fragile and contradictory terms on which this hegemony is founded.

In the second part of my analysis, *Depression* (4.2.) I will investigate the development of the genre's negotiation of gender during the years of the Great Depression. Expanding on an argument made by Peter Stanfield in his study *Hollywood, Westerns and the 1930s*, in which the author establishes a connection between the Western's ostensibly more diverse and more liberal representations of gender during the 1930s and studios' precarious financial situations, I will discuss in the example of CIMARRON (Wesley Ruggles, 1930) and THE PLAINSMAN (Cecil B. DeMille, 1936) two films markedly navigating the complex economy of capitalizing on the contemporary popularity of ambiguous, transgressive conceptualizations of sex and gender on the one hand, and trying to stabilize social order by reconciling them with heteronormativity, on the other.

Both films take a clear position on the contemporary issue of women's emancipation through their entering of the formerly exclusively masculine sphere of labor, codifying this apparent transgression into a decidedly gendered rhetoric. In this vein, I will demonstrate that CIMARRON strives to issue a societal critique in its identification of the heteronormative matrix as a dysfunctional system of moral coercion and double standards. In Ruggles's film, women suffer because society and they themselves fail to recognize their achievements in the public sphere, a circumstance the film ascribes to the asphyxiating corset of heteronormativity as it

dramatizes the obstinate compliance of men and women to comply with social norms of gender. At the same time, however, the film is unable to translate this critique into a coherent structure, as it invariably reproduces the very patterns it purports to attack.

THE PLAINSMAN, on the other hand, identifies especially white women's transgression from conventional images of white femininity as a reason for social instability. In James Ellison's Buffalo Bill Cody and Jean Arthur's Calamity Jane, the film entertains the notion of gender contingency and gender fluidity to comic effect; yet the ultimately tragic ending of the film originates the reason for social instability in Calamity's continuous attempts to conceal (what the film portrays as) her 'natural' gender identity with an unintelligible habitus – in the sense that her transgressive gender performance does not provoke the male hero's (Gary Cooper as Wild Bill Hickok) commitment to heterosexual romance because he refuses to accept her as a woman. Only as the characters learn to steadily realign their gender performance with what is constructed as the natural sex of their bodies can the idea of social stability be approximated. However, for its protagonists, heterosexuality in THE PLAINSMAN exists as but an idealized image, which paradoxically both promises to stabilize and threatens to destabilize gender identity. As the film plays out the conflicting dynamics of conforming with the compelling, interconnected social norms of monogamous heterosexuality and gender coherence on the one hand, and forgoing them on the other, THE PLAINSMAN inadvertently reveals the aporia of heteronormativity, as the characters struggle to make sense of and subsequently form stable gender identities within a system that simultaneously celebrates gender contingency and mandates the dissolution of the same.

In the third part of my analysis, *Mobilization* (4.3.), I will explore gender representations in the Hollywood Western of the tumultuous years preceding and during World War II. Discussing DODGE CITY (Michael Curtiz, 1939) and STAGECOACH – and including an excursion to an earlier study of mine on THE WESTERNER and THE OUTLAW (Howard Hughes, 1943/1946)[14] – I will scrutinize the development of gender conceptualizations in these decisive years, during which the Western attracted an unprecedented level of popularity.

Beginning with DODGE CITY, I will illuminate the Western's proclivity to accommodate the negotiation of discourses of national identity, codified in a gendered rhetoric. Compartmentalizing its representation of heroic masculinity into a triptych of white men, the film manages to mitigate through the interplay of its central protagonist (Errol Flynn as Wade Hatton) with his two sidekicks (Alan Hale as Rusty and Guinn 'Big Boy' Williams as Tex), excessive individualism and uncompromising mobilization with domestic complacency and homely isolationism. From this decidedly moderate, but essentially fragmented position,

[14] I am referring to my contribution to the forthcoming edited volume *Sex in the States: Media, Literature, and Discourse*, "Heterosexual Obligations, Homosexual Attractions: Sexuality and Gender in THE WESTERNER and THE OUTLAW", the publication of which is scheduled for fall 2021.

DODGE CITY constructs intelligible masculinity as a coherent expression of an ostensibly natural, pre-discursive sex, in relation to abject masculinities and a vision of white femininity (Olivia de Havilland as Abbie Irving) that is markedly informed by the object lessons of First Wave Feminism and the Great Depression, as the film's representation of the New Woman is recodified to fit traditional patterns while simultaneously respecting the challenges and accomplishments of changing times.

Expanding on the comprehensive research concerning STAGECOACH, specifically the class- and gender-specific readings of the film put forward by Gaylyn Studlar and more recently by Katrin Berkenkamp, I will argue that Ford's film offers a powerful, if structurally incoherent critique of gender politics. STAGECOACH identifies contemporary cultural constructions (of gender and class) as corrupting and confining, originating the injustice of the heteronormative matrix in the paradox of its simultaneous arbitrariness and universal authority. However, as STAGECOACH confronts its characters and viewers with the untenability of gender stereotypes, it tries to liberate its protagonists (John Wayne as The Ringo Kid and Claire Trevor as Dallas) from the depraving influence of culture by untying them from its bonds, thus preserving in a utopian exile what it constructs as natural gender binarity. Unspoiled by "the blessings of civilization", Ringo and Dallas constitute pristine icons of an allegedly pre-cultural sex. STAGECOACH, I contend, reveals the hegemony of a culturally constructed heteronormative matrix, but reproduces the very patterns that establish this hegemony in an attempt to overcome them.

I will conclude this section with an excursion to THE WESTERNER and THE OUTLAW, wherein I will briefly recapitulate my previous findings about the two films' negotiations of male homoeroticism and compulsory heterosexuality and situate them within the framework of this study to clarify my argument about the two films' capacity to make visible the productivity of both heteronormativity and gender contingency.

In the fourth part of my analysis, *Readjustment* (4.4.), I will explore the ramifications of America's World War II experience for conceptualizations of gender and sexuality. Analyzing two films from the years immediately following World War II, Raoul Walsh's PURSUED (1947) and John Ford's SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949), I will illustrate filmmakers' attempts to utilize the Western to find a stable sense of Self as they negotiate the conflicting experiences of triumph and trauma.

Beginning my discussion with PURSUED, I will situate the film within a subgenre of the Western that came to light in the wake of World War II: the *noir*-Western. Combining elements of American *film noir* and the classic Hollywood Western, PURSUED uses peculiar stylistic devices that, first, draw attention to the cinematic construction of gender and sexuality, and second, function to transpose the traumatic experiences undergone by many an American into an appealing, contemporary, unique visual language. I will argue that, to that effect, PURSUED

embeds its gendered negotiation of veteran readjustment into a narrative of self-authorization, in which the male protagonist Jeb Rand (Robert Mitchum) steadily reappropriates *author*ity over a story that has been largely told *about* him. Ostensibly breaking with prewar gender ideals, PURSUED ends up defending and retaining the very structures that produced them. I will show that the film qua its structure originates that which it constructs as a markedly different image of masculinity in a pre-cultural, or pre-textual nature, thereby obfuscating its demonstration of gender contingency through a narratological device that paralogically purports that the hero's gender performance was but a coherent expression of sex, the true nature of which he had only momentarily forgotten because of his trauma.

While PURSUED draws much of its appeal from its engrossing style that encapsulates trauma in distorted, monochromatic visuals, John Ford's SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON shines in bright, triumphant Technicolor. I will show that Ford's film uses the at the time supremely influential star persona of John Wayne to captain a disoriented community. Under Wayne's paternalistic tutelage as Captain Nathan Brittles, the fragmented, floundering frontier community manages to steady itself as it gradually reinstates order. This order manifests itself in the primacy of clear-cut, binary, and at least superficially egalitarian cultural ideals of gender, epitomized and ultimately confirmed by the fulfilment of heterosexual romance between Olivia Dandridge (Joanne Dru) and Lt. Flint Cohill (John Agar). I will demonstrate that SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is visibly interested in stabilizing American society by restructuring it according to the example of the military. In this vein, I will identify the film's recurring invocation of an idealized behavioral code – "being army" as the signifier of intelligibility – as a strategy to conceal the cultural construction of gender by referencing an allegedly natural code of conduct that originates in a supposedly pre-cultural sex. As the film envelops its younger characters in the perpetual, meandering search for identity, the acquisition of which they complete as they assume the ancestral ideals of gender exemplified by their elders, I argue that SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON locates social coherence in the continuation of prewar gender ideals while at the same time revealing that heteronormativity is taught and learned, in a way not unlike a military drill, thus confirming the cultural construction of heteronormativity.

In this, I intend to show that even though their respective approaches to exploring gender in the postwar era differ radically, PURSUED and SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON have in common the identification of a disoriented younger generation in desperate search for a stable identity. PURSUED suggests that this stability was to be found in the dissolution from ancestral ideals of gender, contradicting itself however in simultaneously illustrating the contingency of gender and disguising it as pre-discursively given, whereas SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON finds stability in the escapist continuation of traditional social structures. Both films, therefore, cannot

resolve the aporia of heteronormativity, as PURSUED replicates its paradoxical nature, while SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON denies it was ever paradoxical to begin with.

The fifth part of my analysis, *Containment* (4.5.), will then deal with the Hollywood Western's most productive era, the fifties. Selecting for discussion from a myriad of examples two comparatively underrepresented Westerns (with regards to established scholarship of the genre), namely THE NAKED SPUR and THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (John Sturges, 1960), I will delineate the Western's increasing penchant for self-examinations, as many films emanate a growing awareness about the genre's status as a culturally pervasive force in the exploration of gender, and by corollary, as a powerful adjunct to society's search for a stable identity, especially in light of the omnipresent anxieties of the dawning Cold War.

Navigating the seemingly diametrically opposed cultural narratives that characterized the anxieties of the time, THE NAKED SPUR is a film of irresolvable frictions and attrition. Building on previous research that has situated the suffering of the film's central protagonist, Howard Kemp (James Stewart), within cine-psychoanalysis, I will read the hero's *masquerade* and spells of *hysteria* in a deconstructivist tradition as occurrences in which the film invariably reveals the irreconcilability of its involvement in practices of cultural construction with the hegemonic impetus of naturalization. I will show that in Howard's tantrums culminate the excoriating tensions between the coercion he feels to abide by an individualist ideal of hegemonic masculinity in order to retain an image of gender intelligibility, and his longing for domesticity, which would refute the intelligible image he struggles to keep up. While these dynamics are evidence of the film's investment in the cultural construction of gender, THE NAKED SPUR equally engenders strategies of naturalization, envisioning in Janet Leigh's Lina a character who masquerades a non-conformative habitus, only to eventually drop the masquerade and re-validate gender as a pre-cultural expression of sex, when she is presented to be able to access a version of white femininity seemingly innately tied to, or pathologically programmed into her body. Indeed, the film ultimately ends with Howie and Lina forming the heterosexual couple.

Crucially however, as I will reveal in my discussion, THE NAKED SPUR refrains from monologically celebrating the heterosexual union as post hoc evidence for social stability. Instead, the film emphasizes the opposite, admitting to the paradoxical nature of the heteronormative matrix, even highlighting its inadequacy, for Lina's hyperbolic ascension to angelic white femininity is coded as a blanket surrender to male hegemony, and Howie's acceptance of her surrender is coded as his forfeiting of hegemonic masculinity. THE NAKED SPUR, I argue, reveals heteronormativity as a strategy of *containment*, of hetero-patriarchy's continued attempts to douse the unquenchable fire that had always smoldered beneath the surface, and is now threatening to break out and spread.

Consulting basic elements of postcolonial theory, I will then proceed to my reading of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN as another paradigmatic fifties Western, dealing as it does with the complex inter-cultural encounters provoked by U.S. imperialism during the Cold War, as a group of American mercenaries answers the call of helpless Mexican villagers to defend themselves against a group of bandits. Using Homi K. Bhabha's elaborations on *ambivalence*, *hybridity*, and *colonial mimicry*, I will investigate THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's construction of cultural identity and reveal its structural analogies to constructions of gender. As such, I will show that the film constructs Whiteness and intelligible masculinity as decidedly different from the cultural and gender identity of the ethnic Other. While THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN uses this structure to, on the one hand, ascertain white and male superiority, the film equally reveals the fragility of this hegemonic narrative, as it fundamentally and inextricably depends on the cultural subaltern or gendered abject. More to the point, the film's repeated attempts to naturalize white male hegemony are countered by such instances that openly disclose the cultural construction of Whiteness and gender through practices of *colonial mimicry*.

Finally, discussing in detail the significance of the hybrid character Chico (Horst Buchholz), I will conclude that THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN self-consciously explores the contingency of gender and cultural identity, as Chico is presented to vacillate between seemingly mutually exclusive domains of gender and cultural identity. Ending with a denouement that harmoniously-if-rigorously discontinues (or contains the dissolution of) *difference*, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN ultimately reinforces the notion that bodily predisposition – be it sexual or ethnical – cannot and must not be transcended. At the same time, however, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN implies that the myth of an allegedly natural, original Self belongs only to a death-defying, spectacular but ultimately illusory dreamscape, in which the Western hero can forevermore bestow a stable identity because, or although, he is, like one character says in the film, "like the wind". In this vein, it will become apparent that the Westerns of the fifties explore with increasing self-awareness the dynamics and effects of gender, showing incrementally diminishing conviction in the legitimacy and self-evidence of gendered power structures.

In the last section of my analysis, *Liberation* (4.6.), I will argue that during the cultural awakening of the sixties many Westerns reached a level of maturity and self-reflectivity that allowed for the comprehensive debunking of the corrosive paradoxical dynamics that had informed their own complicity in the cultural construction of American identity.

Beginning with John Ford's THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962), I will assess the narratological specificities of the film using a critical application of the concept of *nostalgia*. Indeed, *nostalgia* has often been associated with the film, but rarely has the concept been put to critical use. Arguing that *nostalgia* contains an inherently ambiguous perspective on history and historiography (or rather: myth and mythography), I will reveal the film's juxtaposition of

an authoritative white male first-person narrator and a frame narrative which challenges precisely that authority as a clear indicator for THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE's revisionism, which extends to conceptualizations of gender and the genre's own role in the peculiar way of representing it. In its first-person narrator-cum-central protagonist, James Stewart's Ransom Stoddard, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE portrays a white man equipped with the authority to present himself and, in the process, legitimatize his position as a figure of authority after the fact – thereby replicating the cultural practice of constructing hegemonic masculinity, only to subsequently conceal its genealogy by purporting an allegedly fixed, natural origin. Crucially however, the film embeds this practice in a frame narrative that, one, complicates and challenges the white man's self-authorization through the eyes and actions of a white woman and a black man, two, has the white man reveal his normativizing, naturalizing narrative as a lie, thereby acknowledging contingency, and three, shows the complicity of national media – i.e., the Western genre itself – with the cultural construction of white male hegemony, as the newspaper reporters that Ransom Stoddard imparts his story to are more interested in perpetuating myth than they are in divulging the truth, culminating in the famous aphorism: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend."

In my subsequent analysis of Sam Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH (1969), I will begin by situating the film within the counter-cultural thrust that swept the nation at the end of the decade. Paradigm-shifting events and unprecedented acts of violence both at home and abroad significantly altered the way Americans perceived their own cultural identity, thus inevitably affecting the way films were produced and received. Reading Peckinpah's film as a powerful reflection and exploration of the consequences of these social processes, I argue that THE WILD BUNCH stands as a testimony to the desire for a counter-cultural revolution.

Building on the detailed analyses of the director's notorious dramatization and spectacularization of violence by Stephen Prince and Christopher Sharrett, I argue that THE WILD BUNCH iconoclastically explodes in a cacophony of all-consuming violence the genre's corrosive, corrupting relationship with the longstanding genre tradition of historicizing – i.e., legitimatizing – white, male, heterosexual hegemony. Repeatedly, THE WILD BUNCH draws the viewer's attention not only to the process of cultural construction of (gender) identity immanent to the cinematic microcosm – a process the film then eloquently denies in the narrative – but also to the viewer's choice to be either complicit with or rebellious against the effect of that contradiction. In emphasizing the cinematic practice of spectacularization, THE WILD BUNCH creates an ambivalence towards the spectacle, asking the viewer to detect the grave discrepancy between the narrative information we are given about our "heroes" and the visual treatment they are subsequently awarded with. As I propose that this peculiar dynamic of the film is consistently developed in terms of gender and sexuality, I will show that in THE WILD BUNCH, the image of hegemonic masculinity has no original substance. This way, I contend,

THE WILD BUNCH identifies the cultural construction and contingency of gender, revealing the effects of this construction as unjustified because they do not have the natural origin they claim. In the frantic efforts of its male protagonists to abide by a code that they perpetually reinterpret as they see fit, THE WILD BUNCH withdraws all naturalizing pretexts of gender as the expression of a pre-cultural sex, instead revealing, to speak with Judith Butler, that "it was always already gender" (*Gender Trouble* 9), thereby unravelling the aporia of heteronormativity. More than that, THE WILD BUNCH comprehensively discards the paralogisms of its generic antecedents, presenting in the most brutal scene of the Western's history one final act of vindictive, apocalyptic self-destruction, and containing in its coda the reminder that the choice between revolution and reform is one for the viewer – i.e., society – to make.

To summarize, I will demonstrate that the genre's exploration of the paradoxical nature of gender – progressing from the naïve adoption of Victorian conceptualizations of gender in the formative years of cinema at the turn of the century to the radical and comprehensive dismantling of the same during the counter-cultural "revolution" of the late 1960s – reflects the nation's perpetual, meandering, and often erring search for a stable, collective identity. While this search for a stable identity, as well as the genre's inability to, for the most part, conclusively, coherently resolve the paradoxical dynamics that inform this search, remain consistent throughout the years under investigation, what changes is the Western's increasing awareness about itself, and its position in the exploration of gender. From the naïve-yet-constitutive beginnings of early American cinema to the paradigm-shifting transition from classic Hollywood to New Hollywood cinema in the late 1960s, the Western gradually learns to accept what had always been lingering within its generic design: the ineptitude of the heteronormative matrix to univocally explain and organize gender.

It will be the overarching goal of this study to show that the tensions that ultimately led to the (momentary) dissolution of Hollywood and the emergence of New Hollywood are the same tensions that propelled Civil Rights activists and feminists. These tensions were always there, festering beneath a surface of systemic restraint. With every failed attempt to conclusively unravel the aporia of heteronormativity, with every cultural advancement that contested the legitimacy of its hegemony, the coherence of the Western's generic formula eroded a little more. Consequently, THE WILD BUNCH's indiscriminate violence against its heroes, against itself, against the viewer, constitutes but an act of liberation from decades of heteronormative constraint. I hope this study will help make visible the evolution of ideas, translated into film, that facilitated this act of liberation.

2. State of the Art

The critical survey of the Western began as early as the 1950s. Though mostly in the form of newspaper or trade press reviews, some select pioneering studies – including the frequently quoted essays "The Western, or the American genre par excellence" and "The Evolution of the Western*"* by André Bazin (1955), as well as "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner" by Robert Warshow (1954)[15] – started to map out the stylistic and ideological perimeters of a genre yet to reach the peak of its popularity. Interestingly, as these early studies sallied to "defin[e] the essence of the western film in order to locate its cinematic and cultural significance" (Gledhill, "The Western" 376), some elements in these publications already testify to the inseparability of the Western's continuous, peculiar, arguably conscious interest in the exploration of gender, as Warshow, for instance, "views the landscape of the Western as inherently male, a dramatic space in which the Westerner, the man of the West, is the American ideal, representing an archetypal American national identity" (Lusted, *The Western* 16).[16] In that Warshow shifts the perspective away from an analysis of the Western toward an analysis of the Western*er*, accentuating "the relation of the individual to society" (Gledhill, "The Western" 376), his text can be considered a precursor to the subsequent thriving of feminist film theory in the 1960s and 1970s, and to a growing interest of gender discourses in film studies.[17]

During the 1960s, as the academic discipline of film studies established itself, the study of the Western primarily served to exemplify divergent opinions about the understanding of *genre*. As such, endeavors to critically elucidate the taxonomies of the Western-as-*genre* were mainly conducted as a reaction to the *politique des auteurs* (a terminology coined by François Truffaut and imported to an anglophone context by Andrew Sarris) (cf. Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* 10). Thereafter, the Western became an equally pivotal subject during the rising wave of genre theory. In both debates, spearheaded by such prominent figures like Jim Kitses and Alan Lovell, the Western often acted as an auxiliary but graphic stand-in to achieve

[15] Equally influential, Henry Nash Smith's ground-breaking study of popular imaginations of the American West, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), must be mentioned as one of the most influential investigations of Western narratives, and to an extent, Western iconography. Lusted explains: "The attraction of Smith's thesis to film criticism of the Western lies in its concern not only with the myth of the West but also with its signs. Both connect to the visual imagining of the West, especially those visual imaginings in the temporal and spatial distance from the history and geography of the West of which the Western film is a formative part. Smith's work enabled film criticism to connect Western films to long-standing and deep-rooted understandings of American national identity" (*The Western* 19).

[16] In this vein, Christine Gledhill also summarizes: "For Warshow, then, the central problem of the western is individual masculine identity and the violence necessary to its expression" ("The Western" 376).

[17] As Lusted has shown, Warshow's text was mainly received as an attempt "to offer the […] Western as a fictional form that could help in understanding violence," adding that the "links between the Western landscape and ideas of masculinity were to be developed by subsequent critics" (*The Western* 16, 17).

international critical validation for American cinema. Roughly between 1965 and 1975, a considerable number of seminal papers and books discussing the genre-formula of the Western critically assessed the structure of the genre (Pye, "Introduction" 9). Meanwhile, gender-specific discussions of film, as practiced, for instance, by Marjorie Rosen (*Popcorn Venus* 1973) or Molly Haskell (*From Reverence to Rape* 1974) did not specifically target the Western at first. In a way then, the initial drought of feminist revaluations of the genre reflected the ostensibly marginal role of women in most canonic Western films.

During (and prior to) the 1970s, critical writing on the Western mainly attended to the aesthetics, iconography, and prevalent narrative patterns of the genre, as for instance, George N. Fenin and William K. Everson in their historical account of the genre in *The Western: From Silents to the Seventies*, which was first published in 1962 and reprinted in 1973.[18] The anthology *Focus on the Western*, edited by Jack Nachbar in 1974, followed a similar agenda. Generally speaking, scholars of this period produced a first extensive, substantial survey of the Western. Although at this point most works did not include detailed discussions of the genre's peculiar imagination of gender, this does not mean that such aspects were completely neglected. Some did trace out the centrality of conflicting dynamics in the construction and representation of gender in Western films (and literature): for instance, Leslie A. Fiedler in his 1968 monograph *The Return of the Vanishing American*, where the author identifies the myth of a gendered encounter between white settlers and Native Americans (Pocahontas, Hannah Duston, Rip Van Winkle, Natty Bumppo) and the formation of the heterosexual romantic couple as two of the Western's master narratives and vital to the construction of American identity (50-62; 75-76).[19] In a similar vein, reflecting the most dominant schools of thought of the time – structuralism, psychoanalysis and subjectivity (cf. Caughie & Kuhn 2) – John G. Cawelti detects in his seminal interdisciplinary essay *The Six-Gun Mystique* (1971) a distinct connection between the Western's "emphasis on masculine dominance" (Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* 15) and "the western's appeal for children and for rural, predominantly male, lower middle class audiences" (Levitin 95; also cf. Gledhill, "The Western" 379). Pursuing a similar avenue, Jenni Calder carefully observes (among other aspects) the recurring set of attributes that constitute "the archetypal Western hero" in her 1974 monograph *There Must be a Lone Ranger* (185-195).

[18] I am referring exclusively to anglophone research, here. Prior to Fenin and Everson's account, European critics had already begun to chart the still largely undiscovered territory of the Western; specifically, Antonio Chiattone's book *Il Film Western* (1949), *Le Western* by Jean-Louis Rieupeyrout (1953), and also a collection of essays by the name *Il Western Magiorenne*, edited by Tullio Kezich (1953).

[19] Citing a passage of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, Fiedler declares: "In the very tone and rhetoric of the passage, the peculiar brand of sentimentality is revealed which underlies all genuinely mythic descriptions of the West, all true Westerns – a kind of Higher Masculine Sentimentality utterly remote from all fables whose Happy Ending is Marriage" (168).

Jim Kitses's *Horizons West: Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah: Studies of Authorship Within the Western* (1969) is perhaps the most significant study on the Western of that era.[20] Confronting the strictly genre-theoretical approach of earlier critics, Kitses's indispensable achievement has been to highlight the dynamism and ambivalence of narrative and iconographic elements in the Western, repudiating the assumption that the genre abided by the rules of a 'precise model' (Pye, "Introduction" 10). Rather, Kitses proposes to think of the Western as "a loose, shifting and variegated genre with many roots and branches" (Kitses, *Horizons West: Studies of Authorship…* 17). Highlighting the socio-political scope of Kitses's study, Lusted asserts: "What Kitses demonstrates, then, is that the Western genre is a complex of deeply ambivalent attitudes to westward expansion, and thereby offers a framework for challenging and conflicting explorations of the meaning of American history and identity" (*The Western* 22). For his analysis of the works of three distinguished directors of Western films, Kitses conceived what he would later refer to as a "structuralist grid focused around the frontier's dialectical play of forces embodied in the master binary opposition of the wilderness and civilisation" (Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western…* 13).

Horizons West's set of narrative and iconographic antinomies provided the blueprint model for a vast number of subsequent analyses of the Western over the course of the following years. Kitses's work has influenced other scholars in the field. For instance, Will Wright's highly influential book *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* from 1975, which essayed to apprehend the Western on structuralist terms, can be read as a direct answer to *Horizons West*: While Kitses sought to open up the debate by presenting a very dynamic structure of thematic antinomies, Wright, in his rigorously structuralist approach, tries to narrow down the Western's formula to a precisely determinable set of plot structures.[21]

Crucially though, these texts and the occasional points they raise about gender configurations in the Western are descriptions and observations without critique. They were written to explain the makeup of the Western, not to criticize it. They identified depictions of femininity and masculinity as integral to the structure of the Western without problematizing the heteronormative matrices that produce them; as Peter Verstraten describes: "Since the

---

[20] The study was revised and republished in 2004 under the title *Horizons West: Directing The Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*. All subsequent references to Kitses's study refer to this new edition, unless indicated otherwise.

[21] Martin Weidinger, with reference to John Storey's *An Introduction to Cultural Theory & Popular Culture* (1998), identifies Wright's in some cases dogmatic approach as methodologically flawed (Weidinger 95). Elsewhere, Lee Clark Mitchell amplifies this critique: "Yet while *Six Guns and Society* (1975) is the most ambitious investigation of the film Western to date, it suffers from theoretical incoherence, collapsing Vladimir Propp's diachronic sequence of undeviating plot functions together with Claude Lévi-Strauss's synchronic pairing of thematic oppositions, as if the two antithetical methods could be combined" (11). By contrast, Lusted highlights Wright's primary achievement, which has been the establishment of the "important premise that films, even Westerns set many years in the past, connect to issues at the time of their production" (*The Western* 23). He continues: "For Wright, Western films exercise certain combinations of ideas associated with frontier history and its fictional representation in order to explore crucially contemporary issues more fully" (*The Western* 23).

critics from the seventies refrained from challenging the nature of the hero's image, they could not see the cowboy's masculinity as a problematic construction" (*Screening Cowboys* 12).[22]

This would change during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when researchers started to question primarily cinematic representations of the female body and challenged the mechanisms of discrimination against women, at work both inside and outside the cinematic universe (cf. Fenske, "Film" 237). These mostly psychoanalytical (re-)readings focused principally on the problematic relationship between films and female viewers. Proponents of "cine-psychoanalysis" (Lusted, *The Western* 29) attempted to explore the construction of female subjectivity and feminine identity in cinematic systems designed to favor male spectatorship (cf. Fenske, "Film" 237; Gledhill, "The Western" 379-81), and contextualize this assertion as a reflection of the hetero-patriarchal societal system that produced and effected the structures of cinematic representations (cf. Caughie & Kuhn 3-4).

The most prominent study of this kind was brought forward by Laura Mulvey in her paper "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). Mulvey attacks the imbalance between "women as image, men as bearer of the look" (Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* 19), thereby giving evidence to a growing eagerness to challenge the patriarchal and oppressive structures of Hollywood cinema.[23]

Stressing the prolific nature of Mulvey's research, and illustrating how quickly Mulvey's theoretical thrust inspired researchers to diversify their analytical subjects to include cinematic constructions and representations of masculinity and male subjectivity, David Lusted invokes Paul Willemen's article "Anthony Mann: Looking at the Male" as well as the works of Richard Dyer and Yvonne Tasker,[24] to show that "Mulvey's 'theory of the look'" not only "entered the critical fabric of film studies," but also "inspired much work on the look of the Western hero"

---

[22] This assessment does not pertain exclusively to the Western genre but to film criticism of this time in general (cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 16).

[23] The applicability of such a cine-psychoanalytical approach was contested already in its own time, mainly because of the seemingly eclectic adoption of Lacanian psychoanalytical terminology and methodology by film critics, scientific writers and editors, but also because of the inherent vagueness or deceptiveness of cine-psychoanalytical studies (cf. Buscombe, Gledhill, Lovell, and Williams, "Psychoanalysis and Film" 35-46). In a similar vein, more recent studies have reevaluated the psychoanalytical re-readings of films in line with critical feminist film theory. These reading give reason to profess that cine-psychoanalytical approaches in the past, contrary to their original intentions, in fact had helped cement heteronormativity and thus the position of the dominant ideology (Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 16). That said, the feminist revaluations of cine-psychoanalysis, and specifically Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," undeniably constitute invaluable contributions to the diversification of an academic debate that seemed to have reached an epistemological impasse for its uncritical assumption of a heteronormative vantage point. By contrast, Mulvey (and others) issued "to see [sexual; T.S.] subjectivity as a construction rather than as a reflection of a biological given existing in the real world" (Caughie & Kuhn 4).

[24] Specifically, Lusted refers to Tasker's *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*, Dyer's article "Don't Look Now" and Neale's article "Questions of Genre", both published in *Screen*. Elsewhere, Lusted also notes Steve Neale's *Genre* (London: BFI, 1981) as a substantial response to Mulvey, "emphasising instead the auto-erotic nature of the male look on the figure of the hero […] and its importance in the process of identification" (Lusted, "Social Class and The Western as Male Melodrama" 64).

(*The Western* 30). Incidentally, to some researchers the Western would serve as ideal terrain to map out these gender-theoretical deliberations.

In similar fashion, Joan Mellen's *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film*, first published in 1977, constitutes a definitive cut in the academic discussion of the composition and implications of masculinity, chiefly because it for the first time elaborates masculinity as a carefully marked social construction and judges these idealized cinematic 'role-models' as potentially problematic. Mellen identifies as constitutive elements in the cinematic configuration of masculinity such attributes as excessive violence, compulsory heterosexuality, homosocial intimacy, objectification and dehumanization of women, a professional work ethic (3-26). Mellen then proceeds to illustrate these attributes in an analysis of representations of masculinity from the beginnings of cinema to the 1970s (though mostly limited to mainstream-Hollywood-WASP representations). It is no coincidence that many of the star personas she mentions and many of the films she references are, in fact, canonical figures and texts of the Western.[25] Mellen's study gave a powerful impetus to subsequent studies on cinematic masculinities, matched in significance only by Vito Russo's treatment of the persistent cinematic (non-)depiction of homosexual identities and homoerotic desire in *The Celluloid Closet* (1981).

However, these studies had a lasting influence on the academic examination of masculinities, although they marked an exception to the critical discussion of Western films until well into the 1990s. Research about the Western, it seemed, stagnated. Correspondingly, Douglas Pye diagnoses a "paralysis in critical writing on the Western film" after 1975, reporting that in these years all major publications were either reference books or encyclopedias, which all seemed to emanate "the feeling of tombstones marking the passing of the genre" ("Introduction" 9).[26] Although Pye seems to have overlooked the release of a number of international publications, some of which, contrary to his claim, did indeed significantly enhance the critical discussion of the Western – chief among them stands Christopher Frayling's seminal treatment of the European Western – he does have a point in indicating the surprising sparsity of critical writing during the 1980s, especially when compared to the abundance of material that burgeoned in the 1970s and later followed in the wake of the *performative turn* of the 1990s (Fenske, "Film" 237).

Unlike scholarship about the Western, feminist film theory in the 1980s had thrived and produced several acclaimed studies discussing cinematic representations of gender, now repeatedly challenging and critically reflecting the hitherto assumed self-evidence or 'invisibility' of certain categories or modes of representation. Pam Cook, for instance, promoted

---

[25] This aspect owes equally to the Western film's strong interest in explorations of gender and the huge popularity of the genre especially during the 1950s and 1960s.

[26] Pye specifically mentions Phil Hardy's *The Aurum Film Encyclopeadia: The Western* (1983) and *The BFI Companion to the Western* (1988), edited by Edward Buscombe.

in her oft-quoted essay "Masculinity in Crisis?" (1982), the possible arrangement of an eroticized, voyeuristic gaze that could be directed at a man – illustrated in the example of Martin Scorsese's RAGING BULL (1980) (Fenske, "Film" 239). Equally inspirational certainly ranks Steve Neale's article "Masculinity as Spectacle" (first published in *Screen* in 1983), in which the author elaborates on "[h]eterosexual masculinity […] as a structuring norm in relation to images of both women and of gay men" (277).

By the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, initiated by Martin Pumphrey's pioneering article "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?" (1989),[27] film analysis rediscovered the Western as the ideal testing ground for the mapping out of cinematic masculinities and explore its intersections with American cultural identity, applying recently advanced theories of feminist critique and film studies,[28] and drawing extensively from the developing academic field of Critical Men's Studies, which produced a multitude of historicizing accounts of masculinities.[29]

In fact, this rediscovered interest in the Western during the 1990s produced so many fruitful studies that only three of the most significant ones – that is, the three most deeply engaged in gender-related research – can briefly be sketched here: Jane Tompkins's essayist deliberations about key elements of the Western, named *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992), Lee Clark Mitchell's analysis of the centrality of masculinity in the Western cosmos, named *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (1996), and Peter Verstraten's part-psychoanalytical/part-cultural-historical re-reading of traditional Westerns, named *Screening Cowboys: Reading Masculinities in Westerns* (1999).[30]

---

[27] I use the word 'pioneering' in the sense that Pumphrey's article constitutes "the first article to reflect on masculinity and the Western in the light of recent cultural theory" (Pye, "Introduction" 12).

[28] See, for instance, the anthology *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* (1993), edited by Steven Cohan and Ira Rae Hark, or *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men* (1993), edited by Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim.

[29] These publications include E. Anthony Rotundo's *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (1993), Michael Kimmel's *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996), or the encyclopedia *American Masculinities* edited by Bret E. Carroll (2003). Equally pervasive, if originating from a different end of the gender-political spectrum, were those publications of the mythopoetic men's movement, championed by Robert Bly and his extremely successful book *Iron John* (1990).

[30] Other significant 1990s studies of the Western include: Richard Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1992); Dieter Rünzler's *Im Westen ist Amerika: Die Metamorphose des Cowboys vom Rinderhirten zum Amerikanischen Helden* (1995); Michael Coyne's *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (1997), as well as two very comprehensive and diverse anthologies, namely *The Movie Book of the Western* (1996), edited by Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye, and *The Western Reader*, edited by Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. On top of these works, the 1990s saw also the revision of a number of selected films, and distinguished personas famously associated with the Western: Edward Buscombe's reading of STAGECOACH in his eponymously titled monograph (1992), Edward Countryman & Evonne von Heussen-Countryman's reading of SHANE (1953) dating from 1999, or Gary Will's biography *John Wayne's America* (1997), or Randy Roberts & James S. Olson's earlier account of the same actor in *John Wayne: American* (1995). In terms of gender-specific research of Hollywood cinema in general, Steve Cohan's *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (1997) constitutes perhaps the most significant contribution.

First, Tompkins very eloquently retraces a number of elements she considers emblematic for the Western to the imagery and narratives of the 19th century domestic novel: Death, Women and the Language of Men, Landscape, Horses, Cattle. Her main point, however, is to situate the Western in literary/cultural history and thus provide a thematic genealogy. Tompkins identifies the Western genre as a masculinist reaction to an ascending culture of female writers in Victorian America, and suggests a connection between the Western's popularity, patriarchy's oppression of women, and contemporary men's emotional deterioration:

> The Western *answers* the domestic novel. It is the antithesis of the cult of domesticity that dominated American Victorian culture. The Western hero, who seems to ride in out of nowhere, in fact comes riding in out of the nineteenth century. And every piece of baggage he doesn't have, every word he doesn't say, every creed in which he doesn't believe is absent for a reason. What isn't there in the Western hasn't disappeared by accident; it's been deliberately jettisoned. […] If the Western deliberately rejects evangelical Protestantism and pointedly repudiates the cult of domesticity, it is because it seeks to marginalize and suppress the figure who stood for those ideals. (Tompkins 39)

Tompkins's book has attracted strong criticism. Lee Clark Mitchell – whose *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* I will discuss shortly – in his disapproving reaction to Tompkins's work mainly attacks the allegedly untenable and unfounded nature of her observations. He writes: "[…] Tompkins moves through a broad swath of Westerns to prompt provocative observations she can neither prove nor disprove, more interesting in themselves than for what they say about her thesis of a twentieth-century Western and a nineteenth-century domestic novel" (11). Expressing a similar point, Douglas Pye has argued that Tompkins's "desire to make the western monolithically about gender pushes a brilliant argument to a polemical extreme," concluding about her assessment that "the cultural meanings of the western cannot be restricted to a single theme" ("Introduction" 12).

These critical assessments of Tompkins's work notwithstanding, one cannot ignore that her provocative essay – specifically her problematization of the nexus between the cultural status of the Western and constructions of gender – has inspired and launched a vast number of studies in the following years. Accordingly, Lusted asserts: "[…] [I]n her account of the male-centred world of the Western which explores male fears as much as male mastery, she opens up new ways of thinking about the male drama of the Western, as one that is less secure in its masculine identity" (*The Western* 29). Therefore, in regard to my own study, I shall concur with Gaylyn Studlar's assessment of Tompkins's study: "Although Tompkins's generalizing conclusions about the Western are deeply flawed, her work is valuable for its attempt to treat masculinity and femininity in the Western in relation rather than as separate entities, and I will follow that strategy here, if to very different ends" ("Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions…" 45).

Lee Clark Mitchell, on the other hand, emphasizes the diversity and flexibility of the genre. He shows that the Western has always been altering its tropes, varying its materials, changing its narratives, in order to speak to its audiences (Mitchell 6-7). Mitchell demonstrates that irrespective of the variable ambiguity of these tropes and narratives, the Western always revolves around one preoccupying element that unites them: the "problem of manhood" (7); specifically, the construction of it, as Mitchell elaborates:

> Granted other issues engaged by Westerns in fiction and film, then, the one question linking them is how to be a man. The question cannot be addressed by parables about the containment of women, since men do not come into existence simply when women behave in a certain way. […] The alchemy of 'making the man' is more complex, dependent on an intricate mixture of bodily and behavioral traits that results in a double logic of the male body visibly making itself, even as it needs to disappear *as* a body to ensure the achievement of masculinity. […] The point is that masculinity is not evident *prima facie* in the Western – not simply a blunt biological fact (a matter of correct anatomical parts, as it were) – but is as well a cultural fiction that must be created, then re-created. […] [Westerns] oscillate between sex and gender, between an essentialism that requires the display of a male body and a constructivism that grants manhood to men not by virtue of their bodies but of their behavior. (153-155; emphasis in original)

With these complex observations, Mitchell draws from groundbreaking gender-theoretical research that had been advanced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, particularly such studies that helped promote a shift from the traditional sex-versus-gender division toward a constructivist understanding of gender as the result of ritually performed acts within hegemonic systems that discursively endow subjects with meaning about gender and sexuality. Though he does not reference them explicitly, Mitchell's reasoning takes inspiration from the vanguards of this new wave: Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman's article "Doing Gender" (1987), as well as Judith Butler's highly influential books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), and, qua Butler, also by Michel Foucault's *discourse analysis*, as well as Jacques Derrida and *deconstructivism*.[31] In a nutshell – and foreshadowing some of the theoretical tenets of this study that I shall lay out in greater detail below – this understanding of gender as the repetition of discursively marked performative acts means (applied to the context of the Western):

> Men act not manly because of a genetic predisposition in their blood, but mainly because their *gendered acts* reference or evoke acts that have been previously performed by others – acts that

[31] Although in *Making the Man* there is no verifiable discussion of the texts and works that inspired Mitchell's thesis – apart from an explicit reference to Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema" – the parallels between Mitchell's approach to the Western's constructions of masculinity and, for instance, Derrida's approach toward linguistics are uncanny (see, for instance, Mitchell 4).

momentarily promise authority, meaning, and stability. The movie-cowboy's masculinity is therefore supported and facilitated by a series of connections between masculinity and space, such as *the frontier*, guns, etc., which have been established and repeated. (Reeser 27; emphasis in original; Transl. T.S.)

In this vein, Mitchell attempts to show that the iconography and, crucially, the gendered performative acts we know from Westerns such as HIGH NOON (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), SHANE (George Stevens, 1953), HONDO (John Farrow, 1953), or THE WILD BUNCH (Sam Peckinpah, 1969) go back to the paintings of Albert Bierstadt and Bret Harte, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), but essentially all in one way or another originate from James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823-1841), specifically *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). Correspondingly, the author labels Cooper "the father of the Western" (Mitchell 34). According to Mitchell, the Western hero as we know him is perceived as masculine only because he has learned to emulate and refine over and again the behavioral traits that had been pre-established as symbolic bearers of masculinity by the progenitor of this character type: Cooper's Natty Bumppo. Mitchell suggests that Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* in their "celebration of frontier landscape, feats of violence, and masculine self-construction" (8-9) already in the early 19th century introduced the archetypal Western text: that is, the repertoire of gendered acts for the construction of white American masculinity. Following Mitchell's argument, any succeeding Western text, novel, or film, therefore, inevitably constitutes an iteration of Cooper's 'original' material in their configurations of masculinity: "He [Natty Bumppo, T.S.] is the model on which all other attempts to 'make the man' will be practiced" (Mitchell 9). This means that, according to Mitchell, the discursive blueprint for the set of performative acts that comprise the Western hero's masculinity – or, more broadly speaking, the genre's formula for imagining and constructing gender – should be found in *Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales* (cf. ibid. 9), which bodes a certain degree of essentialism in his argument. Mitchell's analysis has influenced and inspired many studies that followed in its wake, and the study at hand is no exception. However, I shall refrain from his implication that posits all Western canon as derivatives of a singular, supposedly original text. What is more, I will modify the outlook of my (de-)constructivist analysis, proposing a more widespread approach to discussing the Western's 'exploration of gender' as opposed to Mitchell's poignant-if-exclusive 'making the man'.

Third, Peter Verstraten's *Screening Cowboys: Reading Masculinities in Westerns* provides probably the least well-known of the three studies mentioned here, which stands in no relation to its value. Verstraten investigates "how constructions of masculinity are implicated in cultural-historical identities" (*Screening Cowboys* 11). Drawing from the works and applications of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Laura Mulvey, Verstraten describes "the 'rule' of traditional masculinity" in Western films with the help of psychoanalysis, and resorts to

cultural-historical contexts whenever psychoanalysis falls short to explain deviations from, variations of, or "distinctions within the 'rule'" (ibid. 14-15). His most important finding is the *sine qua non* of "an internal audience" to the construction of the hero's masculinity: as a narratological device that precludes the hero from being the "character-bound narrator" of the plot, which, in traditional Westerns, functions to ensure that "the hero is predominantly positioned as object of the look of character-bound focalizers who 'see' him with the eyes of imagination as a real man" (ibid. 13-14). Verstraten concludes that this internal audience, i.e., the on-looking focalizers through whose eyes the audience perceives the hero, is vital to the hero's configuration of masculinity: the hero's friends, his rivals, his sidekicks and his henchmen – *they* are the characters that traditionally bestow the hero with "the gift of masculinity" (ibid. 13). However, Verstraten demonstrates in his readings of extra-canonical examples, that

> [a]s soon as these focalizers suspend their belief in the cowboy's heroism, we as readers are encouraged to reconsider the apparent smoothness of the traditional scenario. Due to the suspension of their and our belief in tough heroism, the cowboy's masculinity is revealed as a vulnerable construction, based on an illusion that manipulates the eye of the beholder. (236)

Verstraten draws from, among other sources, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal study *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* to complicate the genre's fragile construction of heterosexuality and illustrate the vehemence with which it is defended against potential insinuations of specifically male homosexuality. To this present study, therefore, Verstraten's most valuable inspiration has been his application of a constructivist, relational understanding of gender that charts and does justice not only to the complexities of the hetero-patriarchal system that the Western both constitutes and reflects, but also to the contingencies in matters of sexuality and gender on which this system is based.

Since the early 2000s, the Western has gained a new level of popularity – and urgency – among researchers. After the all-consuming cut that was 9/11 and the remarkable number of *neo*-Westerns that followed in its wake,[32] scholarship inevitably took to explore the manifold socio-political facets of the Western, revisiting and challenging especially the genre's portrayal

---

[32] By this I mean films that visibly transpose established Western narratives and iconography to a decidedly modern context, like LONE STAR (John Sayles, 1996), THE HI-LO COUNTRY (Stephen Frears, 1998), THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005), BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (Ang Lee, 2006), NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN (Ethan Coen & Joel Coen, 2007), and, more recently, HELL OR HIGH WATER (David Mackenzie, 2016), WIND RIVER (Taylor Sheridan, 2017), 12 STRONG (Nicolai Fuglsig, 2018), or THE HIGHWAYMEN (John Lee Hancock, 2019). It should be noted that this transposition is by no means a phenomenon of recent years. Earlier films that draw from this dynamic include THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE (John Huston, 1948), THE WALKING HILLS (John Sturges, 1949), THE MISFITS (John Huston, 1961), LONELY ARE THE BRAVE (David Miller, 1962), HUD (Martin Ritt, 1963), JUNIOR BONNER (Sam Peckinpah, 1972), BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA (Sam Peckinpah, 1974).

of national and cultural identity.[33] Especially in light of the gradual transcendence of disciplinary boundaries within academia and the significant diversification of research that came with it, the elucidation of the Western flourished like never before. In recent years, scholarship produced several studies that revisited the prolific connection between constructions of cultural identity and gender.[34] This includes such studies that have essayed to illustrate the plurality and transnational, multilateral cross-fertilization of Western narratives, highlighting the prolificacy of frontier narratives outside the United States and Hollywood.[35] Most importantly though, this includes intersectional studies, which elaborate specifically on the complex network of multiple factors of discrimination and privilege conveyed and perpetuated by the Western.[36]

Ever since the 1940s, then, the Western has consistently attracted scholarship that has thoroughly investigated and problematized gender. In most studies, the perhaps unsurprising result of their investigation is that the Western constructs and upholds a binary gender regime that supports and reflects male hegemony. That is, most studies attempt to grasp gender – and subsequently formulate an ideological critique of it – by ways of describing a structural power imbalance between men and women. This approach has produced a great number of seminal contributions that have developed a better understanding of the significance of gender within the cinematic microcosm of the Western as well as American culture at large. Yet I feel that this avenue of research has reached an impasse, primarily because the somewhat striking self-evidence of the results leave little room to imagine the Western as anything but a somewhat static, retrograde masculinist haven, in which (white) men have and will always reign supreme.

My point here is not to question the genre's longstanding perpetuation of white male hegemony; rather, I wonder if there is a different way to imagine and approach gender; one that allows not only for a mapping out of the power imbalances produced and solidified by gender, but one that respects the contingencies gender may contain.

[33] Among the most important proponents of this kind of writing rank certainly Stanley Corkin's cultural-historical contextualisation of Westerns from the 1940s to the 1960s in *Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History* (2004), as well as Armando José Prats study on the Western's representation of "the conqueror's experiences on the frontier" in *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American West* (2002) (xiii). For a concise reading of two paradigmatic Western films within the context of "post-9/11 films" see Holtz, Martin. "The Western in Times of War: *Open Range* and *Seraphim Falls* as Post-9/11 Films" (2017).

[34] See, for instance Roderick McGillis account of the B Western in *He Was Some Kind of a Man: Masculinities in B Western* (2009), Martin Weidinger's book *Nationale Mythen – Männliche Helden: Politik und Geschlecht im Amerikanischen Western* (2006), Russell Meeuf's study *John Wayne's World: Transnational Masculinity in the Fifties* (2013), or Katrin Berkenkamp's study *Die Konstruktion und Demontage des Amerikanischen Helden: Männlichkeitsentwürfe in Westernliteratur- und Film* (2014).

[35] See, for instance, Thomas Klein's study *Geschichte – Mythos – Identität: Zur Globalen Zirkulation des Western-Genres* (2015), or the collection of essays assembled by Austin Fisher in *Spaghetti Westerns at the Crossroads: Studies in Relocation, Transition and Appropriation* (2016).

[36] See, for example, the anthology *Violence and Open Spaces: The Subversion of Boundaries and the Transformation of the Western Genre* edited by Stefanie Müller, Christa Buschendorf, and Katja Sarkowsky (2017).

My impression is that, by and large, academics have predicated their analyses of the Western on the assumption of a stable, binary conceptualization of sex and gender. Taking the terms male and female, masculinity and femininity, as well as their configuration as relational, oppositional, dialectical, and, essentially, stable pairs somewhat for granted (or at least considering them self-evident in their genealogy), such investigations can necessarily only testify to relations between and among genders in a binary system. For instance, an analysis that fathoms any discontinuity or irregularity in the configuration of masculinity as practices of femininization, will necessarily see in this practice the establishment, negotiation, or solidification of a gender hierarchy among men or between men and women. Conversely, an analysis that embraces such discontinuities or irregularities more openly, as *explorations* of gender, might be able to raise a different point. To that end, I propose to reformulate the analytical premise and concomitant vantage point of gender analyses of the Western from "making the man" or "(de-)constructing masculinity" to *exploring* gender.

3. Theoretical Framework

My aim is to show that the Western, far from being uniformly stabilizing gender identities or hierarchies, has always – and quite necessarily so – either inadvertently revealed or candidly discussed such strategies that seek to naturalize gender as a pre-discursive episteme while being inevitably invested in the process of constructing gender as an intelligible, identifiable system of signs and significations. In the Western, the urgency to construct gender as the result of biological sex is at odds with the very process of construction. This paradox is fundamentally embedded in the genre's formula.

In the following, I will develop a theoretical framework that will help me demonstrate that the Western from its cinematic origins to one notable caesura of 1969 has perpetually struggled to explain gender and its legitimacy as a pivotal organizing principle of society, thus revealing both its hegemonic power and its fragility as a system founded on an aporia. Here I heed the call for a critical analysis to, as formulated by Judith Butler on the final pages of *Gender Trouble*, "redescribe those possibilities that *already* exist, but which exist within cultural domains designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible" (203; emphasis in original). In other words, in reading the Western not as self-defeatingly self-evident but instead as evidently self-defeating, I hope to contribute to "making gender visible as a universal category of societal power" (Schößler 15; Transl. T.S.) and to "confounding the very binarism of sex, and exposing its fundamental unnaturalness" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 203).

This requires me to, firstly, provide a foundation for gender's hegemonic power, for which I will refer to Raewyn Connell's model of *hegemonic masculinity*. Secondly, I will problematize a number of aspects contained in Connell's model, relying on the prolific and

productive criticism her theory has attracted, particularly in the German-speaking sphere of gender research, and specifically by consulting Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the *social habitus*. Thirdly, using Bourdieu's theory as the onset for a constructivist conceptualization of gender, and further relying on Judith Butler's work on *gender performativity* and the *heterosexual matrix* to reveal and identify leverage points for ideological-critical research, I will formulate the theoretical framework for my own analysis of gender representation in the American Western (1903-1969).

3.1. Hegemonic Masculinity

Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell originally developed the model of *hegemonic masculinity* in the 1980s together with Tim Carrigan and John Lee (Meuser & Scholz, ""Hegemoniale Männlichkeit: Versuch Einer Begriffsklärung…" 211). In 1995, Connell's work was published under the programmatic title *Masculinities*.[37] Following the widespread reception of *Masculinities*, Connell's pluralistic conceptualization of masculinities, as well as her definition of hegemonic masculinity as historically mobile and continuously and conditionally relational have proven to be extremely influential across the disciplines (cf. Connell & Messerschmidt 830; cf. Martschukat & Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 47; cf. Reeser 31-32).[38]

Connell's study is greatly inspired by Gerda Lerner's assessment of the mechanisms of *patriarchy* (Meuser, "Soziologie" 220; Neidhart 9),[39] as she takes the omnipresence of patriarchal structures and male hegemony as described by Lerner (212-29) as the starting point for her theory. Connell detects "a gender politics within masculinity" (*Masculinities* 37), meaning an institutionalized set of gendered practices and structures of "hierarchization and exclusion" (Martschukat & Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 46; Transl. T.S.), which have long worked to cement a gender order in which men are generally privileged over women. "The power relationships between genders and within genders in the current Western gender

---

[37] An earlier version of Connell's model was published in 1985 together with co-author Carrigan; another version followed in 1987 under the title *Gender and Power*. In the following years to this day, Connell has consistently revised *Masculinities* and worked in criticisms and other suggestions (Dinges, "'Hegemoniale Männlichkeit'" 7n1). The version I am referring to in this dissertation is the latest version of *Masculinities*, the Second Edition, published in 2005 and reprinted in 2015.

[38] Even Connell's critics, such as Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, acknowledge that her "'social theory of gender' has established him [Connell] as one of the leading theoreticians in the general area of gender relations and more particularly in the emerging field of the sociology of masculinity" (337).

[39] One definition of patriarchy, referenced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick in her study *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosociality* (3) has been put forward by Heidi Hartmann, who describes patriarchy "as a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enable them to control women. Patriarchy is thus the system of male oppression of women" ("Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Segregation by Sex" 138n1).

order are centered, in Connell's view, on a single structural fact: 'the global dominance of men over women'" (Demetriou 340).[40]

Connell's subsequent theoretical deliberations draw mainly from Antonio Gramsci's concept of *cultural hegemony* (cf. Reeser 31; Meuser "Soziologie" 220), although in *Masculinities* she only cursorily references his work.[41] To Connell, two aspects of Gramsci's theory are of particular importance:[42] first, that there are dynamic power relations between groups in social life which are exercised in order to stabilize the power of the ruling group over a subordinated group (cf. *Masculinities* 77). Second, that these power relations are not necessarily imposed by force but fundamentally engrained in societal structures (cf. Meuser, "Soziologie" 220; also cf. Glasze & Mattissek "Die Hegemonie- und Diskurstheorie von Laclau und Mouffe" 143-4). Relying on "the subordinates' consent to their own subjugation" (Meuser & Scholz, "Krise oder Strukturenwandel Hegemonialer Männlichkeiten?" 60; Transl. T.S.) and appearing "as more stable the more it is not only passively tolerated but actively supported" (Wullweber 34; Transl. T.S.), one crucial hallmark of hegemony seems to be its propensity to be simultaneously ubiquitous and invisible. On a similar note, Byung-Chul Han observes: "[absolute power] is achieved when freedom and submission concur" (14; Transl. T.S.).

Factoring these insights into her understanding of the mechanisms of patriarchy, Connell thus applies Gramsci's assessment of class relations and the rule of the bourgeoisie to gender relations and the rule of men. Broadly speaking, *cultural hegemony* becomes *hegemonic masculinity*.[43] Connell accordingly defines *hegemonic masculinity* "as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (*Masculinities* 77). This definition also implies the "historically mobile" nature of hegemony (ibid. 77). Connell continues: "When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony" (ibid. 77). *Hegemonic masculinity*, then, provides the ever-flexible, elusive-yet-firm counterbalance to the repeated challenges about the legitimacy of the superiority of masculinity (on an

[40] Demetriou cites an extract of Connell's earlier work, *Gender and Power* (1987).
[41] Gramsci's concept originates from a tradition of political theory, specifically Marxist writing of political economy. Gramsci's interests above all resided in an analysis – and ultimately a critique – of the mechanisms of ideology in a system structured by power relations between classes (Dinges, "'Hegemoniale Männlichkeit': Ein Konzept auf dem Prüfstand" 11). Connell's approach of transposing Marxist political theory for ideological-critical, feminist research is no singular phenomenon and has proven to be quite productive and impactful, as Martschukat and Stieglitz summarize, for instance, Jeff Hearn's approach to his study *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism* as based on a similar theoretical slant (cf. *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 45).
[42] This is a heuristic reduction, as there are other parallels between the two theories. See, for instance, Benjamin Opratko's account of Gramsci and his reading of hegemony as a "certain modus of the exercise of power" (69, Transl. T.S.).
[43] Once again, this is a heuristic reduction. Gramsci's and Connell's understanding of *hegemony* are not exactly coextensive, as Demetriou has shown (345).

individual level) and patriarchy (on an institutional level). Connell's use of language – describing *hegemonic masculinity* as a gender *practice* in the first part of the above quotation, only to speak of it in the second part as a hierarchical *position* of hegemony that is occupied by masculinities – already foreshadows her overall intention, which is to provide both "a way of theorizing gendered power relations among men," and at the same time to help "[understand] the effectiveness of masculinities in the legitimation of the gender order" (ibid. xviii).[44]

The key component of Connell's theory is her classification of four types of gendered power relations among men: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization/authorization (cf. Connell, *Masculinities* 77-81; cf. Meuser, "Soziologie" 220), all of which are interdependent in one way or another. *Hegemony*, for one thing, works only in combination with relations of *subordination*. Likewise, *complicity* requires the *hegemony*/*subordination* dyad, as does *marginalization/authorization*.

Connell asserts with reference to Gramsci that "'hegemony' […] refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (*Masculinities* 77). She continues: "At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" (ibid. 77). Connell invokes the privileged position of heterosexual men in relation to the subordination of homosexual men in European and North American culture as one pivotal example of the hegemony/subordination dyad (cf. ibid. 78), only to point out the "symbolic blurring" of male homosexuality with femininity in the derogatory vocabulary used by oppressive masculinities to brand either of these social groups (cf. ibid. 79).[45] The hegemony of men toward subordinated men is structurally identical to the hegemony of men toward women, as both instances are based on and perpetuate the cultural assumption of a superior

[44] This doubled understanding of hegemonic masculinity has also generated confusion among researchers and hence has attracted a great deal of criticism, as I will explicate below.

[45] This constitutes a very prominent aspect in research on, for instance, heterosexuality, homosociality, or female anthropology, and is by no means originally Connell's. Gayle Rubin writes, for example, in her seminal 1975 study "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex": "The suppression of the homosexual component of human sexuality, and by corollary, the oppression of homosexuals, is therefore a product of the same system whose rules and relations oppress women" (95). Quoting Rubin, this aspect also resurfaces in Eve Kosofsky Segdwick's study *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (3-4), where the author that "'homosocial' forms of domination are constituted in part by the repudiation of erotic bonds among men" and that "the ability to project those erotic bonds into a marginal figure – the stigmatized body of the homosexual – has been crucial to the creation of modern homosociality, which in turn has inflected class identity and male domination" (Warner xiv). Expressing a related point, Richard Dyer has remarked about the intersections of queer sexuality and gender, also indicating in the latter part of the following quote how the pattern of hegemonic masculinity equally pertains to Queer culture: "The treatment of queers may acquire its more vicious or contemptuous forms from the degree to which queers are not real men, from the cognitive dissonance between masculinity and queerness – and yet in practice queers can practice and exclusionary or domineering masculinity, often control those women-centred sectors of employment that make space for them (hairdressing, fashion, dance, some clerical work and caring professions), are by no means free from misogyny, in short, can be men, be perceived to achieve manhood, in spite of being queers" (*The Culture of Queers* 5).

masculinity in relation to an inferior femininity.[46] Consequently, Michael Meuser speaks of a conflation of "the homosocial and heterosocial dimension of hegemonic masculinity" ("Soziologie" 221; Transl. T.S.). It follows that *hegemony* describes a structural link between the institutionalized power wielded by men over women and the symbolic power harnessed by men to establish dominance/subordination among each other.

Yet, as Connell recognizes that only very few men are capable of "rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety" (*Masculinities* 79), she introduces the aspect of *complicit masculinity* to account for those individuals that do not "actually meet the normative standards" of *hegemonic masculinity*, and to provide "a way of theorizing their specific situation" (ibid. 79). Connell subsequently introduces the idea of a "patriarchal dividend" that describes "the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (ibid. 79), even though they do not correspond with the currently accepted model of *hegemonic masculinity*, actively endorse its position of privilege, or re-enforce the patterns by which it is exerted (cf. ibid. 79-80). However, the complicity of men with "the hegemonic project" (ibid. 79) secures men's position within the gender order and stabilizes the structures that produce it (cf. Dinges, "'Hegemoniale Männlichkeit'" 12).

Fourthly, Connell introduces the strategy of *marginalization* to open her model to intersectional considerations and allow for the fluidity required to substantiate her dynamic definition of patriarchy as a historically mobile construct (cf. *Masculinities* 80). With marginalization, Connell "[refers] to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups," accentuating that "marginalization is always relative

---

[46] An important nuance to Connell's model has been voiced by Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, who "draws on Gramsci's concept of historic bloc and Bhabha's notion of hybridity" (Demetriou 337) to predominantly attack "Connell's dualism between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities" (355). He points out that "in Connell's historical narrative [of the historical emergence of contemporary hegemonic masculinity], non-hegemonic masculinities are absent from the formative process of hegemonic masculinity" (346, 347). Quite the contrary, he argues, non-hegemonic practices are constantly appropriated, negotiated, and translated (cf. 355) by hegemonic masculinities, and thus substantially influence the configuration of them, in order to ultimately secure the legitimacy of patriarchy (cf. 351-53). He concludes that non-hegemonic masculinities exert considerable influence on the (re-)configuration of hegemonic masculinity, that they are not just "possible alternatives" or "counter-hegemonic forces" but co-dependent, dialectic gender configurations that are "functional to the reproduction of patriarchy" (347, 349). Todd W. Reeser summarizes: "According to […] Demetriou, hegemonic masculinity ought not to be understood as pure but as hybrid: Through the appropriation of non-hegemonic elements, hegemonic masculinity may deceptively and imperceptibly change itself by transforming that what appeared as 'counter-hegemonic and progressive' into a retrograde means of patriarchal reproduction" (32; Transl. T.S.). Therefore, Demetriou's remarks about the appropriation of subordinates' practices clarify that power relations of hegemony/subordination must not be vectorized exclusively as monadic dissociations of dominant masculinities from subordinated masculinities. Not only do non-hegemonic masculinities strive to imitate or mimic hegemonic practices in order to approximate hegemony (and thus stabilize the gender order by confirming the pre-established pattern). It is also that hegemonic masculinities annex practices of non-hegemonic groups of masculinities in order to stymie the emergence of an alternative gender order (cf. Demetriou 348). Consequently, Demetriou argues that the relations of hegemony/subordination are just as much shaped by practices of appropriation as they are by practices of dissociation, thereby accentuating the polyadic nature of gender relations.

to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (*Masculinities* 80-81; emphasis in original), meaning that within a hegemonic system, certain individuals of an otherwise excluded or ostracized social group may receive quasi-hegemonic status, while the vast majority of men belonging to the same group remain sidelined.[47]

3.2. The Social Habitus: Towards a Constructivist Understanding of Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell thus approaches ideological criticism of patriarchal structures by ways of a doubled understanding of hegemonic masculinity as a principle that confounds – or at least fails to either distinctly differentiate or comprehensively link (cf. Meuser & Scholz, "Krise oder Strukturwandel Hegemonialer Männlichkeit?" 61)[48] – two analytical dimensions: the investigation of hegemonic masculinity as a cultural telos or "model of orientation" (Meuser, "Soziologie" 220; "Orientierungsmuster"); and the investigation of hegemonic masculinity as social practices. Connell's model presents a way to both apprehend the *status* of hegemonic masculinity as a cultural norm and describe the *process* of (re-)constructing and transforming, or, generally speaking, relating to this norm in social practices (cf. "Krise oder Strukturwandel Hegemonialer Männlichkeit?" 61; cf. Meuser, "'Hegemoniale Männlichkeit'" 162; cf. Connell & Messerschmidt, 832).

A significant modification that seeks to disambiguate this aspect in Connell's model has been provided by German sociologists Michael Meuser and Sylka Scholz, as they propose to reconfigure the normative status of *hegemonic masculinity* as "institutionalized practice" (ibid. 61; "*institutionalisierte Praxis*"), which results from the perpetuation of certain social practices by a societal elite, thus becoming hegemonic (cf. ibid. 61-62). Accordingly, they suggest understanding the model's processual aspect as a "generative principle" (ibid. 62; "*generatives Prinzip*"), in that the normative status of hegemonic masculinity as cultural ideal informs the perpetual (re-)construction of masculinity in everyday social practices (cf. ibid. 62).[49]

Here, the authors turn to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the "masculine habitus" (cf. ibid 62),[50] as Bourdieu conceptualizes *habitus* as a kind of "hinge between body and society,

[47] To illustrate the practices of marginalization and authorization, Connell mentions the exposition of particular black male athletes as "exemplars for hegemonic masculinity," while at the same time "the fame and wealth of individual stars […] does not yield social authority to black men generally" (*Masculinities* 81).
[48] Particularly this aspect has attracted a great deal of criticism (cf. Dinges, "'Hegemoniale Männlichkeit': Ein Konzept auf dem Prüfstand" 11; cf. Demetriou 337-43).
[49] In a similar vein, Iris Dzudzek, Caren Kunze, and Joscha Wullweber have proposed synergizing theories of hegemony with approaches of post-structuralism, specifically discourse theory (9-18).
[50] A comparison or conflation of the works of Bourdieu and Connell has been at the heart of many gender researchers in the past (Meuser & Scholz, "Hegemoniale Männlichkeit: Versuch einer Begriffserklärung aus Soziologischer Perspektive"; Neidhart, *Konstruktion von Männlichkeit. Männliche Herrschaft und Hegemoniale Männlichkeit. Bourdieu und Connell. Ein Vergleich*).

between performance and structure" (Martschukat & Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 48, with reference to Meuser, "Soziologie" 221-22; Transl. T.S.; also cf. Lenger, Schneickert, and Schumacher 14).[51] According to Meuser and Scholz, Bourdieu's concept of the masculine habitus explores the nexus between what he sees as men's arbitrary claim to structural power/social capital (male hegemony) and men's everyday social conduct that both reflects and perpetuates this claim to social capital – a behavioral pattern that he describes as the *libido dominandi*.[52] Following Meuser and Scholz's reading of Bourdieu, these two inter-relational and interdependent ontologies share a structural homology, in which "hegemonic masculinity conforms with the libido dominandi and manifests itself in a historically palpable hegemonic ideal of masculinity" ("Krise oder Strukturwandel Hegemonialer Männlichkeit?" 62; Transl. T.S.).[53] *Hegemonic masculinity* is, as Brandes describes with reference to Gregory Bateson, "a pattern that generates patterns" (67), and a pattern that finds its most concrete reification in the social construction of sexed and gendered bodies (cf. Meuser, "Soziologie" 221; cf. Brandes 63; cf. Engler 251). Bourdieu writes:

> The social world constructs the body as a sexually defined reality and as the depository of sexually defining principles of vision and division. This embodied social programme of perception is applied to all the things of the world and firstly to the *body* itself, in its biological reality. It is this programme which constructs the difference between the biological sexes in conformity with the principles of a mythic vision of the world rooted in the arbitrary relationship of domination of men over women, itself inscribed, with the division of labour, in the reality of the social order. The *biological* difference between the *sexes*, i.e. between the male and female bodies, and, in particular, the *anatomical* difference between the sex organs, can thus appear as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the *genders*, and in particular of the social division of labour. […] Because the social principle of vision constructs the anatomical difference and because this socially constructed difference becomes the basis and apparently natural justification of the social vision which founds it, there is thus a relationship of circular causality which confines thought within the self-evidence of relations of domination inscribed both in objectivity, in the form of objective divisions, and in subjectivity, in the form of cognitive schemes which, being organized in accordance with these divisions,

---

[51] Bourdieu follows a sociological understanding of the *habitus* concept, comprising "'schemata of the perception, thinking, and doing' of a person, in which the totality of incorporated, preceding social experiences are expressed" (Lenger, Schneickert, and Schumacher 14, with reference to Bourdieu, "Der Habitus als Vermittler Zwischen Struktur und Praxis" 153 and Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der Theoretischen Vernunft* 101; Transl. T.S.). Alexander Lenger, Christian Schneickert, and Florian Schumacher continue: "The habitus is primarily shaped by the specific societal position of members of a social group within a social structure. Broadly speaking, the concept serves to negotiate between individual dispositions (subject level) and societal opportunities (structural level)" (ibid.14; Transl. T.S.).

[52] For an explanation to Bourdieu's understanding of the *libido dominandi*, see his article "Die Männliche Herrschaft", which I have accessed in its German translation in Irene Dölling and Beate Krais's *Ein Alltägliches Spiel: Geschlechterkonstruktionen in der Sozialen Praxis* (153-217); specifically pages 203-205.

[53] For a succinct description of Bourdieu's own contextualization of the hegemony of masculine dominance, see Engler 252.

organize the perception of these objective divisions. (*Masculine Domination* 11-12; emphases in original)

According to Bourdieu, the cultural vindication of male hegemony – or, in Connell's words, "the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" (*Masculinities* 77) – fundamentally hinges on the perpetual structural confusion of nature and culture (cf. Lenger, Schneickert, and Schumacher 27-28; cf. Engler 250-52). Bourdieu clarifies: "The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations*: it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction*" (*Masculine Domination* 23; emphasis in original).

Clearly, Bourdieu's "reflexive", dualism-breaking conceptualization of the social habitus points towards a constructivist, performative understanding of gender (Engler 248) as proposed, most prominently, by Judith Butler (cf. Martschukat & Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 48).[54] Specifically, Bourdieu's elaboration of the social construction of dimorphously sexed bodies according to pre-discursive assumptions of gender binarity find their conceptual equivalent in Butler's "[contestation of] […] the concept of a sexually determined body as a component of the occidental 'metaphysics of substance'" (Schößler 96; Transl. T.S.). In Bourdieu's social habitus as well as in Butler's conceptualization of sex and gender as a "biocultural unit" (Hey 117; "biokulturelle Einheit", Transl. T.S.), biology appears as "a cultural category; the anatomical sex, too, is a social construction that scientifically substantiates power relations" (Schößler 96; Transl. T.S.). Crucially though, whereas Bourdieu's elaborations, according to Michael Meuser, give evidence to a certain "structurally-deterministic fatalism" – as opposed to the "structurally haphazard creative optimism" of Connell ("Soziologie" 222), Butler's introduction of *gender performativity* as an analytical operator allows for ideological critique and subversion of the instability of heterosexual orthodoxy.

3.3. Destabilizing Gender

In her two most significant contributions to critical feminist theory, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Judith Butler eclectically combines the findings of Michel Foucault's *discourse analysis* with the linguistic insights of J.L. Austin's theory of *speech acts*, as well as its transfer to Cultural Studies by John R. Searle and Jacques Derrida (cf. Schößler 95-97, cf. Lloyd 573-74), and substantiates them with a critical investigation of

[54] At this point it seems worthy to point out that parallels have been detected not only between Butler and Bourdieu, but also between Butler and Connell (cf. Demetriou 340).

Jacques Lacan's reworkings of Freudian psychoanalysis, to challenge formerly established notions of a coherence between sex, gender, and desire, and to render these hitherto stable categories as profoundly unstable (cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 37).[55]

Butler calls into question the usefulness of feminist practices that base their investigations on the stability and 'natural' universality of the category 'woman' (cf. Haller 14).[56] Contesting the "sex/gender distinction" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 9) developed most prominently by Simone de Beauvoir – "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (*The Second Sex*, 283)[57] – Butler thus challenges the hitherto apodictic 'natural' origin of dimorphously sexed bodies as men and women (cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 38). Instead, Butler proposes that our understanding of sexual binarism is, and has always been, informed by discursive presuppositions of gender that effect power imbalances above all (cf. ibid. 38):

> If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. It would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts. (*Gender Trouble* 9-10; emphasis in original)

According to Butler, there is no natural sex that pre-exists the cultural signification of gender. Quite conversely, the preconception of an alleged gender duality continuously informs the construction and simultaneous naturalization of sexual binarism. Like Bourdieu, then, Butler contests the natural origin of sex. Instead, she accentuates the discursive primacy of gender binarism, since it is the culturally pre-eminent idea of gender binarism that produces the sexual categories from which gender is believed to result, a process that ultimately

---

[55] For a concise account of how the understanding of *gender* has developed since the 1960s, see Schößler (2008), specifically pages 9-14. For a more detailed account, see Fenske, *Mannsbilder* (2008), pages 34-49. Also see Schmale, "Einleitung: Gender Studies, Männergeschichte, Körpergeschichte" (1998), and, for a more recent summary, Martschukat and Stieglitz's *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* (2018), specifically pages 16-35.

[56] Butler notes: "Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of 'women,' the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (*Gender Trouble* 4).

[57] Butler answers de Beauvoir: "If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification" (*Gender Trouble 45*, emphasis in original).

conceals the origin of its construction and reclads sex as deterministic, immutable, ubiquitous, and seemingly causal effect of nature (cf. ibid. 33-34).

Butler dismisses the idea of the body as a passive receptacle of nature (cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 38), which would render gender an expression of the sexed body from which it stems; rather, Butler proposes to "consider gender […] as *a corporeal style*, an 'act,' […] which is both intentional and performative, where '*performative*' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (*Gender Trouble* 190; emphasis in original). Highlighting that only through the perpetual – or 'habitual', as in Bourdieu – referencing of those acts (through repetition or modification) does gender receive its operational currency (cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 39), Butler follows:

> As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation. […] Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (*Gender Trouble* 191; emphasis in original)

Butler reconfigures gender from "a cultural construct which is imposed upon the surface of matter" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii) – that is, from an inert, somewhat static *expression* of a biological given – to a performative understanding of gender, as the "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (ibid. xii). She asserts that "gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed," concluding that "[there] is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result" (*Gender Trouble* 34).

Implying at first glance an element of unfettered subjective agency in the construction of gender identity, this aspect has attracted a great deal of criticism. The point has been raised that such a radically constructivist understanding of something as material as the human body might warrant a misconception of total malleability of gender, comparable to the fluctuating donning and doffing of different sets of clothes (cf. Martschukat & Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 54; cf. Haller 19).[58] After all, "gender ought to be understood as the sedimented

[58] For one example of the critique Butler's theory of gender performativity has attracted in the German-speaking sphere, see Duden, Barbara "Die Frau Ohne Unterleib: Zu Judith Butlers Entkörperung. Ein Zeitdokument." *Feministische Studien,* 11.2 (1993): 24-33.

and persistent effects of perceptional patterns and power structures, of discourses and practices, that are implanted into human bodies" (Martschukat & Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* 54; Transl. T.S.; also cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 35-37). Butler shields her argument against such challenges, emphasizing that from her way of theorizing gender does not follow that "any and all gendered possibilities are open, but that the boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursively conditioned experience" (*Gender Trouble* 12). Elsewhere she clarifies that "performativity [is] not […] the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but rather […] that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (*Bodies That Matter*, xii).

A subject's gender is thus only an ineluctable product of the power structures that govern discourse at a given time (cf. Schößler 95), and as such, a subject can only acquire (gender) identity by performing in compliance with a hegemonic system that dictates the coherence of sex and gender, regulated through heterosexual desire (cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 22-23; cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 39).[59] Butler introduces the concepts of *gender intelligibility* and *the heterosexual matrix* to theorize the materiality of cultural ideals of gender as well as describe the legal, juridical, and politico-social apparatus that governs, maintains, and polices those ideals as their cultural effect. Butler notes:

> 'Intelligible' genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire. In other words, the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the 'expression' or 'effect' of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice. (*Gender Trouble* 23)

Two interrelated aspects are of interest here: firstly, as Butler refers to similar models previously designed by Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich to describe the *heterosexual matrix* as a discursive guarantor that retains the seemingly natural and causal coherence of sex and

---

[59] Elsewhere, Butler has indicated the structural proximity of her understanding of performativity (as an element of subject formation) to a Gramscian understanding of hegemony, stating: "Distinct from a view that casts the operation of power in the political field exclusively in terms of discrete blocs which vie with one another for control of policy questions, hegemony emphasizes the ways in which power operates to form our everyday understanding of social relations, and to orchestrate the ways in which we consent to (and reproduce) those tacit and covert relations of power. Power is not stable or static, but is remade at various junctures within everyday life; it constitutes our tenuous sense of common sense, and is ensconced as the prevailing epistemes of a culture. Moreover, social transformation occurs not merely by rallying mass numbers in favour of a cause, but precisely through the ways in which daily social relations are rearticulated, and new conceptual horizons opened up by anomalous or subversive practices. The theory of performativity is not far from the theory of hegemony in this respect: both emphasize the way in which the social world is made – and new social possibilities emerge – at various levels of social action through a collaborative relation with power" ("Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism" 13-14).

gender (cf. Fenske, *Mannsbilder* 39),[60] she exposes the hegemonic and generative powers of compulsory heterosexuality, as the materialization or reification of gender identity occasions in the recognition of an allegedly symmetrical sexual opposite: "Hence, one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 30). Butler elaborates:

> Gender can denote a *unity* of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender – where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self – and desire – where desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires. The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality. That institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces the univocity of each of the gendered terms that constitute the limit of gendered possibilities within an oppositional, binary system. […] The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from the feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire. (ibid. 30-31; emphasis in original)

---

[60] Specifically, Butler notes that she is "drawing from Monique Wittig's notion of the 'heterosexual contract' and, to a lesser extent, on Adrienne Rich's notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' to characterize a hegemonic/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (*Gender Trouble* 7n6). In her introduction to *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction*, Rachel Carroll succinctly summarizes both concepts. On Adrienne Rich and her conceptualization of *compulsory heterosexuality*, Carroll states: "[Rich's] assertion that 'heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a *political institution* [emphasis in original]' retains its counter-intuitive power, challenging as it does persistent assumptions about heterosexuality as rooted in the natural and instinctual (especially where reproductive sexuality is concerned), rather than the ideological. Rich asks why 'such violent strictures should be found necessary to enforce women's total emotional, erotic loyalty and subservience to men' and in doing so establishes heterosexuality not simply as a sexual relation but also as a power relation" (*Rereading Heterosexuality* 2-3). On Wittig's notion of the *heterosexual contract*, Carroll remarks: "Monique Wittig abandons 'women' as an irrecoverably ideological concept, arguing in her important essay 'One Is Not Born a Woman' (first published in 1981) that 'the refusal to become (or to remain) heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or a woman, consciously or not'" (ibid. 3-4). Carroll lists and contextualizes these concepts (also including Butler's idea of the heterosexual matrix) to chronicle the epistemological development of heteronormativity, as a focal point of Queer Theory, noting that: "Feminist and lesbian feminist theorists have offered an ideological critique of heterosexuality in relation to the gendered and sexual oppression of women; in this way, heterosexuality has been analysed as a patriarchal institution which perpetuates gendered power relations through sexuality. More recently, queer theory has extended the terms by which heterosexuality can be understood through its discursive analysis of heterosexuality as an effect of historical and cultural construction" (ibid. 2).

In other words, Butler describes the *heterosexual matrix*, or heteronormativity[61] – as this is the terminology this study will predominantly apply[62] – as a system regulated through discourse, "that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality" (*Gender Trouble* 192-93). The heteronormative matrix, as the culturally accepted frame within which identities continuously negotiate and thereby acquire gender intelligibility through practices that privately and/or publicly denote 'proper' forms of heterosexuality, retains the illusion of natural gender binarism. The heteronormative matrix thus stabilizes a social order in a status quo that generally privileges male bodies to female and ensures its reproduction "through that felicitous self-naturalization" (*Gender Trouble* 45; cf. Bublitz 67-68).

Secondly, conceiving of the process of acquiring a gender identity in relation to "intelligible genders" opens an intriguing avenue for the critical subversion of the heteronormative matrix, an impetus that has its likely origins in Michel Foucault's remarks on normalization,[63] and that has arguably provided one of the key premises for Queer Theory (cf. Haller 9-11, 13; cf. Wagenknecht, "Was ist Heteronormativität?" 18). Butler asserts:

---

[61] One concise definition of heteronormativity has been provided by Dieter Haller in his introduction to "Die Entdeckung des Selbstverständlichen: Heteronormativität Blick": "Broadly speaking, heteronormativity describes all such views that assume as self-evident that the heterosexual couple constitutes the cipher for being human" (1; Transl. T.S.). Rachel Carroll refers to two seminal studies – one by Cathy J. Cohen ("Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?"), the other by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner ("Sex in Public") – to enlarge upon the issue, stating: "Cathy J. Cohen defines 'heteronormativity' as follows: 'both those localised practices and those centralised institutions which legitimise and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and "natural" within society.'[…] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner emphasise that while heteronormativity serves to privilege heterosexuality this privilege remains contingent and unevenly enjoyed; they define heteronormativity as 'the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organised as a sexuality – but also privileged', but add that its 'coherence is always provisional, and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms'" (Cohen 440, and Berlant & Warner 548 in Carroll, *Rereading Heterosexuality* 7). For a comprehensive survey of the history of the terminology see Peter Wagenknecht's article "Was ist Heteronormativität? Zur Geschichte und Gehalt des Begriffs" in *Heteronormativität: Empirische Studien zu Geschlecht, Sexualität und Macht* (Hartmann, Klesse, Wagenknecht, Fritzsche, and Hackmann 2007).

[62] In *Die Möglichkeit, dass alles auch ganz anders sein könnte: Geschlechterverfremdungen in zeitgenössischen Theatertexten*, Franziska Bergmann has suggested the use of the term *heteronormative matrix* "to foreclose the assumption that any form of heterosexual desire was to inevitably correlate with normative perceptions" (33; Transl. T.S.). Conceptually speaking, this important differentiation is already intimated by Foucault in his observations about the normative function of "heterosexual monogamy" in relation to "peripheral sexualities" (*The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 38-39). This is a differentiation that I will adopt in this study – especially as it resonates with commonly held observations about Hollywood ideology, as Benshoff and Griffin discern: "while […] there *are* multiple ways to be heterosexual, eventually one type of heterosexuality is […] 'better': monogamous, procreative marriage" (311; emphasis in original).

[63] Incidentally, Haller begins his attempt of formulating a more comprehensive definition with reference to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* ("Die Entdeckung des Selbstverständlichen" 1-2). On "normalizing judgement" (177), Foucault writes: "In short, the art of punishing, in the régime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. It brings five quite distinct operations into play; it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one

> Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of 'gender identities' fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. Their persistence and proliferation, however, provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder. (*Gender Trouble* 24)

If intelligible genders become intelligible – that is, if a subject assumes a sex and identifies with it coherently – only as a corollary of the violent defamation and exclusion of unintelligible, or abject genders, then by definition, these abjects exist and are constitutive to the process of subjectification (cf. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii-xiii). Butler elaborates:

> Indeed, the construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation. Hence, it is not enough to claim that subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less 'human,' the inhuman, the humanly thinkable. (*Bodies That Matter* xvii; emphasis in original)

Advancing one step further towards an application of Butler's theoretical deliberations to cinematic representations of gender, I will base this application on an understanding of cinematic representations (as a subdomain of mass media) that posits them as reciprocal agents reflecting the cultural construction of epistemes of gender and sexuality (cf. Lünenborg & Maier 107). It follows, that cinematic representations are at once an integral part of the somewhat ephemeral, historical discourse that regulates what is – in Butler's words – "the more and the less 'human,' the inhuman, the humanly thinkable" and a lasting, ahistorical speculum that makes accessible and visible both process and effect of gender subjectivation over and against abjectivation. Consequently, visibility (or representation) of abject genders – even if recognized only by the representation of the process of their exclusion to a "zone of uninhabitability" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xiii), or if their legitimacy is disavowed within the matrices they do appear – signifies existence, because the denial of that existence succeeds their construction. More than that, their representation clearly displays the fluidity of gender as

---

another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal […]. The perpetual penality that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*" (182-83; emphasis in original).

it draws our utmost attention to the arbitrariness of the construction process, which is contrary to and thus refutes the assumption of a natural sexual binarism that aims to naturalize its heteronormative articulations.

Butler follows: “These excluded sites come to bound the ‘human’ as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation” (ibid. xvii). In other words, the study of the dual, interdependent relation of (gender) subjectivation over and against abjectivation provides the leverage point for a deconstructivist critique: if what is constructed as an intelligible gender is caused by the repetition of discursively performed acts against an abject, these acts as well as the gendered subject and abject they produce are necessarily conducive to intervention and resignification (cf. Haller 14). Incidentally (as the intervention that precedes resignification), exposing the conflicting dynamics of simultaneous gender construction (as a creative practice of identification) and/versus gender naturalization (as an exclusionary practice of discrimination) in cinematic representations will help reveal gender and heterosexuality as both intertwined categories of universal power and specters of subversion.

In my following diachronic analysis, I will show that in the moment of simultaneously constructing and naturalizing gender, the Western reveals both the discursive hegemony of gender as well as its contingency; it occasions both the enormous power of heteronormativity and its fragility; it instances both heteronormativity’s stabilizing effect and its profoundly unstable origin – and it embeds these conflicting processes in a self-perpetuating, historically mobile (to invoke Connell) genre formula.[64] In discussing these vexing relations, I hope to disclose the aporia that seems to be at the heart of them and re-read the Western as not only a site for the immortal reification of the primacy of heteronormativity, but also as a locus for explorations of the perimeters of a confining-yet-vulnerable system.

4. Analysis

4.1. Foundation (1903-1929)

In the first part of my analysis, I will chronicle the genesis of an assortment of films dealing with cognate subjects in similar ways that came retroactively to be understood by and subsumed under the umbrella term “Western films” (cf. Neale, “Questions of Genre” 163-165). Feminist scholarship has well-established the interrelations and intersections of genre

[64] Through incessant, ritualized repetition and variation, gender and genre – or, put in more general terms, gender and media – generate a reciprocal discursive field, producing a distinct ontology, a distinct hegemony, characterized by a distinct vacillation between stability and contingency, between normativization and resignification (cf. Lünenborg & Maier 107, 117; cf. Seier 83-84, 88, 95). Andrea Seier succinctly remarks: “From this point of view, gender appears as both a product and productive” (86; Transl. T.S).

development and gender conceptualizations (cf. Gledhill, “Introduction” 2). Just as genre is defined by the “powerful dynamic of repetition and expectation” (ibid. 11), so are visual representations of gender. It is the aim of this first section to retrace the diachronic development of the Western genre in relationship to that genre’s mode of representing gender. As a generic formula emerges from this development, these films establish the Western as a locus of discourse for the exploration of gender and sexuality. They construct gendered bodies in search of a coherent, seemingly natural form of sexual identity, and affirm, defend, and essentially conceal in their finding of sexual identity the heteronormative matrix that produced it. This pattern – the belief that it was possible to find and retain a natural origin of gender – becomes inherent to the Western, and its continuation stabilizes heteronormativity’s position as society’s organizing principle. It will become apparent from my analysis that, already at this early stage of cinema, the Western constructs gendered subjects over and against potentially destabilizing abjects, which must subsequently be eliminated for the subjects to cohere. Consequently, the idea that from male bodies springs masculinity and from female bodies springs femininity, as well as the idea that we recognize these gendered bodies as they recognize each other’s binary sexual *difference*, is firmly implanted in the Western. Crucially however, so are the frictions that arise from recurring incongruencies. These early films reveal the presence and productivity of both heteronormativity and gender contingency as constitutive elements of the emerging Western formula.

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (1903) shows that the burgeoning genre is organized by heteronormativity as a principle that regulates gender inside and outside the diegesis. Structured by a heterosexist gaze *dispositif*, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY inscribes gender binarity onto bodies based on sexual *difference*. What is more, it shows how male characters, specifically, are required to secure the validity of this construction by including themselves in the processes that affirm the system and violently excluding those who threaten to destabilize it. Imagining women as domestic, central-yet-peripheral counterparts to men, who in turn are the mobile gatekeepers of community, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY envisages a discrepancy in access to space that translates to an imbalance of power. This way, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY indicates a hierarchy between male and female bodies in accordance with the “ideology of ‘separate spheres,’” or “cult of domesticity” (Winter, “Cult of Domesticity” 120), which it establishes as societal consensus in line with the dominant cultural forces of the time. At the same time, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY inadvertently reveals this ideology to be a farce, as its establishment as societal consensus becomes visible only as characters eliminate all deviations from the norm. In THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, the normative, heterosexual subject requires the non-conformative, sexually ambiguous abject to constitute itself.

With the example of THE REDMAN’S VIEW (1909), I will illustrate the pervasiveness and scope of this pattern, as this film uses ‘knowledge’ of representing gender to project ethnicity.

Envisioning a conflict between aggressively appropriative white men and a tribe of docile, defenseless Native Americans, THE REDMAN'S VIEW transposes the ideology of separate spheres to both justify white conquest and romanticize the genocide of Native Americans as the 'natural' consequence of biological predisposition. Griffith's film provides a telling example of the deep-rooted interconnectedness of racism and sexism – that is, of the binary distinctions between white and non-white, and male and female, which are adduced to legitimatize discrepancies in a character's access to power. I argue that this pattern is embedded in the developing generic formula of the Western. In THE REDMAN'S VIEW, the aporia of heteronormativity, as an irresolvable enigma oscillating between naturalization and construction, extends its ideological thrust to conflate representations of gender and race.

This formula will be elaborated with the success of William S. Hart in the mid-1910s. In the example of HELL'S HINGES (1915), I will illustrate the significance of William S. Hart's stardom for representations of gender and Whiteness in Western films. Accentuating the 'authenticity' of his films and infusing his star persona with a consistent ideology, Hart and his collaborators transformed the Western genre to be perceived by the general public as an art form that specifically spoke to and that, by design, mediated conceptions about a supposedly 'natural' American character. In my analysis of HELL'S HINGES, I will demonstrate that, according to Hart, this American character connects with discourses of social reform, Christianity, race, and gender. Hart's Westerns imagine the West as an idealized America, and they organize this idealized America by notions of white supremacy, Puritan moral, and, most significantly, a conceptualization of gender that at once extends and severely curtails women's symbolic capital. To that effect, HELL'S HINGES greatly emphasizes, and purports as naturally given – that is, ordained by God – the transformative, domesticating, powers of the white woman, while explicitly limiting the influence of that power to be exclusively conducive to (and thus in support of) white hegemonic masculinity.

With my discussion of THE VIRGINIAN (1929), I will argue that, coinciding with the successful implementation of sound to the Western, the genre's formula reaches its temporary completion. THE VIRGINIAN, too, confirms heteronormativity as society's organizing principle, but in its emphasis on the perpetual struggle that the erection, maintenance, and defense of this systemic construct entails (especially for men), the film strongly implies the fragility of normative (gender) identities and heterosexual monogamy. Featuring a narrative in which the film's eponymous male protagonist and his romantic female counterpart undergo a series of transformations that incrementally align them with the heterosexual norm, THE VIRGINIAN stresses the centrality of domestic conformity as catalyst and goal of American cultural identity. However, as it equally extols in the transgressive pleasures and anxieties of excessive individualism, which the film displaces onto a repressed homoerotic relationship between the hero and his best friend, THE VIRGINIAN can ultimately only imagine a coherent form of gender

identity by compartmentalizing and subsequently silencing certain elements of it. In THE VIRGINIAN, the conflicting gender dynamics of the Western – of constructing gender as predicated on the notion of a supposedly natural sexual binarism while relying on the construction of something outside the heterosexual dyad in order to appear natural – surface most palpably, and reflect the genre's ongoing, productive effort to simultaneously acknowledge and conceal the contingency of gender.

4.1.1. Nascent Heteronormativity: THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (1903)

Directed by Edwin. S. Porter and manufactured for the Edison Company in 1903, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY constitutes an indispensable part in almost any critical discussion of American film history or genre, specifically with regards to the Western. Simultaneously, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY has gained a certain notoriety for attracting labels and credits that showcase its pioneering character: "the first story film", "the film that introduced narrative to the screen", "the first Western", "the film with the first close-up" (all Fenin & Everson 47),[65] "the first dramatically creative American film" (ibid. 47), "the first narrative Western" (Tuska 28), "the origin of the western film genre" (Popple & Kember 15), "[…] a prototype for the classical American film" (Bordwell & Thompson 446), "the progenitor of narrative cinema" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 231), "the most commercially successful film of the pre-Griffith period of American cinema" (Buscombe, *100 Westerns* 69), the first film that manages to exhaust all available practices and techniques of filmmaking of the time and assemble it to one narratively coherent whole (cf. Esders-Angermund 42, also cf. Sklar 40).

While some of these labels are still unanimously agreed on, others meanwhile have been called into question (cf. Altman 34-35; cf. Verhoeff 114-5; cf. Sklar 40).[66] Either way, what is undisputed is the film's historical significance. Unquestionably a milestone in American cinema due to its groundbreaking form, most commentaries have focused on this aspect, not

[65] To clarify, Fenin and Everson quote these label descriptions in order to state that THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY actually met none of them (47).

[66] For instance, Nanna Verhoeff has thoroughly demonstrated that the superordinate genre label "Western" is something that works only in retrospect, and that during the days of early cinema it merely served to specify already established kinds of genres. She writes: "[…] it is a good starting point to realize that, at the time, no simple genre label such as 'Western' was in use for films. 'Western' was used mostly as an adjective to specify a certain kind of melodrama, comedy, or romance, giving dominance to these larger categories. The phrases: 'Romance of the West,' 'Western Comedy,' 'Western Melodrama,' or 'Dramatic story of the Wild and Wooly West' are such qualifying usages of the label in the trade press. But in a different view, the films could also be called 'Frontier Drama,' 'Village Drama,' 'Mining Story,' 'Early Settler' Subject,' 'Indian Romance,' 'Military drama,' or 'Civil War Picture,' 'scenic film,' or plain 'Melodrama' with no Western adjective" (114-5). Charles Musser strikes a similar chord, when he points out that such interpretations that associate THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY with the Western are "retrospective readings" (130), explaining that at the time the film would have been more likely to be associated with "the travel genre or the genre of crime" (131).

its representations of gender.[67] And while there are certainly good reasons to prioritize formal aspects of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY for a scholarly investigation, I will show in the following that there are equally good reasons to examine the film's representation of gender.

Consisting of the introductory title card, "a series of thirteen 'tableaux' shots (Buscombe, *BFI Companion to the Western* 265) and one additional medium close-up shot of one of the outlaws emptying his gun targeted right at the audience, the film spans a little over eleven minutes.[68] In these eleven minutes, we see a group of outlaws entering a railway station, where they overpower, bind, and gag the station manager, before they stop, board, and eventually rob a train. In the process, they kill a total of three people. As they escape to the woods, for a moment it seems like they are getting away with the crime. But then the action returns to the railway station, and we see a little girl freeing the station manager. Immediately, he storms out to inform the sheriff, who is currently visiting a dancehall. Once alerted, the sheriff forms a posse to hunt down the outlaws. In the final shoot-out, the posse find and kill the outlaws just as they are about to divvy up their loot.[69]

Despite its relative narrative complexity as to how it expounds its story (cf. Fenin & Everson 48), the film is very straightforward and one-dimensional about what it does and does not tell: For instance, it does not provide its villains with a motive for the robbery (cf. Grob 42-43); it does not provide a final sense of closure for every narrative thread (whatever happens to the station manager, the girl, the train passengers, the posse, and the loot?); and perhaps most prominently, it does not develop distinctive characters (cf. Sklar 40).[70] The characters in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY are unindividuated instruments of the action-driven story (cf. Grob 42-43; cf. Gunning, "Movies, Stories, and Attractions" 131). Therefore, perhaps more pronounced than any other film that will be discussed here, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY equates *character* with *(kinetic) action*, since the viewer's perception of a character's goodness or badness is almost exclusively defined by what that character *does* (cf. Nowotny 173).[71]

[67] A rare example of a gender-specific discussion of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY is Karin Esders-Angermund's analysis of the tenth tableau (the little girl untying the station manager) (41-47).
[68] Famously, the tableau of the gunfighter breaking the fourth wall was free for film exhibitors to place either at the very beginning or at the very end of the film (Gunning, "Movies, Stories, and Attractions" 131; Slide 14; Fenin & Everson 50).
[69] For a shot-by-shot protocol of the film, see Nowotny, Peter. "Die Anfänge des Amerikanischen Spielfilms als Western" (169-70).
[70] Of course, these rhetorical questions are written with the benefit of hindsight, seeing that in the long run narrative structures such as the one featured in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY inspired the formation of Hollywood's notoriously functional, 'invisible' style, many aspects of which provide directs answers to the questions posed here.
[71] Correspondingly, Karin Esders-Angermund argues that the practices that are performed on screen are rarely motivated by a psychological disposition. Instead, she diagnoses that early Western-themed films like THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY make use of a predicative style of narration, which is largely determined by external action (78). Incidentally, Esders-Angemund observes, this occasionally allowed for unusually active roles for female characters (79).

Primarily, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY appears to be void of such elements as it precedes a formulaic mode of storytelling. An early successor of the "cinema of attractions" (cf. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions" 57), the film predates an established cinematic language (cf. Esders-Angermund 23). THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY combines elements of the actualities and experimental films audiences had been exposed to before (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 106) and enhances the experience with the linearity and causality that we would nowadays associate with standardized narrative cinema. As such, Porter's film shows several of the "curiosity-arousing devices of the fairground" (Kuhn & Westwell 76) that plant it firmly within the context of the cinema of attractions: For instance, the film confronts, even scares the viewer with the isolated tableau of the outlaw firing his gun directly at the audience, "extending the latent threat to the viewer's reality" (Nowotny 173; Transl. T.S.). In a different tableau, the film dynamically engages viewers with the film's seemingly unstoppable escalation of violence. As Porter positions the camera on top of a moving train, he "invites [viewers] to participate in the action" (Kuhn & Westwell 77), shocking the audience with a horrific display of violence that is amplified through some editing trickery, thus showcasing the sensational "technical possibilities of the new medium" (ibid. 77): One of the outlaws wrestles one of the conductors to the ground, only to cave in his head with brute force, before he callously disposes himself of the body by throwing it overboard.[72]

At the same time, however, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY situates these action-laden sequences within a progressing, cumulative chain of events. Each tableau builds on the previous one and leads into the next, thereby creating a sense of coherence and cohesion. There are no focalized characters or title cards to navigate us through the story. Instead, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY's plot unfolds entirely through the movement and action of bodies placed in a mostly static environment, and only in its sequential succession does this chain of moving images create an organic, conclusive story. The visuals *are* the narrative. Like many of its peers of early American cinema, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY is spectacle above everything else (cf. Hutchinson 112).

These things considered, it is safe to say that THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY does not contain or intend to express a premeditated comment on issues of gender and sexuality,[73] let alone promote heteronormativity as a pillar of American identity. Cinema, it stands to reason, was neither equipped nor inclined to consciously explore the cultural significance of gender with complexity and nuance, just as much as audiences would not have been trained yet to

[72] A cut conceals the moment during which the actor playing the conductor is replaced by a dummy that allows for such a reckless stunt and graphic display of violence.

[73] That said, Porter's movies of this era often revolved around moral issues of risqué subjects like sexuality, crime, and violence, although admittedly the focus in his pictures was mostly on spectacle rather than a sincere investigation of morality (cf. Sklar 39-40).

decipher such explorations consciously. A gender-specific reading of this film must respect that.

However, this does not mean that issues of gender are entirely absent in the film. Benshoff and Griffin have shown that American cinema emerged at a time in which conceptualizations of gender were subject to significant transformations (cf. 260). Mapping out the changes in people's living conditions and the country's economy, the authors link these aspects to "issues of patriarchy" (ibid. 260), outlining the complicated circumstances under which white American men, in particular, tried to cultivate a coherent identity. Incidentally, as cinema became an immensely popular outlet for escapist entertainment especially among the urban demographics, "the cult of masculinity found its way into the subject matter of even the earliest motion pictures" (ibid. 260). As the authors continue to single out THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY as a narrative adaption of "the type of outdoor active masculinity championed by Theodore Roosevelt" (ibid. 260), they imply that although cinema's disposition to self-consciously *explore* gender was still fairly limited due to an as yet germinating, pre-discursive visual rhetoric,[74] its propensities to at least *represent* gender in a pleasurable, exhilarating style were quite visible from the start. That is, even though THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and its peers did not consciously reflect gender as a category that would in any way organize their diegesis, the fact that certain bodies perform certain practices and are represented in a certain way allows for the conclusion that they were nonetheless informed by contemporary conceptualizations of gender.

Discussing one of the film's fourteen tableaux, I will show that THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY instantiates the cultural mechanism of introducing sexuality and gender to film – in this case, the Western –, of transforming them into cinematic discourse, of establishing a way to represent and repress, in a word: regulate these forces through culturally designed discourse (cf. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 17-35). More than that, it contains a very articulated vision of gender that nicely illustrates Judith Butler's understanding of the concept. Tableau eleven presents a dance sequence that reflects the circular causality of establishing gender *difference* through the unification of the heterosexual couple that precipitates the formation of a community, which is constituted and violently defended by processes of

[74] By this I mean that THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, in its conflation of narrative cinema and Cinema of Attraction, sets precedent for this particular style, which becomes evident only in retrospect. Discourse requires references and repeated, if modified, citations. As THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and its enormous success attracted imitators that replicated its style (that is, referenced it), a generic formula (or discourse) developed, which audiences would recognize as such. This, of course, does not mean that the discursive knowledge that THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and its peers established had emerged out of nowhere. Scholarship of the genre has convincingly shown that early Western films were greatly inspired by existing modes of storytelling, imagery from the visual arts (cf. Berkenkamp; Mitchell; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*), as well as roadshow attractions like "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" show (cf. Nowotny 171).

inclusion and exclusion.[75] I will demonstrate that the tableau entails gaze constructions that signify to the viewer normative and non-conformative behavior, and that lay out a groundwork to tie such behavior to performances of gender. THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY's narrative as well as its visual arrangement are organized by heteronormativity, and it reflects these principles as social consensus, while inadvertently revealing its inadequacies.

The Dancehall Tableau

Following a series of tableau shots in which a gang of outlaws robs a train and knocks out a railroad station manager before he can inform the law, the eleventh tableau of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY features a scene in a dancehall. Presumably included to retard the film's climactic denouement and to increase suspense (cf. Gunning "Movies, Stories, and Attractions" 130),[76] the scene, as mentioned above, most likely carries no intentional (that is, self-aware) comment on discourses of gender. That said, the tableau offers a decidedly heterosexist gaze *dispositif*,[77] constructing men and women as gendered bodies who recognize each other as such through practices that emphasize sexual *difference* and produce and normativize heterosexual subjects against a non-conformative abject. Particularized as gatekeepers of *community*, the scene envisions men as licensed to enforce the boundaries of the heterosexual consensus with violence and thus reflects the power imbalance so fundamentally embedded in and actuated through gender. THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY normativizes gender as intelligible only by a coherence of sex, gender, and desire, thus predicating the building of community on the allegedly natural duality of sex. At the same time, the film indicates that there is something outside the natural binary, only to exclude it from sociality. Already in this early, foundational text of the embryonic Western genre, there is possibility to demonstrate the aporia of heteronormativity.

As the tableau opens before us, there is a band playing music on the right side of the screen, while a group of dancers occupies the center. The people are all dressed in frontier attire, establishing their outward appearance as diegetic normalcy: They wear hats, boots, and some carry guns. Drawing from contemporary popular knowledge about the American West, contained in and perpetuated through "dime novels, Wild West shows, paintings, illustrations,

---

[75] The emblematic significance of dance sequences as ritualized acts of heterosexual couple formation (hence: community building) echo throughout the Western's genre history, most prominently, perhaps, in the films of John Ford (see, for instance, the dance sequences in MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (1946) or FORT APACHE (1948)).

[76] Others have suggested that the scene also could have been included because it "not only presented an interesting slice of Americana to early movie audiences, but it was also a singular attempt at greater conviction in rounding out the story with background material" (Fenin & Everson 49).

[77] I understand the term *dispositif* in a Foucaltian sense as a network that comprises the various discursive strategies which produce, reflect, and connect knowledge (cf. Strüver 69n1, with reference to Foucault, *Dispositive der Macht: Über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit* 119-20).

short stories, and the like (as well as one or two films)" (Neale, "Questions of Genre" 163) – in other words, invoking a firmly established visual iconography and imagery of Western lore (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 234-5; cf. Gunning, "Movies, Stories, and Attractions" 129) –, the tableau clearly introduces this locale as *the West*, even though the film was shot in New Jersey (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 106), and notwithstanding the fact that contemporary audiences would not necessarily have perceived the film within a generic tradition (cf. Neale, "Questions of Genre" 163-4; cf. Musser, "The Travel Genre in 1903-04" 130-1). Perhaps even more so, given that the events that inspired THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY at the time dated back only three years before the release of the film (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 235).

To recall from 3.3., Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that the category of sex must be thought as a cultural construction just as much as gender. Laying out a hypothesis to subsequently distance her theoretical deliberations from the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Butler writes:

> Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts. (10; emphasis in original)

Applied to THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, the film in tableau eleven configures a community-building process that illustrates the construction of 'sexed nature' and 'a natural sex'. As the scene draws from discursive gendered signifiers to designate (and establish as diegetic normalcy) male bodies and female bodies, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY exemplifies, to speak with Butler, the "construction of 'sex' as the radically unconstructed" (ibid. 10), concealing processes of cultural construction by envisioning them as prediscursive and natural. Western men and women are constructed as such utilizing prediscursive 'knowledge' about sex (which is always already gender) that rests on and is stabilized by their repetitive and reciprocal reification as heterosexual couples (cf. ibid. 7).

The scene establishes heterosexuality as *norm* and denounces any violation of it as *abnorm*, as subject and abject (cf. Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xiii). There is one cluster of people who wear boots and hats and trousers, have mustaches, and carry guns. They are generally taller than the other cluster of people, who also wear boots and hats, but instead of trousers they wear long dresses, and they do not carry guns. In pirouettes and do-si-dos, a member from one cluster is paired with a member from the other, thus organizing the ritual not by indicators of *difference* such as age or more visible ones like hat color, but by what we perceive as their biological sex through objects (here: attire) that both signify and produce

gender (cf. Villa 106-7). It follows that the construction of binary sexual *difference*, then, relies on a corresponding, intelligible gender habitus (cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 7n6). As these people come together to celebrate and foster their community, they organize themselves in oppositional pairs, informed by these visible differences: For every dress, a pair of trousers; for every gun, a skirt. Men and women recognize each other by their gendered attire which functions to denote sexual *difference*. As they organize their community accordingly, the scene unwittingly singles out gender coherence and heterosexual desire (if we accept the dance-ritual as a euphemism for heterosexual performance) as definitive prerequisites for the shaping of community. The ritualized act of dance even amplifies this aspect since the community actively celebrates the nuclear component of its own structure in dance.

About ten seconds into the scene, another character enters the room through a door on the left and, after carefully tiptoeing their way inside, stands in a corner by themselves.[78] Stoically, the character remains sidelined and does not participate in the dance, until one dancer notices them and drags them into the center of the quadrille. As the other characters form a semicircle around them, we get a better look at the newly arrived guest. We see the person wears towns' clothing, starkly clashing with the frontier outfits of everybody else. The relatively outlandish style constitutes a deviation from the diegetic norm, which instantly makes them a conspicuous outsider.

In the frontier universe, the representation of this character draws from the image of the dandy, a 'dude' in the original sense of the word (cf. Gunning, "Movies, Stories, and Attractions" 130). As such, the outward appearance is instantly coded and perceived in gendered terms.[79] That is, as the armed frontiersmen begin to fire at the stranger's feet, forcing them to perform the "dude dance" (cf. Gunning, "Movies, Stories, and Attractions" 129), the film exposes (or expresses) their appearance and habitus as *abnormal*, as abject compared to the subjects that govern both diegetic discourse and our perception of it. The dandy dances alone, detached from the processes of couple-formation, while the surrounding characters burst with laughter (Fig. 2). When the shooting and laughing stops, the embarrassed intruder storms out of the room and the dance continues.

Expelled from the ritual of heterosexual couple formation, the dude-character never qualifies to engage, and therefore remains unaligned. Their exclusion brands them as somebody who has no stakes in the crucible of performing gender in accordance with the norm. They are not like Western men, in that they do not sport the markers of intelligible masculinity (a mustache, frontier clothing, guns). Nor do they resemble Western women, for

[78] In the following, I use the gender-unspecific pronouns "they/them" to syntactically illustrate and substantiate the film's construction of the character's gender as irreconcilable with the binary norm.
[79] It should be said that the practices of negotiating gender as described above naturally intersect with negotiations of class. As the frontier community expels the Eastern/urban dude character, the film equally conveys its sympathies for a romanticized, homogenous yeoman working-class community.

the same reasons. The dandy's performance of sex/gender is unintelligible to the other characters, which makes the West uninhabitable for them. Though apparently inhabiting a male body, the dandy fails to exhibit the signifiers that situate their gender within the heteronormative binarism of Western men and Western women. For this, they are constructed as gender failure and consequently ostracized.[80] In turn, the heteronormative subject (the community) affirms itself by identifying and banishing the abject.

The film's formal arrangement substantiates this impression and therefore supports this reading. Throughout the scene, the static camera does nothing to direct the viewer's gaze. Our perception of the events is entirely controlled by action and performance, namely the movement of the dancing couples. We are motionless spectators to the events on screen, our perception is not focalized by any character.

Fig. 2. Source: THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, Edwin S. Porter (1903). Edison Manufacturing Company. DVD. 00:08:55.

[80] Multiple authors have commented on the Western's longstanding tradition of coding the image of the dandy as gender failure, most prominently Martin Pumphrey, who noted in his essay "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?" that "the dandy's city clothes are inappropriate in the hostile (masculine) environment of the hero's West. […] To pay attention to the non-functional aspects of dress (to imply that one dresses for others) indicates weakness in a man" (55). More recently, Ines Bayer has elaborated: "Understatement versus vulgarity, pragmatism versus vanity: The villain's stylishness is always fueled by narcissism, by the abnormal, which indicates decadence and his inevitable defeat. […] In the classic Western, this deviation from the norm earmarks the villain. In the guise of elegance, his vanity portends danger; as an obsession, it permits our ridicule" (152, 163; transl. T.S.; emphasis in original). The dancehall tableau is an early example of how this visual tradition and its inextricable connection to performances of gender failure was created and, by repetition, established.

This changes when the dandy enters the scene. As the couples form a semicircle and drag the dandy to its center, the arrangement opens up like a theater stage (which, in fact, it is), allowing us to look directly at the dandy's 'dude-dance', the alleged testimony to their gender failure. Yet we perceive it as such because the surrounding characters, previously identified as heterosexual couples, begin to point at them, vectorizing and thus controlling our gaze. We assume the subject's gaze and identify with it. Our perception is now focalized. *The subject's* dismissal of the dandy's violation of the Western norm, as a deviation from the diegetic normalcy, becomes *our* dismissal. As we are invited to emulate the gaze of the various couples, we experience the dandy's performance filtered through and guided by the heterosexual gaze, inadvertently making us accomplices to this display of heterosexist identity formation.

Crucially, the casual exertion of violence amplifies the effect. Not only is the dandy character subdued and dragged to the center against their will, but also do the (intelligible) male characters draw their guns and fire at their feet to make them dance. In other words, violence is used to call out the dandy's deviation from diegetic normalcy, and violence is used to punish it. Foucault writes: "A policing of sex: that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses" (*The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 25). Incidentally, as the internal audience meets these acts of violence with laughter – and as no (physical) harm is done to the dandy – we are invited to perceive them as jovial and hence legitimate.[81] The construction allies us with what the film depicts as a healthy, playful affirmation of a 'Western' community. In expelling the abject, they validate and restore heteronormativity as social consensus.

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY inadvertently reveals the inconsistency of what it carefully constructs as diegetic normalcy. Through the ritualized dance the film delineates heteronormativity as social consensus: these are the rules by which the community organizes itself because they are seemingly natural. Except that when the dandy appears, we learn that not everybody complies with those rules, and that they are most certainly not natural. Heteronormativity, in fact, is not biological inevitability but a carefully constructed version of reality. It is not social consensus but a farce.

It means the rule of the many to the exclusion, even expulsion of the few to retain the appearance that it was the rule of all. To that end, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY licenses the crowd to police the boundaries of their organizing principle and banish aberrations with violence to retain the image of said organizing principle as social consensus. THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY inadvertently evidences that "under conditions of normative heterosexuality" – a paradigm that the film itself constructs in the dance sequence – "policing gender is […] used as a way of

[81] Of course, the dandy is never granted a perspective of their own that would challenge the heterosexual subject's position of power, hence its self-legitimization.

securing heterosexuality" (Butler *Gender Trouble* xii).[82] In THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, the viability of heteronormativity is under threat, but it is justly equipped to defend its status with violence, the execution of which is inscribed into intelligible male bodies, specifically. More than that, heteronormativity fundamentally rests on the sanctioning of those who are identified as anomalous and aberrant, and who for that reason threaten the plausibility of a natural, causal linearity of sex, gender, and desire. Community springs not only from men and women recognizing each other as such, but also from defending this constructive process violently against those who challenge 'natural law' as its origin.[83] The dandy constitutes an agent of contingency in a system that relies on binary order, an element which must be rejected to preserve order. However, the film also illustrates that in order to render certain gender configurations unthinkable, it must first think them.

Separate Spheres I

After the dandy has been expelled, the dance continues until another character enters the room. This time, it is the station manager who had been tied up and gagged during the outlaw's train robbery. He informs the community about the events that took place, and instantly the community – quite literally – splits: Most men pick up arms and leave the dancehall, while some men (the musicians) and all the women stay behind. In the following, the film features three more tableaux: the chase, in which a posse formed by the men from the dancehall hunt down the train robbers; the climactic shoot-out, in which the posse confront the outlaws and kill every single one of them; and the final (or first) tableau, featuring one of the outlaws breaking the fourth wall and shooting at the audience.

As the narrative progresses from dancehall to chase tableau, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY crosses a significant spatial boundary. Incidentally, this shift in spatial domains is coded in decidedly gendered terms. While the dancehall was characterized by the presence of men and

---

[82] Butler elaborates on this in her discussion of Freud and his negotiation of *disposition* and *identity*, stating that "[t]he ego ideal […] serves as an interior agency of sanction and taboo which, according to Freud, works to consolidate gender identity through the appropriate rechanneling and sublimation of desire" (*Gender Trouble* 85). Butler later clarifies: "Thus, the repressive law effectively produces heterosexuality, and acts not merely as a negative or exclusionary code, but as a sanction and, most pertinently, as a law of discourse, distinguishing the speakable from the unspeakable (delimiting and constructing the domain of the unspeakable), the legitimate from the illegitimate" (ibid. 89).

[83] Michael Kimmel has shown that U.S. culture in the early 20th century was haunted by a growing "anxiety and insecurity among American men […] about being feminized" (120). As Kimmel notes the numerous measures taken by men to counteract these anxieties, he thus gives historical/cultural evidence to Butler's theoretical deliberations and substantiates their applicability to a reading of cultural artifacts of this specific period in time: In their own sense, Kimmel's cultural-historical analysis of American masculinities in the early 20th century, Butler's investigation of the dynamics that constitute the paradox of the heterosexual matrix, and my reading of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY evince a system – be its socially, hermeneutically, or diegetically constructed – that defines itself in opposition to an Other which it then subsequently sanctions and eliminates "to disguise its own genealogy" (*Gender Trouble* 87) in order to, quite paradoxically, strengthen its hegemony.

women who engaged in a ritualized affirmation of heterosexuality, the following tableaux are conspicuously void of female characters. Crucially, as the railroad clerk calls upon the people in the dancehall to form a posse and chase the outlaws, only the men respond, while the women are literally pushed to the margins. Relegated to the far-right side of the screen, they stay inside the dancehall as the men cross the spatial threshold and execute lawful and just violence outside in an all-male, homosocial environment. Incidentally, the narrative will never return to the dancehall or, in fact, any other space inhabited by women.

Evidently, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY is characterized by a semiotic connection between space and power, a seemingly causal link that allows some bodies to traverse space freely while it confines others to a very specific, designated space – and this seemingly causal link is gender, which the film equates with sexual *difference*. This way, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY reflects and represents gender according to the at the time still prevalent "doctrine of separate spheres" (Rotundo 22), a conceptualization of gender firmly based on "diametrically opposed definitions of masculinity and femininity" (Winter, "Cult of Domesticity" 121), or biological determinism. Rotundo elaborates:

> According to this view, the social realm was divided into two spheres – home and the world. Home was the woman's domain, so it was filled with the piety and purity that were 'natural' to the female sex. This atmosphere of virtue made home the logical place to raise children, and woman the fit and proper person to do the job. The female sex extended its moral influence over men as well. In the good and godly environment of the home, women supplied the other sex with moral nurture and spiritual renewal. Men needed to be strengthened in conscience and spirit because they spent so much time in 'the world.' The world, according to this moral geography, was the realm of business and public life. It was the emerging marketplace of competitive trade and democratic politics, the arena of individualism. And, just as women's domesticity fitted them for the duties at home, so men's presumed aggression suited them for this rough public life. Indeed, the world was viewed as the locus of sin and evil. It demanded greed and selfishness of a man, tempted him with power and sensual enjoyment, and set him against other men. […] Men's sphere depleted virtue, women's sphere renewed it. (22-23)

While THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY's representation of gendered space differs in some respects from Rotundo's descriptions of the separate spheres,[84] it nevertheless demonstrates the overarching principle of pathologizing gender and dividing spaces and social practices: women are associated with the inside and are confined to that spatial domain; men are able to traverse space freely, and are at their most spectacular and entertaining – that is, at their best – when they enforce violence in the open.

[84] For instance, in no way does the film give reason to infer the dancehall should resemble a home. For all we know, this frivolous locale could be a saloon, and the female characters might be 'dancehall girls' – that is, women that are portrayed as morally dubious by their euphemistic association with sexual promiscuity (cf. Stanfield 175-6).

However, men are also at their happiest when they form heterosexual couples with women within the spatial domains of women, as the dancehall sequence illustrates. This creates a precarious paradox, a field of tension that compels men to prove themselves as men between mutually exclusive poles, which THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY reflects. Men become men only by coalescing with women, the sexual Other, thus occupying the domestic sphere, which is associated not with masculinity but with femininity. At the same time, men become men only by competing with other men, thus roaming through the sphere of individualism, 'the world', which is associated with masculinity but always verges on excess if men are not simultaneously restraint by feminine domesticity.[85]

In a way, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY dramatizes this last aspect in its final (or first) tableau. As one of the outlaws fires his gun at the audience, smoke belches out from his revolver every time he shoots – until he is out of ammunition. Still, he continues shooting, as if in a maniacal craze, suggesting "an overzealous kill impulse" (Hutchinson 112). This is masculinity in excess. The outlaw is coded as such in the rhetoric of gender: Isolated from community, excluded from the practices of community formation that secure heterosexuality and thus initiate people into the organized cosmos of heteronormativity (and repeatedly confirm them as inhabitants of that cosmos), the outlaw is lacking restraint. Excessive and illegitimate violence, which he directs at the subject (the viewer/diegesis/discourse), is his only outlet. A dangerous threat to the functioning and coherence of the system, he too (like the dandy) must be banished. He too constitutes an abject to community. And his abject identity, too, is legitimatized as such because of his detachment from practices and performances that suggest the construction of an intelligible gender identity as natural. Consequently, he too represents gender failure. Except that, in spite of this gender failure, he symbolically outlives the narrative. In one sweeping image, then, the final tableau (if assembled in such a way) illustrates both the abject's degeneration as a gendered threat to the functioning of society and invariably produces in its lasting presence, in its representation that survives the diegesis, this contingency of gender as irrevocable truth.

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, then, reflects in its representations of gender a precarious world. According to THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, ideal gender performance in the universe of the frontier, suggests for women to comply with the heteronormative paradigm and remain confined to a space that is vaguely evocative of the domestic sphere; for men, the film reflects a world that demands they simultaneously abandon and embrace femininity in order to prove themselves as men of the frontier.

---

[85] Thomas Winter has illustrated the pervasiveness and ambivalent nature of what he refers to as the cult of domesticity, arguing that while some men sought fulfilment in the individual sphere according to the doctrine, others "actively desired marital bliss, domestic life, and the morally and spiritually elevating influence of a wife as indispensable to male wholeness" ("Cult of Domesticity" 121).

Men 'become' men only if they engage successfully in the rituals of heteronormativity and police its boundaries to deviant intruders, as well as defend its legitimacy by sanctioning those who choose to not abide by its rules. In other words, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY constructs a reality in which men are tasked by society with co-constructing heteronormativity and maintaining its façade as social consensus against a plentitude of inconsistencies and contradictions. THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, in its most embryonic form, reflects the taxing and confusing aporia at the heart of the genre's representation of gender: that the defining endeavor of finding a coherent gender identity was only possible by violently rejecting deviance, even though this deviance evidently appears as constitutive to the workings of the system.

Of course, in the true sense of the spectacle that THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY wants to be, the film *depicts* this paradigm without serious investigation. As the genre gradually finds its footing, later films, inspired by THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY's conflation of spectacle, movement, violence, and spatial dynamics (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 231; cf. Roloff & Seeßlen 37; cf. Fenin & Everson 49; cf. Grob 43), would explore gender between these seemingly irreconcilable terms with increasing self-awareness. As of 1903, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY gives evidence that the aporia of naturalized heteronormativity was deeply embedded in the genre's developing formula.

4.1.2. Constitutive Intersectionality: THE REDMAN'S VIEW (1909)

In this section, I will discuss one example from the early days of American cinema – D.W. Griffith's THE REDMAN'S VIEW (1909) – to outline an underlying representational strategy as a constitutive element specifically of the Western genre: the colonization of non-white bodies as a means to chronicle, explain and legitimatize white American history. Specifically, to illustrate the intersectional scope of this study, I will elaborate how this colonization frequently coalesces with and draws from stereotyped 'knowledge' of gender. Incidentally, this process parallels the conflicting dynamics of the simultaneous construction and naturalization of gender.

In Culture Studies, this representational strategy has prominently been laid out by Edward Said in his ground-breaking study *Orientalism* as one manifestation of the "complex hegemony" that is colonial rule (5).[86] Summarizing Said's explanations of the "positional superiority" of European colonialists that enabled them to create and construct images of the ethnic or racial Other as susceptible to colonial rule (Said 7-9), María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan delineate "the corresponding dichotomous representational system […] as

[86] Said's analysis focuses on literature, but offers nonetheless a useful analytical starting point for other studies.

deeply entrenched in a regime of stereotypes, which conceptualizes the orient as feminine, irrational and primitive in opposition to a masculine, rational and progressive West" (99; Transl. T.S.). Succinctly put, Said's study shows, among other things, that discourses of colonial rule rely on stereotypical images that are profoundly informed by pre-existing modes of conceptualizing and representing gender, that is: cultural *difference* is articulated in the rhetoric of sexual *difference* (cf. Said 206-7). Thus, the legitimization of white colonial hegemony invariably ties to male sexual hegemony.

This semiotic kinship is not exclusive to Orientalism and colonial projects of the East. With regards to the colonization of North America, and specifically westward territorial expansionism during the 18th and early 19th century, Amy S. Greenberg has observed a similar underlying strategy. Greenberg's research demonstrates that both the political rhetoric and literary narrativization of white American expansionism were greatly informed by prevailing ideals of aggressive masculinity.[87] Elaborating how these dynamics contributed to the retroactive legitimization of genocide, Greenberg poignantly discerns that the feminization of Native Americans by white Americans dialectically ensured white Americans of their alleged prerogative to occupy and claim Native American land (cf. 108).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, cinema adapted elements of this rhetoric and visual iconography to the screen, especially in the United States, and specifically in the increasingly popular genre of Western and 'Indian' films. In scholarship of the early Western, Richard Abel has contextualized these dynamics as a continuation of the prevalent political and literary discourses of the preceding years, discerning an ideological agenda. Abel demonstrates that, as an integral part of the Americanization project, the early Western constituted "white supremacist entertainment" (Abel 82) because it "defused and deflected all kinds of perceived threats (chief among them class conflict) by asserting white male supremacy as the basis for constructing a new national identity" (ibid. 82).[88] Though non-white bodies oftentimes feature prominently in Western films, they are represented almost exclusively from the perspective of white Americans,[89] and overwhelmingly reduced to stereotypes that befit

---

[87] On a related note, Lee Clark Mitchell has shown in his discussion of the landscape paintings of Albert Bierstadt that conceptualizations of gender and national identity informed the creation and reception of the visual arts, as well – "reshaping the landscape as well as history into a logic conducive to Americans' dreams" (93).

[88] Abel develops his argument with reference to Robert Rydell's study *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*.

[89] Benshoff and Griffin have described that in the earliest days of cinema some Western-themed films or 'Indian Story' films "were even written and directed by Native Americans" (107). The authors continue: "James Young Deer created films such as RED WING'S GRATITUDE (1909), WHITE FAWN'S DEVOTION (1910), THE RED GIRL AND THE CHILD (1910), and A CHEYENNE BRAVE (1910). His films dealt with relations between Native Americans and whites in a much more complex manner than most classic Westerns" (107). However, Benshoff and Griffin conclude that "[b]y the mid-1910s, the Western film genre had been formed and its popularity eclipsed the Indian story altogether, often focusing on charismatic white male cowboy heroes such as William S. Hart. The few possibilities for Native Americans to be writers

white Americans' imagination of the 'alien other' (cf. Abel 84-86). Abel concludes that "Westerns of 1907-1910 […] served […] as models of exclusion and inclusion, defined sharply according to 'race' and gender differences, in the construction of national identity" (88).[90] This way, Abel vividly illustrates how white hegemony and male hegemony complemented each other to construct and perpetuate in the Western hero a new, decidedly 'American' cultural ideal (cf. ibid. 88). Consequently, the institutionalized racism that barred non-white identities from the means to articulate a perspective of their own harmonized with the ideological interest of white male Americans to establish a purified, glorified image of white masculinity as the new national character.

In his equally inspired study "The Voice of Whiteness: D.W. Griffith's Biograph Films (1908-1913)", Daniel Bernardi demonstrates that this pattern also permeates the work of D.W. Griffith, America's genius innovator and experimenter of early American Cinema (cf. Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By…* 78), during his most productive years at American Biograph.[91] Bernardi manages "to uncover the relationship between narrativization and racial articulations" in the director's Biograph films, and shows how they "articulate an ideology of race that positions 'whites' as normal and superior and 'non-whites' as deviant and inferior" (104). In keeping with Abel's argument, Bernardi on several occasions notes that Griffith's films frequently deployed discourses of sexuality and gender to delineate non-white characters as inferior to whites (113-5, 125).

Relying on these observations, I will discuss the relationship between representing gendered bodies and representing racialized bodies in the example of D.W. Griffith's THE REDMAN'S VIEW (1909). THE REDMAN'S VIEW tells the story of a young chieftain's son, Silver Eagle (Owen Moore), and his sad romance with his lover, Minnewanna (Lottie Pickford),[92]

---

and directors evaporated, and by the 1920s, James Young Deer could only find work directing films in Great Britain" (107-8).

[90] On a related note, this illustrates that only six years after THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, as a film still characterized by its naivety concerning the discourses it engaged with, American cinema "had joined the rank of other media of social comment" (Gunning, "The Redman's View" 125). By 1909, Tom Gunning argues in his historical contextualization of the film, the Western had already matured to the point of self-awareness, in that filmmakers were evidently mindful of the representational discourses they approached and equipped to conceal them artistically in the form of allegory (cf. ibid. 124-5).

[91] In their pictorial account of the films of D.W. Griffith, Wagenknecht and Slide conclude that within the years 1908-1913 Griffith must have directed about 450 films (1). Elsewhere, Slide even gives the number of "over five hundred films in four years" (*Early American Cinema*, 102).

[92] The copy I used for analysis showed no indication of character names. These I have adopted from Tom Gunning's sighting and analysis of the archival sources of *The Museum of Modern Art* and the *Library of Congress*, as well as American Biograph's attending press release for the film, a *Biograph Bulletin* dating December 9, 1909, as included in Gunning's corresponding entry in *The Griffith Project: Volume 3* (123-6). Though Gunning does not specify or elaborate on this, presumably, the name Minnewanna is a derivative of the popular fictional Native American character Minnehaha, originally coined by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) (cf. Hembus 214-5). In fact, as the Native American hero in Longfellow's poem, Hiawatha, falls in love with Minnehaha only to lose her to white conquerors, THE REDMAN'S VIEW, in fact, adopts many of the key elements of the original literary source, hence corroborating the suitability of the characters' names.

against the backdrop of their tribe's tragic fate.[93] As their love begins to blossom, a group of white prospectors violently drive the tribe off their land.[94] A trophy to their conquest, the prospectors' leader claims Minnewanna his own, forcing Silver Eagle to decide between fighting for Minnewanna and staying with his aging father, the chief of the tribe. Silver Eagle chooses duty over love, thus commencing a trail of suffering as the tribe is exiled from their land. During this arduous journey Silver Eagle's father dies. Absolved from his familial ties and responsibilities, Silver Eagle immediately returns to the white conquerors to 'reclaim' Minnewanna. As Silver Eagle faces the prospectors' leader, for a moment it seems as if violence might break out, but then a benign white prospector intervenes and convinces his leader to release Minnewanna. The film ends with Silver Eagle and Minnewanna standing at the old chieftain's burial site, reunited in their love yet facing the symbolic extinction of their people.

THE REDMAN'S VIEW can be considered a paradigmatic example of the director's period at American Biograph, as well as for Western-themed films in the years following THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (cf. Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film* 3-4).[95] The film lends itself for an intersectional analysis because it signals an astounding level of complexity with regards to the discourses and representational strategies it engages in. The film ostensibly issues "an appeal in pictures on behalf of the Indian" (Gunning, "The Redman's View" 125, quoting from a review of *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, dating December 25, 1909),[96] leading Tom Gunning to note of THE REDMAN'S VIEW that the film showed "an inversion of the usual roles of genre" ("The Redman's View" 124) concerning the film's representation of Native Americans.[97] As

[93] The film therefore already includes Griffith's trademark narrative element of allegorizing and humanizing 'historical' events in the fictitious story of his protagonists (cf. Nowotny 177), an aspect most vigorously implemented in THE BRITH OF A NATION (1915).
[94] The *Biograph Bulletin* specifies the indigenous people shown as people of the "Kiowa tribe […] of the Shoshone family" (Gunning, "The Redman's View" 123), but the film never explicates this.
[95] This is not to imply that Griffith was a Western genre-director. Rather, his influence on the genre must be contextualize among the innovations Griffith introduced to film, in general (cf. Nowotny 176). Accordingly, Edward Buscombe writes in his *BFI Companion to the Western*: "Alongside [Thomas] Ince and Broncho Billy [Anderson], Griffith is often cited as a prime mover in the development of the early Western. However, this undoubtedly has more to do with his status as the 'father of film art' than for any outstanding innovations within the genre" (347-8). As such, "Griffith was a pioneer in the transformation of early cinema from a system of attractions, or the displaying of film as a curiosity, to a system of narration, or the use of film for storytelling" (Bernardi 103, with reference to Tom Gunning's extensive study *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years*).
[96] With reference to reviews like the one from *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, Gunning illustrates that this facet of the film that was recognized as such in its time (Gunning, "The Redman's View" 125). In fact, the opinion that Griffith's treatment of Native Americans not only in THE REDMAN'S VIEW but more generally in his films for American Biograph "was almost consistently sympathetic" has long prevailed in traditional scholarship of the director (Wagenknecht & Slide 13). Even though more recent scholarship frequently revisited Griffith's main body of work, specifically THE BIRTH OF A NATION (1915) and BROKEN BLOSSOMS (1919), to develop an argument about the racism that informed his narratives and modes of representation, only slowly did this argument trickle down to scholarship of his earlier work, and hence elicit a critical reassessment of "the racist practices in Griffith's Biograph films" (Bernardi 104).
[97] Benshoff and Griffin succinctly retrace stereotypical images of Native Americanness to the early days of the continent's conquest, when white European writers first encountered its indigenous people and

such, Gunning describes that "[i]t is the white men that are shown as brutal marauders, while the Indians are associated with family and tradition" (ibid. 124) and that "[t]he whites are violent whereas the Indians […] are shown as entirely passive, offering no resistance to their dispossession" (ibid. 124).

However, Gunning's observations fall short of addressing the racism that informed the creation of these representations, as well as the sexism they are imbued with. THE REDMAN'S VIEW colonizes representations of indigenous bodies to defend white supremacy in conjunction with male hegemony.[98] Conceptualizing whiteness as masculine and non-whiteness as feminine, THE REDMAN'S VIEW retains and legitimatizes *Manifest Destiny*[99] and renders the passing of Native Americans as a natural, logical consequence of biological determinism. Predicated on notions of white male hegemony, THE REDMAN'S VIEW constructs an image of 'Indianness' tailored specifically to justify its erasure from history and historiography (cf. Berkhofer 3, 71). Yet by writing *in* Native Americans only to write them *out* again – a hegemonic strategy akin to Foucault's deliberations about Western society's simultaneous propagation and castigation of the sexuality of children, "forcing them [these tenuous pleasures] into hiding so as to make possible their discovery" (*The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 42) –, THE REDMAN'S VIEW illustrates "the verso and recto of the same colonial sign," which in their interdependence reveal the binary tenets of the myth of the West as unstable (Shohat & Stam 15),[100] and illustrate the conceptual overlaps and structural parallelisms of colonial rule and heteronormativity.

"constructed an image of Native Americans that suited their own needs, disregarding anything that might complicate matters" (103). The authors continue: "Two basic stereotypes evolved in this literature […]: the Indian as either a marauding, bloodthirsty savage or a more benign and helpful savage" (ibid. 103). Correspondingly, White and Averson have illustrated that "[…] when the redman [sic] wasn't being portrayed as a rapacious scalper, he was treated in a condescending way. In a number of films, e.g., STOLEN BY INDIANS (1910), THE HEART OF A SIOUX (1910), AT OLD FORT DEADBORN (1912), Cecil B. DeMille's THE SQUAW MAN (1914), the Indian heroine sacrifices herself for her white man lover; or a brave and capable Indian chief turns out to be a white man who was kidnapped by the tribe when he was a child" (8). Benshoff and Griffin conclude that "both [images] still conceive of Native Americans as barely one step above animals" and, therefore, clearly inferior to white colonizers (104).

[98] As Armando José Prats has shown, the practice of appropriating non-white bodies entails a colonial act of hegemony in and of itself. Prats writes: "[T]he very idea of an indigenous view originates in the assumption that perspective can be readily transferred, even to an inveterate Other, without thereby drawing attention to the *transfer itself* as an indication of ascendancy – of the power to empower, let us say. A view that must be specified as the Indian's own is a view that already designates a prior and supervisory perspective. It is the conqueror's to give to the Indian, and the conqueror's, one assumes, to take away" (119-20).

[99] I understand *Manifest Destiny* as "an ideology that suggested that American expansion across the North American continent and beyond was preordained by God" (Greenberg 104 with reference to Tom Chaffin's book *The Pathfinder: John C. Frémont and the Course of American Empire*; Transl. T.S.). For the intents and purposes of this study, Greenberg's definition will suffice.

[100] To clarify, Shohat and Stam refer to the "fictional construct" of the Western world as an arbitrary global manifestation of Eurocentrism. In the above statement, however, I refer to the myth of the West as pertaining specifically to westward expansion in North America, following Richard Slotkin's conceptualization of the myth of the frontier (cf. *Gunfighter Nation* 10).

When we first meet Minnewanna, she is the only moving part in what is essentially a domestic still life. We see people wearing allegedly authentic tribal costumes and head ornaments (cf. Gunning, "The Redman's View" 124), there are tipis in the background, and the entire right side of the screen shows the entrance to a lodge made of wood and animal hides. Right from the start, the viewer is confronted with a culture that is decidedly *different* from the usual cinematic Self. However, inside the diegesis, the scene is structured to suggest a certain familiarity, as it is the first thing viewers are exposed to and hence assume as 'the known' (cf. Prats 118-9). A rare exception to the bulk of (early) Western narratives, which "turned history on its head by making Native Americans appear intruders on their own land" (Shohat & Stam 119), THE REDMAN'S VIEW "show[s] Native Americans as simply inhabiting the domestic space of their unthreatening daily lives" (ibid. 119) (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Source: THE REDMAN'S VIEW, D.W. Griffith (1909). American Biograph. *YouTube*. 00:00:25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SawVHKuwi9A&t=288s>. 28 Jun 2021.

The static camera encourages viewers to take in all aspects of this quasi-ethnographic study,[101] as a young Native American woman (Minnewanna) slowly and warily moves towards the center front of the screen. Holding a water jug, she faces the camera, and exits the scene.

[101] Such ethnographic curiosities were a popular format in the early days of cinema (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 105-6).

The subsequent scene presents to us an idyllic river, where the romance between Minnewanna and Silver Eagle cautiously develops, as they meet and gingerly confess their love to one another, only to return as a couple to the seemingly unchanged scene at the Native American village. Armando José Prats describes the tone of the scene: “All is serenity and unanimity with the aboriginal soul, and the passion of young lovers […] only perpetuates the elemental equipoise” (119). All other characters sit or stand placidly, either looking calmly at the ground or staring at the distant horizons, as if in waiting for something significant to happen.

The viewer, of course, knows how the story ends: wagon treks of white settlers will disperse the indigenous people, or worse. Assuming their perspective as they look towards their future, which holds nothing short of their imminent demise, the opening scene at once symbolizes the film’s alleged perspective and lends currency to the inevitability of the Native Americans’ passing. This has also been observed by Mary Lee Bandy and Kevin Stoehr, who note that “[t]he Indians, even when shown in their native setting before any signs of conflict rises, are inevitably the waiting victims of American expansionism and must confront enemies who are the necessary vehicles of Manifest Destiny” (13).

When the white conquerors[102] do appear, they advance with a sense of unerring purpose, and, as we see that they are heavily armed, we recognize that they are prepared to exert violence. Prats observes:

> When THE REDMAN’S VIEW produces its first shot of the conquerors, it transforms the significance of the opening scenes (the Indian idyll) to produce […] [an] image of an unsuspecting culture about to be crushed by empire’s relentless march. Thus ‘the red man’s view’ designates not a scene from a culturally independent way of life but a *dialectical response* to history’s intrusion in the ahistorical scene. The camera, it turns out, though it witnessed the opening idyll, never gave us the Indian’s ‘view’ but rather the view *of* the Indian, and its presence in the village initiated the dialectical process whereby Conquest could be introduced only so that it might be thereafter condemned. (122; emphases in original)

In other words, THE REDMAN’S VIEW offered us a glimpse at the to-be-colonized, the prelapsarian Native American idyll that draws its meaning singularly from the fact that it will be spoiled eventually and unavoidably by the arrival of white men. Thus, Griffith’s film is but another reiteration of what Leslie Fiedler has coined “the Legend of the Vanishing American” (76-77), as the director arcs the trajectory of his tragedy around the inevitability of his Native American protagonists’ demise.

Accordingly, a title card introduces the white men’s encounter with the Native American characters before the fact, reading “THE YOUNG MAN CHOOSES BETWEEN THE LOVE FOR HIS SWEETHEART AND HIS DUTY TO HIS FATHER” (00:02:38-00:02:47), thereby not

[102] The film introduces them as such in a title card that reads “CONQUERORS” (00:02:08).

only explicating the ensuing narrative conflict, but also foreshadowing the outcome of the encounter as *fait accompli*. Successfully refusing oppression, eschewing colonial subjugation, effacing genocide, is not an option. Historical discourse demands that the Native Americans retreat. But the way THE REDMAN'S VIEW structures this retreat in the opening sequences means that historical discourse is equated with destiny – *Manifest Destiny* to be precise. The aimless gaze towards the horizons, the overall static demeanor, and the ominous title cards convey in allegory "the belief that Native Americans were inevitably vanishing, like leaves blown by the autumn wind, before the power of white America's manifest destiny" (Jay 7).[103]

The white conquerors enter the tribe's settlement and approach a young chieftain, presumably Silver Eagle's brother (though their relationship to one another is never specified). For a moment they argue, as the white conquerors confidently claim the land as theirs to occupy, while the young chieftain tries to explain to them on behalf of his people that the land is theirs and has been since time immemorial. Offended by this insolence, the whites draw their guns and fire warning shots at the sky, after which the young chieftain immediately intervenes and urges his people not to retaliate. They will not fight. Instead, they will go and accept devoutly and peacefully their fate as pariahs.

Yet the scene does not end there: As the chieftain's son turns around to lead his people to new lands, Silver Eagle appears, looking for Minnewanna. The leader of the white conquerors – who had helmed the preceding dispute – finds her inside her lodge and forcefully drags her outside. Another conflict ensues. As the white conquerors express their desire to keep Minnewanna as a domestic slave (on the left end of the screen), and Silver Eagle's father, the old chieftain, is visibly too weak to get up and join the 'exodus' of his people (on the right side of the screen),[104] Silver Eagle is literally caught in the middle, facing the unwelcome choice (as introduced by the earlier title card) between saving his sweetheart from a modified 'fate worse than death' (cf. Prats 123n44)[105] and honoring his father. Not only do the white

---

[103] Prats elaborates: "History, by which I mean here *the ideology of purposive temporality*, had generously bestowed these paradisal guarantees on Anglo-America, but the same history vouchsafed to the Indian only his extinction. The Indian knew nothing of the theory of 'natural selection,' already fermenting two decades before Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), a theory which, so easily abused and perverted, could sanction the disappearance of an entire race in the name of scientific fact. Nor did the Indian know about Hegelian notions of historical inevitability, or about the utilitarian variant of these ideas christened Manifest Destiny in 1845. The Indian stood still, awaiting his doom, ever about to be trampled by the course of empire" (121; emphasis in original).

[104] The film uses the term exodus to describe the tribe's dispossession in a title card that reads "THE EXODUS – THE LONG TREK" (00:04:20-00:04:25). This way, THE REDMAN'S VIEW simultaneously strengthens the film's notion of a preordained fate that must inevitably befall the Native Americans and reveals once more the film's colonization of Native Americans, transferring without issue a decidedly white Judeo-Christian, Eurocentric paradigm to the portrayal of a different culture to increase audience identification and dramatic effect (cf. Prats 119).

[105] This mytheme of the captivity narrative (cf. Buscombe, *BFI Companion to the Western* 78-81; cf. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* 94-95) constitutes another example of how the film consistently embeds elements of a decidedly white American perspective into its allegedly Native American point of view (cf. Prats 123).

conquerors take away the Native Americans' land, but also the young chieftain's lover. Discourses of cultural and sexual identity are profoundly intertwined, as the white conquerors expropriate Silver Eagle both in terms of spatial and sexual belonging.

Separate Spheres II

There is a lot to unpack in this constellation. Gunning notes as one aspect of what he considers "a deliberate reversal of the traditional portrayal of the Native American" that "the whites are a sort of primal horde with no women, whereas the heterosexual romance is given to the main Indian characters" ("The Redman's View" 124). Granted, the circumstance that Griffith centers his story around a non-white heterosexual romance is a clear deviation from conventional representations of Native Americanness of the time. However, this ostensibly novel mode of representing non-white bodies does not eliminate their structural and representational disenfranchisement; it is still, as Gunning himself puts it, the "portrayal *of* the Native American" (my emphasis). Accordingly, Prats has shown: "His ['the Indian', T.S.] having a perspective endows him with one more mark of his narrative dependence" (120).[106]

Incidentally, this portrayal is informed by prevalent notions of gender, replete with their own power dynamics. This way, the film assumes a variant – Prats labels it a "derivative" – perspective of Native Americanness that is still commensurate with the prevailing ideologies of white male superiority.

Specifically, the Native American protagonists, and by proxy the entirety of their people, are shown as profoundly domestic. We see them being idle or doing domestic chores (Minnewanna fetching water from a nearby river), and, perhaps most importantly, we experience them as organized by a complex familial network. Both the patriarchal lineage and the heterosexual romance connect Silver Eagle to a larger collective body that motivates and influences his actions. Effectively, however, this web of domestic bonds and familial duties predominantly limit his mobility in relation to his white oppressors and augment Silver Eagle's

[106] On a related note, although the aforementioned Biograph Bulletin haphazardly relates the depicted Native Americans to "Kiowa tribe […] of the Shoshone family" (Gunning, "The Redman's View" 123), in no way does the film attempt to substantiate this description. Instead, this particular depiction of one Native American tribe is deliberately used to indiscriminately lump together all indigenous people, as suggested by the syntax of the film's title: THE REDMAN'S VIEW (singular as a comprehensive, reductive *pars pro toto*). Ward Churchill has written a succinct and insightful essay on this in "Fantasies of the Master Race: Categories of Stereotyping of American Indians in Film". In a similar vein, Robert F. Berkhofer notes in *The White Man's Indian*: "By classifying all these many peoples as *Indians*, Whites categorized the variety of cultures and societies as a single entity for the purposes of description and analysis, thereby neglecting or playing down the social and cultural diversity of Native Americans then – and now – for the convenience of simplified understanding. To the extent that this conception denies or misrepresents the social, linguistic, cultural, and other differences among the peoples so labeled, it lapses into stereotype. Whether as conception or as stereotype, however, the idea of the Indian has created a reality in its own image as a result of the power of the Whites and the response of Native Americans" (3; emphasis in orginial). For a succinct survey of the workings and ramifications of cultural stereotypes in American film see Benshoff and Griffin (*America on Film* 7).

decision with morality, also in relation to the white conquerors, whose reckless appropriation of space is inextricably connected to the expropriation of a home, which is thus immoral. Because under the open sky or not: The Native American village is a home, and as such it is "filled with the piety and purity that were 'natural' to the female sex" (Rotundo 22). Even though we see mostly male characters occupying the opening tableaux, there are clear iconographical and narrative cues (shelter, family, nurture, décor) that code this as "the woman's domain" (ibid. 22) according to the doctrine of the separate spheres.

The white conquerors, by contrast, roam the open spaces like nomads. Never do we see them rest or camp. They are an unstoppable force of imperialist expansion yet to meet an immovable object, equipped with the confidence that traversing these spaces was their natural prerogative and with the violent skills to enforce this prerogative should it become necessary. When they eventually do arrive at a domestic space, the Native American settlement, they subdue and enslave Minnewanna to perform domestic chores for them, so as not to compromise their own mobility in becoming domestic. *A priori* identified as conquerors, these white men occupy, move across, and seize "the world," or "arena of individualism" (Rotundo 23), the man's domain according to late 19th and early 20th century conventions.

This characterization of the white conquerors would be fully consistent with the 19th century gender ideal of the *frontiersman* (cf. Greenberg 103) – an image that had amalgamated the idea of territorial expansionism and masculinity (cf. ibid. 105) – was it not for the purported shift of perspective. Their reckless advancement is clearly coded as a profoundly immoral act that tarnishes the ideal of the frontiersman. The white conquerors are not heroes, which becomes visible through the film's colonization of Native American bodies and the appropriation of their perspective. Inasmuch the same way the film offers us "the view *of* the Indian" (Prats 122), THE REDMAN'S VIEW looks *at* whiteness from a distance. In other words: Through THE REDMAN'S VIEW, white people look at white history, and in that process the construction of Whiteness with all its ideological ramifications becomes visible.

But does the distance that the ostensible change of perspective entails result in a critical assessment of conquest and genocide? In his effort to substantiate his reading of THE REDMAN'S VIEW as a sympathetic treatment of Native Americans, Gunning references a contemporary review of the film from *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, inferring that "reviewers of the time understood it as expressing a compression of space, time and action into a symbolic tableau of the treatment of the Indians by the whites" (125). Yet this propensity for allegory, as George S. Jay has convincingly argued with reference to the same review, does not translate to structural criticism. Instead, as Jay's study illustrates, the sentiment contained in THE REDMAN'S VIEW's derivative perspective can be interpreted as allegorical, but it must be understood as "an aesthetic effect produced by the modes of sentiment and melodrama," not as a means to incite structural or systemic critique (7).

On a different note, Prats has shown that the film's formal arrangement is rather indicative of its underlying white supremacist ideological premise, rendering Native Americans as "victims of 'history'" (122). Prats observes:

> [t]he 'view' outlasts the Indian; it endures past his purported vanishment, to take its place in a culture fated *to remember* him whom it *never really knew*. If the Indian has a 'view,' then, it is only so that he may condemn Conquest on behalf of the very civilization that Conquest made possible. There is something scandalous, obscene, in having *the Indian* enable Conquest's heirs to claim exemption from 'the legacy of Conquest.' (122-123; emphases in original).

Jointly, Jay and Prats outline that the representation of Whiteness in THE REDMAN'S VIEW, though ostensibly condemned, functions to defend the societal consensus; Jay, by pointing out that this condemnation works mainly on an affective level and in terms of melodrama that eschews intrinsic systemic critique, Prats by pointing out that the appropriated Native American perspective allowed white audiences to distance themselves from the implications of genocidal conquest in spite of witnessing and living its legacy.

What is more, in its synthesis, these two studies illustrate the idea of determinism and inevitability that inform both the film as a cultural artifact and the socio-cultural and politico-historical discourses that produced it: THE REDMAN'S VIEW personifies the fateful story of the vanishing American in two tragic heroes who are destined to fail no matter their struggles, while the circumstance that the films tells this dramatized piece of 'history' to an overwhelmingly white audience, sitting comfortably in theaters or fairgrounds in mostly urbanized spaces, while the Native American indeed has been marginalized, macabrely reifies the narrative as 'fact'.

It is this connection between defending the societal consensus and the notion of 'inevitability' that will be of interest in the following part of my discussion, as both elements are informed by discursive 'knowledge' of gender.

Heteronormativity and Whiteness

Like the outlaws in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, THE REDMAN'S VIEW presents in the white prospectors/conquerors a vision of white masculinity in excess, unbridled from the socially regulating influence of (white) femininity. Although in THE REDMAN'S VIEW the Native Americans are associated with domesticity, hence the woman's domain, to legitimatize, in the logic of the film, their biologically determined inferiority to the white man, they equally do not assume full authority over this domain. My point being, that they fail at performing what will be the task of Faith Henley (HELL'S HINGES) or Molly Wood (THE VIRGINIAN) in the years to come: the primary

domestic duty of the white woman, which is to domesticate – that is, “to [conquer] and [tame] the wild, the natural, and the alien” (Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making* 25), which, in its reversal of roles (cf. Gunning, “THE REDMAN’S VIEW” 124), THE REDMAN’S VIEW aligns with the white men. Equated with the phallic gun, which the white conquerors fire excessively skyward, the film in its representation of white masculinity “envision[s] ungoverned manhood as a socially destructive force” (Rotundo 25), which can only manifest itself because of one conspicuous absence: there is no white woman to function as moral corrective/regulative; there is no white woman to “[monitor] the borders between the civilized and the savage” (Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making* 26).

To illustrate: Silver Eagle returns to free Minnewanna from the withe conquerors’ ties. She, too, has attempted to escape but was recaptured. The village seems abandoned. Silver Eagle calls for her, and eventually finds her in her former lodgings. Together, they attempt to sneak out of the village unnoticed, but immediately, they are discovered. Silver Eagle tries to explain to the white men how much he loves Minnewanna, and that they belong together, but to no avail. The white men’s leader draws his gun and threatens to shoot Silver Eagle. But Silver Eagle remains adamant. His passion for Minnewanna is too great; their bond so deep he is prepared to die to prove it. As the conquerors’ leader cocks his gun to deliver his punishment for Silver Eagle’s insubordination, another white man intervenes (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Source: THE REDMAN’S VIEW, D.W. Griffith (1909). American Biograph. *YouTube*. 00:13:25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SawVHKuwi9A&t=288s>. 28 Jun 2021.

He disarms the leader and demands he show mercy, allowing Silver Eagle and Minnewanna to leave together which they happily do, thanking the elderly white man profusely. Now united, they exit the village and walk to the burial site of Silver Eagle's father, where they solemnly, heads sunken low, mourn the passing of their chief.

Two aspects are important here: Firstly, THE REDMAN'S VIEW utilizes a common narrative and visual strategy of tokenizing a white female character for the purpose of negotiating authority between two male rivals.[107] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has described this triangular pattern as a recurring feature in the negotiation of masculinity in literature (cf. *Between Men* 21). Highlighting the possibilities of these constellations for queer readings, Franziska Schößler describes the female character's function within such "erotic triangles" (Sedgwick 21) as *copulae*, or "as connectives between men and symbols to their power" (Schößler 115; Transl. T.S.). Since, scholarship has provided several transpositions of this pattern to the idiosyncrasies of film, particularly the Western (cf. Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 219; cf. Tompkins 40). Visually, the woman is usually positioned between the men fighting over her, and often this competition is resolved with violence between men.

In the case of THE REDMAN'S VIEW, however, the constellation varies in that both Silver Eagle and Minnewanna occupy the center (sharing the position of the conventionally feminine), tokenizing them both. Moreover, the competition is not resolved with violence. Before the white leader, Silver Eagle's antagonist, can enforce violence to establish his dominance, an elderly white man intervenes and prevents further escalation. However, in that the elderly white man authorizes Silver Eagle and Minnewanna's union, Silver Eagle does not gain actual power over the white leader (cf. Connell, *Masculinities* 80-81). It is the whites' power to take, and it is theirs to give (cf. Prats 119-20).[108]

Secondly, Silver Eagle's refusal to use violence in this competition dissociates him markedly from the performance of white masculinity, just as much as his determination to disobey the white leader's command dissociates him from previous performances of Native Americanness. His defiance symbolically severs the bond to his tribe; after all, Silver Eagle returns to Minnewanna alone, while the tribe simply vanishes from the narrative.

With regards to post-colonial theory, this puts Silver Eagle and Minnewanna's couple formation – that is, their performance of heterosexuality – and specifically Silver Eagle's performance of masculinity in a space of hybridity. This is because his performance of gender/ethnicity begins to resemble that of the white men (rapid movement across open

---

[107] There are exceptions to this pattern, for instance the "interracial love triangle composed of Cora, Uncas, and Magua" (Sterritt, *Review of THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS*) in THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS (Clarence Brown and Maurice Tourneur, 1920) (see below).

[108] I paraphrase one of Prats' poignant conclusions here to illustrate the structural parallelism and interconnectedness of what Prats describes with reference to the film's perspective and my elaborations on authorization with regards to Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity.

spaces, a sense of purpose) but is decidedly not identical to the 'original' (cf. do Mar Castro Varela & Dhawan 230).[109] Likewise, Minnewanna's representation of femininity is decidedly different from cultural expectations of white femininity, in that she does not manage to domesticate the white men to the point where they become civil/settle down. However, her presence does not leave them unaffected, as it is arguably her womanhood (she must be spared the experience of excessive violence) that prompts the elderly white man to intervene, appeal to his leader's compassion, and authorize a non-violent resolution.

It is this *difference* in social practices between ideals of white gender orthodoxy and its non-white counterparts that is then used to retroactively confirm the prejudice of 'natural' racial *difference* and incidentally conceal its racist origins. Cultural practice simultaneously evinces and masks biological *difference*, thus presenting a structural homology to the conflicting dynamics of constructing/naturalizing sexual identity.

Silver Eagle and Minnewanna, the individuated, if still overwhelmingly passive, protagonists of THE REDMAN'S VIEW's melodramatic trajectory, operate in a flustering limbo between white and Native American ethnic performance articulated in terms of gender. They belong neither to the individualist (that is: white, male) nor the domestic (white, female) domain. They have no place, a fate that THE REDMAN'S VIEW potently metaphorizes in the Native Americans' repeated spatial displacement. They lack the qualities that characterize the white man (aggressiveness, brutality, recklessness, belligerence, fierce, mobility) just like they lack the qualities of the white woman (mainly, the quality to constrain the white man's primal tendencies and mold him to a civilized member of a functioning society), which somewhat successfully veils and mirrors the presupposition of differently colored/sexed bodies. This way, the film symbolically makes gendered (non-)sense of the subjugation of Native Americans at the hands of white conquerors. THE REDMAN'S VIEW associates indigenous people with domesticity but shows them disengaging from their alleged duty by either accepting their displacement or being incapable to tame, hence stop the white men's territorial expansion. Therefore, THE REDMAN'S VIEW implies that, in effect, Native Americans sealed their own fate because they failed to counterbalance the white man's innate proclivity for violence and conquest. Instead, they chose to comply with his irresponsible decrees. Only those who learned to assimilate to the white man's ways, Silver Eagle and Minnewanna, survive the film as immortalized anachronisms, at once marginalized and incorporated to the empire of home (cf. Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire* 28), destined to forevermore stand at the pyre of their roots and witness their symbolic extinction as abjects to a white hegemony.

The film conflates discursive 'knowledge' of gender and race to generally position Native Americans outside the heteronormative paradigm. Like the dandy-character in THE

[109] I will elaborate on the theoretical background to this aspect, namely Bhabha's theory of *hybridity*, *ambivalence*, and *mimicry*, in my discussion of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN.

GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, this means that though they do not cease to exist, there is no place for them inside the burgeoning American collective. They are *abnormal*, and as such, their deviance constitutes gender failure, and, correspondingly, determines their extinction. Because they were neither like the white man nor the white woman, Native Americans could not be sustained by civil society. Hardly sympathetic with Native Americans, then, THE REDMAN'S VIEW legitimatizes the genocide of Native Americans in their ambiguity about, their *difference* from, their non-conformity with what the film implies (and presupposes) as biologically predetermined (that is: God-given): heteronormativity as societal consensus. In a system that derives its meaning and receives its currency as societal consensus from the dyad of white man and white woman, there is no place for red men and women because they are neither. Correspondingly, THE REDMAN'S VIEW signifies that Americanness means Whiteness, and Whiteness means heteronormativity, and vice versa.

And yet, like THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, THE REDMAN'S VIEW's defense of heteronormativity as societal consensus is not without friction, as the film does contain incongruencies that simultaneously – if inadvertently – challenge the legitimacy of heteronormativity, and by corollary therefore also the supposed natural legitimacy of white superiority. As the film qua the representation of Native Americans – irrespective of their allegedly preordained extinction at the hands of the white man – acknowledges their existence as something outside the heteronormative paradigm, THE REDMAN'S VIEW reveals the aporia of heteronormativity: What the film so fervently advocates as naturally given – as vested by both God and Science (cf. Bernardi 104-5, 124-5) – is constructed first and naturalized second, and must thus be perpetually defended with violence against those who by existing threaten to destabilize its coherence. Normalcy must be defined through the exclusion of the deviant; the white subject finds its confirmation only in the construction and subsequent displacement of the non-white abject. In its perceived threat towards the legitimacy of white male hegemony, the *abnormal* at once confirms and debases the norm's power.

4.1.3. Excursion I: THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS (1920)

To briefly digress, the final scene of THE REDMAN'S VIEW reprises several years later in an adaptation of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*-material, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS (Clarence Brown and Maurice Tourneur, 1920).[110] Here, the film ends with Great Serpent, father of Uncas and last surviving member of his people, standing at the pyre of his

[110] THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS was the first film of Associated Producers Inc. (a production company founded in November 1919 by Tourneur, Allan Dwan, Tom Ince, J. Parker Read, Mack Sennett and Marshall Neilan). Tourneur was supposed to direct the film with Brown functioning as his assistant. But after an accident of Tourneur two weeks into shooting the picture, Brown took over altogether (cf. Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By…* 142).

son, shot against the setting sun on a mountain ridge, once again emblematizing the vanishing American. Like THE REDMAN'S VIEW, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS appropriates non-white bodies to chronicle a fictional episode of white American myth-become-history. More importantly though, it appropriates non-white bodies to openly entertain the notion of interracial romance, thus responding to at the time pressing socio-cultural discourses of xenophobia and American nativism (cf. Hefner 464). Incidentally, the film appropriates a white female body to explore and negotiate anxieties of white middle-class men about changing conceptualizations of gender and shifting notions of especially female sexuality (cf. Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 187-92; cf. Studlar, "Barrymore, the Body, and Bliss…" 161), thus providing another example of the intersections between discourses of sexuality, gender, and race that inform the Western.[111]

Often has the case been made to identify Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* as the most important literary source of inspiration for the visualization of the Western genre (cf. Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film* 15), and the novel series' main character Natty Bumppo as "a figure in the popular imagination, to which all subsequent versions of the hero had perforce to refer, whether in emulation or denigration" (Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* 468; also cf. Hembus 150; Mitchell 9; Miltenberger in Carroll, 267; Smith, *Virgin Land* 61).[112] Incidentally, the *Leatherstocking*-material, and especially *The Last of the Mohicans*, inspired several cinematic adaptations, both before Brown and Tourneur's film as well as after.[113]

What is special about Brown and Tourneur's film are two significant alterations to the original source material, both of which affect the film's conceptualization of Whiteness and gender. First, Natty Bumppo (Harry Lorraine) – or Hawkeye, as he is referred to in the film – is

---

[111] Discourses of race are also an issue in Cooper's literary original (cf. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* 1002). In the same vein, Slotkin has described the intersection of discourses of race with discourses of class and gender in the *Leatherstocking Tales*: "Cooper recognizes that the racial opposition of Whites and Indians is (for an American) the most basic and definitive of historical tropes, that the ideological justification of American history hinges somehow on the Indian question. His Leatherstocking novels amplify this basic imagery systematically, using White/Indian opposition as the key to interpreting other fundamental oppositions: the opposition between 'hard' and 'soft' understandings of social and class questions embodied in the gendered contrast of Masculine and Feminine ways of thinking about Indian wars, and the class opposition between landed gentry and social-climbing yeoman, masters and slaves, or commanders and subordinates" (*Gunfighter Nation* 15-16).

[112] Mitchell contends referring to Cooper's novel: "In a period of social dislocation, the allure of Natty Bumppo lay in the capacity to read him as a mediating figure, poised yet still, responsible yet detached, at last no more socially or politically involved than the landscape itself. He is the model on which all other attempts to 'make the man' will be practiced" (9). Similarly, Miltenberger describes: "Inspired by English tales of chivalric knights and the mythical exploits of the frontiersman Daniel Boone, and also troubled by the growth of the American republic, Cooper created in the character of Natty Bumppo the archetypal American 'Western' male hero, poised between a savage 'natural' masculinity […] and 'civilized' white Victorian manhood" (Miltenberger in Carroll, *American Masculinities* 267).

[113] Hembus lists nineteen cinema productions between 1909 and 1967 adapting the *Leatherstocking*-material (some of the entries are international productions; excluded are television productions) (151).

drastically marginalized in Brown and Tourneur's adaptation.[114] When he does appear, he outdoes everybody around him with his wisdom and skills, but he is hardly the central character he is in Cooper's original. Most importantly, in Brown and Tourneur's adaptation it is not Natty who mediates between white colonial powers and the continent's indigenous people. This function falls entirely in the hands of Cora Munro (Barbara Bedford), a white woman. In THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, every character, irrespective of cultural heritage, eventually gravitates towards her: The clumsy and cowardly Captain Randolph (George Hackathorne) is in love with her; so is Uncas (Alan Roscoe), the film's stereotypical *noble savage*.[115] The predatory Magua (Wallace Beery), a Huron traitor and collaborator of the opposing French armies, abducts her and threatens to sexually violate her. Her father, Colonel Munro (James Gordon), tries to protect her but fails; as do Natty and Great Serpent (Theodore Lurch), Natty's Mohican friend and ally.

Secondly, the film 'purifies' Cora Munro's racial heritage. While Cooper describes her of mixed racial descent,[116] Brown and Tourneur repeatedly insinuate her as purely white, introducing her, for instance with title cards that read: "Even in a wilderness, gently-bred women somehow maintain the grace and dignity of life" (00:01:35-00:01:43), and replace Cooper's description of a woman with dark eyes, dark skin, and dark hair with a woman of bright white skin and dark blonde hair. Clearly, Cora in THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS functions to represent idealized white femininity, as Brown and Cooper not only assimilate her physiognomy to a contemporary cultural ideal but also her habitus. Cora is defined as the white heroine through an association with domesticity (she takes care of her sister Alice (Lillian Hall), she is surrounded by children, she operates in closed, confined spaces, and initially emanates a general passivity that verges on apathy), as well as through repeated references of the white men around her, as they emphasize the centrality of protecting the inviolability of her body.

Even more strikingly, then, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS envelops this white female body in a complex network of interracial, transgressive desire, in which Cora is portrayed to signify

---

[114] Correspondingly, in THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS Natty is played by Harry Lorraine, a rather insignificant actor compared to Wallace Beery (Magua), Barbara Bedford (Cora Munro), or Alan Roscoe (Uncas). This is a striking variation of the source material, in which Natty Bumppo is the undisputed hero.

[115] For a brief definition of the origin of the concept of the *noble savage* as well as the implementation of it in literature, I refer to J.A. Cuddon's *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (550-1).

[116] Cooper initially describes Cora the following: "[H]er veil also was allowed to open its folds, and betrayed an indescribable look of pity, admiration and horror, as her dark eye followed the easy motions of the savage. The tresses of this lady were shining and black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the colour of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds" (19). Later in the novel, Cooper has her father, Colonel Munro, himself of Scottish descent, explain her origin to Major Heyward: "'I had seen many regions, and had shed much blood in different lands, before duty called me to the islands of the West Indies. There it was my lot to from a connexion with one who in time became my wife, and the mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman of those isles, a lady, whose misfortune it was, if you will,' said the old man proudly, 'to be descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class, who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people'" (159).

and openly express sexual desire, as we see her eying Uncas's bare-chested body, accompanied by a title card that reads: "Her girlish fancy investing the young Chief with a halo of romance" (00:04:44-00:04:52). Again, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS is careful not to suggest this attraction to be merely physical, but also related to Uncas's demeanor, as the film repeatedly stresses his noble primitivism, which mostly transpires in acts of honor, integrity, and restraint.[117] Incidentally, she completely disregards the unfortunate and misguided efforts of Captain Randolph to court her and is exposed to the ever-lecherous gaze of Magua, the film's horribly skewed embodiment of racialized, unrestraint, priapic sexuality.[118] It is Cora's sexual desire that is at the heart of the film, and the film's appeal lies partly in the fact that her desire is reciprocated not by a white man but by the Mohican Uncas.

Broadly speaking, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS envisions a cosmos in which potent white masculinity is pushed to the margins and is only residually extant in some characters who belong to an older generation (Natty, Colonel Munro). Like in THE REDMAN'S VIEW, there is no white male hero. Likewise, the white men in THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS – Captain Randolph, Gamut (Nelson McDowell), and to some extent even Major Heyward (Henry Woodward) – signify gender and racial failure in their inability to connect with, that is, attract the sexual fancies of the idealized white woman. Therefore, while THE REDMAN'S VIEW appropriated non-white bodies to dramatize the absence of idealized white femininity and the concomitant impact on white masculinity, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS appropriates non-white bodies (and the white female body) to dramatize the absence of idealized white masculinity and the concomitant

---

[117] Mitchell has described with regards to Cooper's novel that especially the virtue of restraint manifests in characters' relation to nature. He writes: "In addition to its narratological role as guide for the reader's aimless glance, […] landscape serves the additional function of being a paradigm for male behavior, with even the power to enforce that ideal. It both assumes and compels the kind of quiet restraint men are expected to take – restraint effectively dramatized only in contrast with scenes of lack of restraint (impulsive action, unexpected noise)" (38). Brown and Tourneur's film reflects this paradigm in the dualistic portrayal of Uncas and Magua. Accordingly, Uncas and Magua can also be read anthropomorphized agents of landscape, a narrative device explicitly connected by Mitchell to conceptualizations of non-European masculinity as "being able mysteriously to merge with the landscape, only to reemerge in moments of crisis" (37), and more generally by Richard Dyer with regards to colonialist discourses, who notes: "Expansions into other lands placed the humans encountered there as part of the fauna of those lands, to be construed either as the forces of nature that had to be subjugated or, for liberals, the model of sweet natural Man uncontaminated by civilization" ("White" 742).

[118] In one scene, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS explicitly employs sexualized rhetoric to dramatize what it presents as the destructive, violating element of racial *difference*. Led by Magua and fuelled by liquor that the French carelessly disseminated among the Hurons, their faces degenerate to ugly grimaces of excessive lust as they unleash an orgy of rape and murder. As the title card introduces the sequence with the words "That night – to the everlasting shame of our civilization – covetous white men sold firewater to the Hurons, debauching the red men with drunken orgies", THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS amalgamates non-white sexuality and violence to emphasize the alleged danger to America's civil society posed by non-white identities. Secondly, the film constructs the Huron's proclivity for excess as biologically innate. According to THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, the attempt to integrate the Hurons into white society like the French do with their alliance is essentially a time bomb waiting to explode.

impact on white femininity, as well as white society at large. THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS catastrophizes the downfall of white male hegemony.[119]

As white male bodies are overwhelmingly characterized by their failure to comply with cultural expectations of gender, and non-white male bodies are either presented as better embodiments of essentially white virtues or caricatured as unstoppable threats to the sanctity of the white female body, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS conflates 'knowledge' of ethnicity and gender to articulate contemporary anxieties about immigration and the dissolution of white American superiority. In Brown and Tourneur's film, the absence of hegemonic white masculinity (almost) leads to the dissolution of racial segregation,[120] which manifests in what the film constructs as appealing but wayward expressions of female sexuality.

Both THE READMAN'S VIEW and THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS normativize white heterosexuality, albeit it by unconventional means, as both films dramatize the absence of dominant white heterosexuality. That notwithstanding, in THE REDMAN'S VIEW's de-naturalization of its supposedly naturally inferior Native American characters and in THE LAST OF THE MOHICAN's overt negotiation of transgressive female sexuality, both films are powerful examples of the productivity of gender contingency. Before white heteronormativity quashes those abject identities, they are visibly, markedly, appealingly constructed. Especially in THE REDMAN'S VIEW, the thought that the indigenous people of North America were like the white conquerors – and thus equally entitled to basic human rights – precedes the decision (and legitimation strategy) to render that thought unthinkable. Both films undergo this negotiation (and reach their respective verdicts) in a rhetoric that amalgamates preconceptions about gender and cultural identity that are subsequently concealed or simply misconstrued as biological truths about sex and race.

4.1.4. Formularization and Mythification: HELL'S HINGES (1916)

During the 1910s, American cinema underwent several radical changes, chief among them, perhaps, is the fact that most American film productions relocated from the East coast to Hollywood, Southern California (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 31). What is more, films became increasingly more complex. As filmmakers transitioned from the predicative narratives of earlier films to an attributive style of narration, they awarded characters with psychological motivations to pursue clearly defined goals (cf. Esders-Angermund 82-84). Incidentally, partly due to an increasing interest in the medium as a pastime, audiences became bigger and films

[119] David Leverenz has shown in his discussion of *The Leatherstocking Tales* that this rather sentimental image of white masculinity is already evident in Cooper's literary original (755-7).

[120] Cora and Uncas's union is only realized in death. She is thrown off a cliff by Magua; Uncas dies in the attempt to kill him. As their hands grasp one another with their final breath, they die a couple. This way, the film is able to symbolically entertain the notion of miscegenation without depicting it.

became longer (cf. ibid. 80-81), allowing for the infamously racist, but undoubtedly paradigm-shifting three-hour epic THE BIRTH OF A NATION (D.W. Griffith, 1915).

However, as Kristin Thompson has shown, these stylistic innovations were subject first and foremost to the governing body of "standardized studio organization" (157). Because of a Supreme Court ruling in 1915 that classified film productions as businesses as opposed to art, thus exempting them from protection as free speech (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 31-34), studios themselves "controll[ed] new ideas, fit[ed] them into an existing model, and [made] them into normative principles" (Thompson 157). Therefore, though perpetually negotiating stylistic innovations, the consolidating industry of Hollywood film production became essentially self-contained, as it was strongly incentivized by national law and an increasingly competitive domestic (and international) market to deprioritize substance and style to profitability (cf. Bronfen & Grob, "Einleitung" 11).

Consequently, the classic Hollywood style as it was beginning to take shape in the 1910s has been commonly referred to as the "invisible style," obviating as it does most aspects of formal or stylistic contingency to facilitate audiences' understanding and thus reach wider audiences and in turn increase profits. The developing stylistic norm, therefore, has often been described by its penchant for continuity, linearity, stereotypization, and closure (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 24-26), in other words, by the seemingly unreserved primacy of causality. From its earliest days, Hollywood provided a *heterotopia* of collective American self-contemplation (cf. Bronfen & Grob, "Einleitung" 15),[121] as a space governed by the perpetual strive to – in its most literal understanding – *make sense*, finding purpose and satisfaction in the construction of logic.[122]

Though there have been voices that have complicated this heuristic classification of the Hollywood style (cf. Bordwell, "The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917-60" 3), it follows from here that Hollywood films must be understood as a consumable product first, streamlined to appeal to (and thus be consumed by) as big and financially susceptible an audience as possible, which in the earlier days would have primarily comprised the lower, working-class social strata (cf. Robinson 33-35), and only as time progressed increasingly catered to the interests of an allegedly more "'respectable'" white middle-class audience (Benshoff & Griffin 33). Originating from, controlled by, and fashioned to represent the interests of a white, hetero-patriarchal, bourgeoise establishment, Hollywood, therefore, "endorsed middle-class American values of strong active men and passive women, heterosexual romance, and the

[121] Bronfen and Grob refer to Michel Foucault's understanding of *heterotopias* in relation to *utopias*, the differentiation of which he has laid out in his essay "Andere Räume" (39).

[122] There may be an interesting structural parallel here that might deserve more attention than can be provided for in this study: If it follows that the Hollywood style is characterized by a complex, somewhat cyclical teleology that conflates the explanation of phenomena by their purpose with the purpose of finding a logical cause, does that in way structurally resemble the opposing gender-ideological currents of constructing versus naturalizing gender?

centrality of whiteness" (ibid. 34), although it often did so surreptitiously, its potent ideologically charged content not rarely enshrouded by an unobtrusive visual style that suggested self-evidence.

Another key element for the success of this rapidly growing business was the star system (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 33-34). Relying on the appeal of familiarity, "the first stars were film actors who acquired celebrity through a succession of appealing roles in which they developed and projected a consistent screen persona by which they could be readily identified" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 242). As audiences flocked to "pay to see any of the star's films" (Benshoff & Griffin 34), movie stars like Florence Lawrence, Charlie Chaplin, Lilian Gish, Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, Clara Bow, or Mary Pickford became the predominant pull factors of this booming industry. Over time, some movie stars attained a celebrity that, in public perception, elevated them to the ranks of royalty or even divinity (cf. ibid. 34).

However, as Richard Dyer observes, "[a] film star's image is not just his or her films, but the promotion of those films and of the star through pin-ups, public appearances, studio hand-outs and so on, as well as interviews, biographies and coverage in the press of the star's doings and 'private' life" (*Heavenly Bodies*, 2). Accordingly, Richard Slotkin notes that "stardom as a cultural phenomenon is not contained by the films on which it is based" (*Gunfighter Nation* 242). Fueled by "the inescapable confusion between actor and role, between 'real life' and the fiction made about it" (ibid. 242), Slotkin argues that stardom "mimics the conceptual structure of myth" (ibid. 242), the myth being the seamless fusion of personality and persona which suggests that these larger-than-life icons were people still, performing acts "we would not dare or forbid ourselves to do" (Bronfen & Grob, "Einleitung" 34; Transl. T.S.). Richard DeCordova's historical study on stardom, and specifically his argument that from 1913 onwards "the question of the player's existence outside his or her work in film became the primary focus of discourse" (98), corroborates this point.

Recently, Mark Lynn Anderson has added to this aspect with reference to several historical studies (including DeCordova's), stating that by 1915 "most popular stars began using their unusual status as capital assets to negotiate ever greater compensation, a situation that […] manifested itself in their conspicuous consumption of luxurious goods and services" (102). Anderson concludes therefore: "Coverage of the stars' hobbies, homes, and material possessions revealed utterly charmed lives, a condition of grace expressing the unique personalities upon which that very grace was premised" (ibid. 102).

Stardom thus attempts to reconcile the excellent and the mundane, extracting as well as generating meaning and identity from the contradictory idea that those who perform extraordinary acts on screen were authentic representations of reality, who could thus be emulated, despite the fact that those extraordinary acts simultaneously dissociate them from reality (cf. Bronfen & Grob, "Einleitung" 37). Generally speaking, then, as poster people for the

cultural system that produced them and potent mediators between cultural ideals and the general public, film stars ranked among the most influential vehicles for ideology (cf. ibid. 40). Slotkin makes a convincing argument of the impact and effectiveness of this pattern specifically to the Western genre, as the genre that became more and more recognized as an art form tantamount to the creation and negotiation of collective American national identity. Slotkin's reasoning is worth quoting at length, especially because his conclusion nicely illustrates the premise of this section and introduces its key protagonist. Elaborating on the confusion between "'real life' and the fiction made about it," Slotkin notes:

> This confusion is particularly significant in the case of the Western star, because he is a hero in two different mythic traditions: the celebrity-generating mythology of Hollywood, and the Boone-Crockett-Cody-Virginian tradition of the Frontier Myth. Actors whose stardom derived primarily from Westerns often found themselves 'type-cast' into a narrow range of roles. But the repeated association of a performer with a single genre like the Western […] fostered the illusion that the star continuously 'inhabits' that fictive world, and his passage from film to film is mistaken as a kind of biography, the development of 'his' character, the figurative history of 'his' life. The more significant the star as a figure in national culture, the deeper the confusion. The supreme example of the type is John Wayne, whose role as movie hero became so important to our culture after the Second World War that Congress authorized a medal honoring him as the embodiment of American military heroism – although he had never served a day in uniform. The cultural structures through which Wayne would rise to the stature of myth-hero were established between 1914 and 1920 in the work of the most important silent-Western star, William S. Hart. (*Gunfighter Nation*, 242-3)[123]

This section, then, will be about the star-text of William S. Hart and his significance to both the Western genre and American culture in the 1910s, specifically with regards to contemporary conceptualizations of gender.

Occasionally credited as "[t]he man who, single-handed, rescued the Western film from the rut of mediocrity into which it had fallen" (Fenin & Everson 75; also cf. Maddrey 4), William S. Hart "did for feature Westerns what Griffith had done for melodrama, taking existing elements of the film genre and bringing it to new levels of dramatic power, building his own

[123] The Western had already spawned the careers of several stars over the years prior to the development of the star system, as Scheugl describes: "The first male stars that developed a convincing image in movies were actors of Westerns. Although the star system only emerged during the 1910s, George Max Anderson starred as *Broncho Billy* as early as 1908 in the eponymous series, which ran until 1916. Together with Tom Mix (by 1910), they were the most famous defenders of law and order in the early Western. By 1914, two stars began their movie careers and managed to transition from the genre's 'anarchic' beginnings to more moderate forms; that is, they accompanied the industry's structural changes from a mostly proletarian to a bourgeoise audience: Charles Chaplin and William S. Hart" (16; Transl. T.S.; also cf. Nowotny 174).

stardom in the process to a rank equal to that of [Charlie] Chaplin and [Douglas] Fairbanks" (*BFI Companion to the West*, 348).[124]

Slotkin singles out the impact and significance of Hart's stardom for his commitment to "'authenticity' and 'realism'" (*Gunfighter Nation* 243),[125] painting a picture of an actor-director who identified himself as and thus became identified with 'a real Westerner' (cf. ibid. 243, 245).[126] Far from making realistic pictures of the West,[127] however, Hart's cinema is best characterized by its stylistic and narrative austerity (ibid. 245), that is, Hart's uncompromising reduction and adherence to a consistent formula, "the fight of Good versus Evil" (Nowotny 177; Transl. T.S.). Often, these narratives featured Hart himself in the role of the *good-badman*, a notorious wrong-doer redeemed and transformed at the hands of a pure, angelic white woman.

Striving to make movies that would appeal to audiences that had largely been exposed to sensationalist quasi-historical actualities and shallow dime novel fabrications of the West (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation 244*; cf. Nowotny 177), William S. Hart's movies stand out by having successfully molded the myth of the frontier into a generic pattern that, by generating

---

[124] Admittedly though, Hart's celebrity would already come to an end in the mid-1920s. Inasmuch as I contend in the following that some salient aspects of his films have had a considerable impact on the solidification of a generic formula, I generally agree with Tuska that Hart "was not a consummate film maker" (34), especially in terms of storytelling: "What ruined Hart in actually a very short time was his dogged insistence on overstated, fragrant, idealistic and sentimental plots" (ibid. 33).

[125] Slotkin is rightfully cautious to put the terms in inverted commas. Indeed, Hart's attention to detail, specifically with regards to authentic cowboy garb has been noted in many accounts (cf. Brownlow, *The War, The West, and The Wilderness* 267-8), and has in some cases been construed as 'realism' (Fenin & Everson 75). By contrast, Jon Tuska has put this interpretation into perspective: "[Hart's] influence on Western film making was negligible. […] You'll find the same crudity of dress, dilapidated town sets, dusty streets, rough interiors – the 'realism' praised in Hart Westerns – in Anderson's pictures of that period and in Universal products like STRAIGHT SHOOTING or the Selig short Westerns with Tom Mix. Since most of Hart's Westerns still exist, in lieu of any ready contradiction he is given credit for introducing these elements. […] Had we more documentation by means of which to trace stylistic evolution, I suggest it might turn out that Westerns were so 'realistic' in the 'Teens because film makers couldn't imagine them being any other way" (31-32). These things considered, Brownlow's succinct reference to Hart's style as "romantic realism" seems the most adequate (*The War, The West, and The Wilderness* 264). Hart was "genuinely concerned about authenticity" (ibid. 264), but for dramatic reasons and to respect established generic conventions, Hart repeatedly swayed from the truth (or realism), to deliver "poetic evocations of the Old West" (ibid. 264). Brownlow concludes: "Hart presented the West of the popular imagination, and in his Puritan Westerner people could see an idealized portrait of their fathers or uncles; his films brought to life the stories they told" (ibid. 268).

[126] To that end, Hart tailored most accounts of his past to fit his Westerner-image and reputation (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 244). In his autobiography as well as in many recorded interviews, Hart adamantly insisted on his authentic Western pedigree (cf. Maddrey 4-5; cf. Brownlow, *The War, the West and the Wilderness* 267). Born in Newburgh, New York, Hart spent most of his childhood days following with his family the sporadic employments of his father as a miller, which had them move to relatively remote places in the Mid-West, such as Aurora (Illinois), Portland (Iowa), Minneapolis (Minnesota), and Trimbell (Wisconsin) (Davis, *William S. Hart: Projecting the American West* 3-10). Hart moved to the West proper only at the age of forty-nine (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 243).

[127] Accordingly, Hart has labelled his own approach "fictional history". Though the quote is taken from the foreword to one of his literary endeavors – *A Lighter of Flames*, in which he chronicles and heroizes the ventures of Founding Father Patrick Henry – the description fits his approach to cinema, as well. Hart declares: "As the story has unfolded, I have found it necessary to transpose some dates and incidents, but in the main the thread of the central figures life runs true. I have called it in my own mind fictional history – an effort to make that vibrant past and its heroic actors live again" ("Foreword").

an aura of authenticity through stardom, costume, and design, overtly perpetuated myth as a truthful representation of the West (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 244). Through his stardom, Hart explicated the latent cultural construct of previous films about the West: the prominent narrative convergence of territorial conquest as white Anglo Saxons' historical and spiritual assignment. Hart engineered the Western to reflect a strict exegesis of Puritan belief, "[using] the biblical myth of exodus and conquest to justify imperialism before the fact" (Bercovitch, "The Rites of Assent…," 8).[128] Considered by many "the paramount interpreter of the West as an Anglo-Saxon heritage" (Koszarski ix), Hart's most significant contributions to the Western lie in distilling the Western myth and perfecting the fusion of ideology and genre (cf. Nowotny 178), thus "injecting it [the Western, T.S.] with contemporary bourgeois notions of social reform, Christianity, race, and manhood" (Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians* 165).[129] Hart gave *Manifest Destiny* a face and a name.

Building on the consistency of William S. Hart's star text across his performances that other scholars have previously observed (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 244; cf. Nowotny 177-8; cf. Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians* 162-80),[130] I will illustrate in one of his most popular and most critically acclaimed features, HELL'S HINGES,[131] the incorporation of ideology to the developing genre formula. On decidedly allegorical terms, Hart in HELL'S HINGES explicates and thus amplifies the hitherto latent notion of westward expansion-as-divine errand. The film maps out its two idealized characters using complex-if-stereotyped dialectics of gender and race, depicting idealized white masculinity as responsive only to the powers of idealized white femininity, and negotiating white Anglo-Saxonism in relation to an inferior racial Other.

Crucially, the film puts great emphasis on the domesticating powers of its central white female character, as she is the one who elicits and motivates the hero's transformation. As this domesticating power, however, potentially violates the image of the masculine individualist as

---

[128] Bercovitch continues: "[…] For the […] Puritans it was a matter not of claiming rights but of reclaiming ownership. The wilderness belonged to their errand before the errand belonged to them" ("The Rites of Assent…," 8).

[129] These are the first firm steps of a consolidating genre towards what John Ford, looking back at six decades of making Western films and manipulating historiography, would include in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962) as one of the Western's most famous aphorisms: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend."

[130] Other Hart films of the time, such as KNIGHT OF THE TRAIL (1915), THE RETURN OF DRAW EGAN (1916), THE ARYAN (1916) and THE PATRIOT (1916) all reveal similar plot structures, and, consequently, a very consistent star persona. Accordingly, biographer Ronald L. Davis notes with reference to articles on Hart's films in the trade press: "Reviewers had begun suggesting that Hart had allowed himself to be trapped in a predictable role that was becoming a bore. *Moving Picture World*, on February 19, 1916, warned that the actor was failing to win a large percentage of eastern movie audiences by his persistent repetition of the 'western badman reformed through the sweet and humanizing influence of a pure-minded girl'" (83). Slotkin strikes a more condemning tone: "Hart almost always played a 'bad man' of one kind or another – an outlaw, gambler, or just a hard customer – who finds redemption through the love of a good woman (or a pure young girl). The formula was used over and over, with minor variations" (*Gunfighter Nation* 244).

[131] Hart frequently co-directed and/or co-wrote the pictures he starred in (cf. Koszarski ix).

cultural ideal of gender, who by design must strive towards but is essentially unfettered by the feminizing influence of domesticity, HELL'S HINGES obfuscates that power by rendering it mainly symbolic. However, impactful and populist as this functionalization (and thus, marginalization) of female characters may appear, as an attempt to reconcile the confusing, paradoxical ramifications of the doctrine of separate spheres, I will show that this construction, too, cannot fully reconcile the aporia of heteronormativity that lies beneath it.

"One who is evil, looking for the first time upon that which is good"

HELL'S HINGES features William S. Hart as Blaze Tracy, the most feared and revered gunslinger in the depraved Western town of Placer Center, also referred to as 'Hell's Hinges'. Expecting the arrival of a minister from the East, named Robert Henley (Jack Standing), Blaze joins forces with the local crook Silk Miller (Alfred Hollingsworth), promising to send the preacher back whence he came to ensure the town's wild, uncivilized nature. Upon the preacher's arrival, however, Blaze lays eyes on his sister, Faith Henley (Clara Williams), and recognizes his own erring ways. He swears loyalty to her and her Puritan faith, transforming from the town's most notorious killer to its most confident crusader, a savior with a six-gun, as he purges the town from the debauchery and vices that have befallen it.

A discussion of the complex, interwoven discourses of sexuality, gender, and race that inform HELL'S HINGES and William S. Hart's star persona, in general, is not without precedent. Most significantly, Richard Slotkin's analysis of the film in *Gunfighter Nation* offers a detailed account of the intricate web of discourses that inform Hart's star text in this film and beyond. Slotkin demonstrates in the example of HELL'S HINGES how Hart managed to create "a distinctly modern form of culture hero who appears as the representative man of his people or nation," (*Gunfighter Nation* 251), a point that he then substantiates with observations about two of Hart's subsequent features, THE ARYAN and THE PATRIOT (both 1916).[132] In Hart's stardom, Slotkin exemplifies the beginning of the genre's supplanting of truth by myth: "Through Hart, the Western genre-hero achieved broad acceptance as a historically 'authentic' and morally valid representation of a specifically 'red-blooded' version of American character" (ibid. 251). As such, Slotkin describes Blaze Tracy as a vision of the Western hero that is defined by the divine obligation to his race, which, however, only manifests itself upon fulfilling the heteronormative contract with the right – that is, white – woman: "[…] sexual passion is seen as the most fundamental expression of racial consciousness or instinct, and the characteristic

[132] About THE ARYAN, Andrew Brodie Smith writes: "Although filmmakers had previously suggested it, they had never so clearly connected the hero's use of force in the western film with the maintenance of white supremacy" (168).

of the true Anglo-Saxon is represented as an intense exclusivity in preferring women of his own race, the purer the better" (ibid. 248).

Taking Slotkin's analysis as my starting point, I will elaborate specifically on the interplay of discourses of gender and race, building an argument that will help explain the dual function of the film's central female character, Faith, in relation to its central male protagonist, Blaze, and that will illustrate the solidification of the conflicting dynamics of constructing versus naturalizing gender as constitutive, if irresolvable elements of the generic formula.

Blaze Tracy is introduced as the pivotal agent of chaos in Placer Center, as one quasi-documental title card reads: "The embodiment of the best and the worst of the early West. A man-killer whose philosophy of life is summed up in the creed 'SHOOT FIRST AND DO YOUR DISPUTIN' AFTERWARD'" (00:09:50-00:10:12; emphasis in original). Accordingly, he shows uncanny skills with a gun, which he utilizes, however, to impress the other men of Placer Center, symbolically announcing acts of heinous violence as he shoots multiple holes in a can that features a caricature of the imminently expected preacher strapped around it. As such, the sequence on the one hand validates the performance as an act of great skill that vests hegemonic masculinity, as he receives the roaring appraisal of the internal, homosocial audience (cf. Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 13). On the other hand, the film insists that this portrayal be far from a cultural ideal, as this internal audience – as unindividuated agents of spatial and social environment – has previously been characterized as violent, immoral, licentious.[133]

To emphasize the point of Blaze's questionable repute even further, the film aligns him in another characterizing sequence with Silk Miller, the half-Mexican saloon/bordello proprietor. Silk feeds on the town's vices, just as Blaze's reputation as the wildest of them all hinges on the town's untamed, savage nature. As they share a drink, Silk incites Blaze to rid the town of the preacher as soon as he gets there, a challenge he happily accepts. The former to secure his thriving, if shady business, the latter to secure his potent, if erring identity, Silk and Blaze are allies in their mission of keeping civilization at bay. Similar to the marauding white conquerors in THE REDMAN'S VIEW, Silk and Blaze both in their own way represent the socially destructive element of unrestrained masculinity (cf. Rotundo 25), of excessive, profligate individualism that yet eschews the domesticating influence of white femininity.

Of course, Silk is an entirely functionalized character, serving to initially decry Blaze's morals by aligning the two, only to become his main adversary once Blaze's transformation has been completed. Accordingly, the film underscores the insuperable *difference* between

[133] A long shot capturing the main square of Placer Center shows in an establishing sequence (before we meet any individuated characters of the town) a horde of men watching the spectacle of two violent shoot-outs (00:07:28-00:08:10), accompanied by a title card that gives a blanket characterization of the town and its residents as "[a] gun-fighting, man-killing, devil's den of iniquity that scorched even the sun-parched soil on which it stood" (00:07:41-00:07:51).

them in the opening sequences: “The two most dangerous men in the territory, widely different in every characteristic, but agreed on one point: that neither LAW NOR RELIGION shall ever come to ‘Hell’s Hinges’” (00:11:24-00:11:41; emphasis in original). For one thing, this insuperable *difference* is communicated in an openly racist rhetoric, as Silk is introduced as “[m]ingling the oily craftiness of a Mexican with the deadly treachery of a rattler” (00:08:13). Mexicanness, in the logic of HELL’S HINGES, equates with, and irrevocably determines villainy: In the fight of Good versus Evil, the film suggests, Silk is evil because he is corrupted by blood.

For another, HELL’S HINGES draws from established discourses of gender to depict in Blaze and Silk two different images of masculinity. For example, Silk and Blaze’s spatial contextualization as well as their respective outward appearances reflect the gendered paradigm set by THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, with Silk occupying mostly interior spaces and sporting the decorative outfit of a dandy, while Blaze is defined by his actions both inside and outside, wearing ‘functional’ frontier/cowhand clothing. Consequently, the film uses explicit references to racial stereotypes as well as implicit references to already familiar dialectics of gender to characterize Blaze as the *good-badman* in relation to the uniformly badman Silk: Blaze is bad because he is headed towards betraying his race by affiliating himself with Silk; at the same time, he shows the as-yet dormant potential to do great, because he still clearly outranks Silk in his representation of gender. Put differently, HELL’S HINGES presents in its exposition the potentially dangerous interplay of culture and nature, as their mingling, in the logic of the film, may only pollute nature by refashioning society to disregard natural *difference* – a tense dynamic that is articulated both in terms of gender and race.

The film suggests Blaze is stuck in his ways, corrupted by Silk’s influence, and lacking a sense of purpose to utilize his seemingly natural talents for the greater good. It appears that Blaze is unable to refuse Silk’s cultural (which is clearly marked as racial) ‘contamination’, until Faith Henley, the white woman, elicits his transformation. Faith arrives with the stagecoach that carries her brother Robert, sent out West to redeem himself as a preacher away from the corrupting influence of the city. As the stagecoach pulls in, the ‘Petticoat Brigade’, the last vestige of civilized people in Placer Center, “a drop of water in a barrel of rum” (00:09:14-00:09:26), gather around to welcome their new residents. Blaze prepares himself to issue a different kind of welcome, as the townspeople – that is, Silk and the men around him – expect him to scare off the preacher and ensure Placer Center remain uncivilized. Two crowds gather on main square, and the camera alternates (hence, communicates) between them: Faith, clinging to the chest of her brother as they disembark the coach, surrounded by the Petticoat brigade on one side; Blaze, wading through the crowd of Placer Center’s men, prepared to use violence, on the other.

Immediately, one side is defined by its symbolic association with domesticity, hence femininity: the preacher, tasked to dispel savagery; his innocent sister, herself determined to

guide her brother and monitor his redemption; the Petticoat brigade, reputable citizens but altogether defenseless due to their pacifist inertia: they all comprise the promise of 'home'. The other side, by contrast, strongly evokes images of excessive individualism, hence unrestraint masculinity, "the locus of sin and evil" (Rotundo 23): Blaze, the exceptional if misguided gunslinger-champion of Placer Center; the grimacing crowds of men, jittery with excitement about impending acts of violence.

But as Blaze positions himself at the head of the crowd, instead of him asserting the power of this decidedly individualistic, undomesticated space, he himself is pulled in by the powers of domesticity. A total of four shot-reverse shot sequences follows, spanning for a duration of approximately fifty seconds, as the camera indulgently lingers on the exchange of gazes between Blaze and Faith, the camera emulating his scrutinizing gaze as it moves ever more closely to her, eventually culminating in two close-up shots of her face, accompanied by the prophetic and central title card of the film: "One who is evil, looking for the first time upon that which is good" (00:14:25-00:14:33).

Even though this sequence happens relatively early in the film, it constitutes the turning point in Hart's *good-badman* character. Upon seeing her, he changes. Though no interaction between them other than visual contact has motivated his choice, he immediately decides to change his ways. Blaze symbolically traverses the space between the homosocial domain of irreputable, unrestraint masculinity and enters the domestic domain represented by the Petticoat brigade, and, most importantly, by Faith Henley. He takes off his hat, momentarily shedding the insignia of his gunslinger identity, and bows his head slightly to introduce himself politely to Faith, an act that is met with disbelief by the people around him, but which is reciprocated and thus validated by Faith. From then on, Blaze will abandon his sinful ways and become good; that is, renounce the company of Silk and the wicked townspeople, and follow Faith's virtuous command instead. Blaze eludes cultural hybridization and commits to his allegedly natural assignment, at once revoking the threat of racial impurification and ratifying heteronormativity.

In using the phrase "One who is evil, looking for the first time upon that which is good" as the deterministic headline to Blaze's transformation, the film openly differentiates between evil acts nurtured by a hostile environment and an innate predisposition for goodness; meaning that Blaze carries the potential to do good by design, but has become corrupted by the evil forces of Hell's Hinges. As the film clearly associates the corruption of Hell's Hinges, hence the performance of evil, with Silk Miller, on the one hand, and the goodness that lies dormant in Blaze, waiting to be animated, with the white woman on the other, the film articulates an openly racist message. Blaze has been made evil by the 'crafty Mexican', but he can be made

good again by the redeeming influence of the white woman who reminds him of his racial origin.[134]

To further emphasize the significance of this scene, that is, to underscore that Blaze's motivation to cross the threshold, relinquish the realm of unrestraint masculinity, and commit to an honest life in service of domesticity, was not fueled by mundane sexual attraction but constitutes a spiritual awakening, the film intersperses later scenes with images that are unmistakably inspired by or even directly taken from Puritan/Christian iconography: Repeatedly Blaze wades through crowds like Moses parting the Red Sea; the second spiritual union between Blaze and Faith is augmented with inserts of a woman in a white gown kneeling at a cross like Maria Magdalene; in the final third of the film Hart visually connects a burning church with images of a burning cross;[135] the march through the desert of the dispelled citizens of Placer Center links their fate to the Israelite's Exodus. HELL'S HINGES accentuates that, as Slotkin puts it, "Blaze learns to desire faith by experiencing desire for Faith" (*Gunfighter Nation* 248), meaning that their union is spiritual first and sexual/romantic only in its consequence. Faith is constructed as the paradigmatic white woman, as "the apotheosis of desirability" (Dyer, "White" 749). Blaze and Faith find each other as the answer to a calling. Theirs is destiny.

Moreover, the spiritual union between Blaze and Faith is counterpointed by Robert's fall from grace. The film begins with the young parson, who appears to be more interested in self-aggrandizing showmanship than spreading God's word. An introductory title card *a priori* characterizes him as "[t]he victim of a great mistake. A weak and selfish youth, utterly unfit for the calling that a devout and love-blinded mother has persuaded him to follow" (00:00:42-00:00:57). Robert's sermon directly reinforces this sentiment, during which he only addresses the women in the front row, who incidentally seem most responsive to his preaching. Accordingly, another title card emphasizes the nature of his character: "Untouched by the holy word he is conveying but taking an actor's delight in swaying his audience" (00:01:59-00:02:10), earmarking him as a fundamentally flawed character. Crucially, as Richard Hutson has noted in his discussion of the film, Robert's shortcomings are coded in gendered terms, complicating the sex/gender coherence of his representation of gender with tokens of femininity that defy his male body.

> Robert, in his ministerial role and popularity as a preacher to women, is identified with the tradition of the feminized American spiritual or intellectual institutions. His institutional and cultural duty

[134] Such articulations of openly racist ideology permeate much of Hart's oeuvre, as has been noted by, for instance, Koszarski (ix).

[135] Slotkin specifies: "The image of its [the church's; T.S.] burning cross borrows one of the most dramatic of Griffith's symbols [of THE BIRTH OF A NATION; T.S.] – although here it signifies the ruin of society rather than its coming redemption" (*Gunfighter Nation* 248).

is to guide the church people, reinforce their Christian moral values, but his vulnerability to women results in his failure to carry out the conventional task of a pastor. (62)

What the film explicitly determines as markers of youth and implies in his repeated association with conventionally feminine concepts and images (being exposed to the gaze of women as opposed to wielding the power of the gaze onto others; being timid in temper, controlled by his mother, supervised by his sister, unskilled with a gun, unfit for the West) essentially function to expose Robert's representation of gender as unintelligible. This way, HELL'S HINGES conflates the narrative trajectory of Robert betraying the sacrosanct commission of his office with him betraying his gender, as his representation of gender at once defies conventional conceptualizations of heroic masculinity and opposes the diegetic gender ideal, Blaze Tracy.

Upon arriving at the cesspool that is Placer Center, where he has been sent to administer a parish, Robert's misconduct exacerbates. His patrons and his mother had hoped that idyllic frontier life might teach Robert the humility required for his hallowed calling. Instead, Robert succumbs to heavy spells of drinking, and, most despicably (in the logic of the film), engages in sexual activities with the racially stereotyped, licentious 'half-breed' prostitute Dolly (Louise Glaum). Consequently, the film adds to Robert's gender failure, deeming it as the betrayal of his race, coded in Robert's strongly implied transgression of Puritan sexual conventions: extramarital sex in conjunction with the notion of miscegenation.[136] Robert more and more falls prey to the vices of 'the world,' ill-equipped to practice the restraint and composure expected of a white man appointed to conquer these spaces. Eventually, the story of his demise culminates in Silk and Dolly coaxing him into setting on fire his own church, leading to his death. This thus inspires Blaze to ignite the entire town, turning Placer Center into a purgatory, where those unworthy of salvation will burn forever, while the blessed few (he and Faith), may venture forth to Paradise.

Therefore, as Richard Hutson correctly discerns, the film is arched around two dialectical narratives of seduction, embodied by two binary *images* of femininity: the "moral

---

[136] The implied act of miscegenation is followed up by one of the most unapologetic and appalling displays of misogyny and racism in all the films discussed in this study. Having found Dolly drunk and asleep with Robert in a backroom of Silk's saloon, Blaze violently picks Dolly up by the throat and furiously tosses her to the ground. Not only does the sequence go by unsanctioned, but the film also subsequently shifts the attention away from Blaze's act of violence to a greater cause that seems to be at stake. Blaze raises his arms, quiets the frantic crowd and begins to tell an impromptu Western parable, himself assuming moral and spiritual authority over what has transpired in the backroom: "Boys, you all remember 'Arizona Frank', the best roper in the territory, don't you? Once I seen 'Arizona' rope a steer with as pretty a throw as was ever made, but the rope broke and the steer got away. That wasn't 'Arizona's' fault. It was the thing he was dependin' on that was no good" (00:38:14-00:39:02). The parable identifies the people of Placer Center with 'Arizona Frank', Christianity with the steer, and the rope with Robert. Blaze thus defends the virtues of Christianity and only holds accountable Robert as the erring individual who has betrayed his office by bedding with Dolly (cf. Hutson 64), which is a cultural affront as much as it violates the film's racist dogma.

seduction" of Faith, prompting Blaze to relinquish his vices and become good, and the "erotic seduction" of Dolly, corrupting Robert to betray his race and forfeit any chance for redemption (64). Binary imaginations of femininity such as these have been deeply engrained in Western culture, and frontier mythology is no exception (cf. Armitage 166-8). Furthermore, they have been transposed to and established in American filmmaking, with the paradigm often being referred to as the pervasive "virgin-whore complex" (Benshoff & Griffin 219).

We know from feminist revaluations of Freudian psychoanalysis and the subsequent reassessment of canonic literature and other cultural artifacts that "these binary imaginations of femininity are often the result of processes of dissociation, which separate transgressive visions of femininity from innocuous ones" (Schößler 67; Transl. T.S.). Women appear not as representations of actual women's lived realities but, as Silvia Bovenschen writes in her seminal study *Die Imaginierte Weiblichkeit*, as "female vehicles for male desires" (68; Transl. T.S.). Analogously, Faith and Dolly in HELL'S HINGES (and, in fact, countless reiterations of the paradigm) must be understood as "symbolic presentations" and "sensational projections" that predominantly reflect men's fantasy's "usurpation of the feminine" (ibid. 68; Transl. T.S.) and, as such, reveal in their relation to male characters a moral spectrum ranging from socially acceptable to socially untenable.

Crucially, as imaginations of male desire, both extremes contain a certain sense of sexuality (again, ranging from socially acceptable to socially untenable) and emit a certain element of power (ranging from the power to restrain to the power to amplify men's desires). Correspondingly, Hutson writes of the arrangement in HELL'S HINGES: "Both Faith, courageous Christian, and Dolly, saloon vamp, are presented as having power over men. Both work their influence in the different transformations of the two men" (65).[137]

As indicated by Slotkin, heroic white masculinity (and therefore, gender/race ideal) and flawed white masculinity (and therefore, gender/race failure) are predominantly determined in HELL'S HINGES by the male characters' reactions to women (cf. *Gunfighter Nation* 248). This way, the film incidentally singles out the significance of its two female protagonists. Without Faith and Dolly, transformation (for better or for worse), does not happen. What was conspicuously absent in THE REDMAN'S VIEW, thus partially explaining the white men's conduct, is present in HELL'S HINGES and exudes her most formidable influence: the domesticating, transformative power of the white woman.

[137] A popular character trope in Hollywood cinema during the 1910s, Benshoff and Griffin define the vamp as "a sexually active woman often of another race, ethnicity, or nationality, […] a predatory monster who drained men of their money and morals" (220-1).

Functionalized Femininity

In her study *The Anarchy of Empire*, Amy Kaplan has complicated the ideology of the separate spheres within the Puritan-imperialist narrative of *Manifest Destiny* by highlighting and dissecting a number of contradictions in the internal logic of the concept of domesticity (cf. 26). Rather than assuming domesticity as the monolithic, static counterpart to territorial expansion ('the home' versus 'the world'), Kaplan convincingly demonstrates that domesticity "is a mobile and often unstable discourse that can expand or contract the boundaries of home and nation" (ibid. 26). Kaplan illustrates and thus recognizes the historical significance of the process of domestication; that is, of the equally imperialist domestic project of "conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien" (ibid. 25), which shares an internal logic with narratives of conquest and territorial expansion (cf. ibid. 31). She concludes: "Not a retreat from the masculine sphere of empire building, domesticity both reenacts and conceals the origin in the violent appropriation of foreign land" (ibid. 50).

While Kaplan's focus lies on making visible racist presuppositions and imperialist consequences informing "Manifest Domesticity",[138] I will single out one of her arguments and recontextualize it for the intents and purposes of this study: In a way building on Leslie Fiedler's definition of the "Real West" as "a place to which White male Americans flee from their own women into the arms of Indian males, but which those White women, in their inexorable advance from coast to coast, destroy" (50), Kaplan demonstrates the paradoxical nature of domesticity as at once an extension of the imperialist project of *Manifest Destiny* and a decidedly separate domain, thus exemplifying that "power is wielded by this feminine position of not-having [the Phallus]" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 60). This way, Kaplan paints a picture of (white) femininity in 19th century North American literature that is perpetually oscillating between symbolic power and reified marginalization.[139]

As such, Kaplan's paradigm precisely delineates the position of Faith Henley in HELL'S HINGES. For one thing, her domesticating powers, her allegedly innate abilities as the pious white woman to transform the white man, are essential to the film and its ideological premise, as without her, Blaze will not become heroic. Without her identification as the white woman – the last bulwark of domesticity – the West will not be civilized, but instead fall prey to the savage, heathen forces of unrestrained masculinity and racial impurity. Only as Faith and Blaze recognize each other can they build the foundation to elicit change together, which is to

[138] For instance, she evidences in Sarah Josepha Hale's *Woman's Record* (1853) the centrality of "woman's sphere […] to the racial discourse of Anglo-Saxonism" (39-40).
[139] Kaplan is not alone in doing so. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, for instance, writes in the same vein that "the domestic can be read not only as the basis for a female countervision to male fantasies of conquest and possession, but as in fact complementary to them: the ideal of domesticity, read in a context of empire building, also functions as an instrument for imposing cultural and social control and order upon the 'disorderly' classes of the West" (29-30).

form the heterosexual couple and ensure racial purity, which jointly necessitate the building of empire.

On the other hand, the film consistently marginalizes her character, in that none of her attributes bear any significance as to her personality or psychological profile as a *character* but are solely relevant to ascertain her catalyst *function* in the narrative. Though conferred with the tremendous power to tame and transform Blaze's representation of unrestraint masculinity, that is, to domesticate savage masculinity and usher in civilization, Faith, once her decision to accompany her brother out West is made, which arguably is fueled by the same domesticating impulse that drive her union with Blaze, has little to no agency in the plot and operates on decidedly allegorical terms (as illustrated in the surrealist equation of her character with Maria Magdalen). Her purpose is to harness Blaze's individual talents and channel them to the benefit of society (even though this means burning down a corrupted, foul place), to provoke his transformation, to confirm his representation of gender as cultural ideal as he fulfills both racial and heterosexual obligations with her.

Karin Esders-Angermund has described this phenomenon as a salient aspect of the overarching transformations in Hollywood film production during the 1910s. Observing that with the increasing popularity of feature films, Western film productions shifted their attentions more and more toward developing respectively the personalities and personae of male characters and stars, Esders-Angermund notes:

> Women henceforth assumed the significant function of 'motivation' and 'characterization,' making it easier for audiences to comprehend the increasingly complex narrative connections of feature films. […] The appearance of woman affects actions and counteractions, and it initiates the 'inner' transformation of male heroes. If earlier Western heroes were determined by their physicality and a rather static/functional character, male characters are now subject to change, allowing for more vivid characterizations that have them find either themselves or demise, once they encounter the 'right' woman. This coincides with a significant reduction of agency and opportunity for female protagonists. (84-85; Transl. T.S.)

Esders-Angermund's observations provide insight to the historical longevity and complex circumstances of the functionalization of female characters in Western films – a phenomenon that has frequently been stated by numerous critics of the genre, but has perhaps never been put more poignantly than by two of its vanguards looking back to several decades of making Western films: Pam Cook cites directors Budd Boetticher, stating that "[w]hat counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather, what she represents. She is the one […] who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance," and Anthony Mann, noting that "a woman is always added to the story because without a woman the Western wouldn't work" ("Women and the Western" 293). Accordingly, Cook summarizes the

"dual, contradictory role of women" (ibid. 293): "On the one hand she is peripheral […]" but "[o]n the other hand she is central" (ibid. 293).

To illustrate: As Andrew Brodie Smith has noted, Hart's representation of Blaze Tracy (as, in fact, his entire star persona) represented an image of masculinity that differed decidedly from its predecessors. Unlike the rugged individualists of Broncho Billy Anderson-productions or contemporary cultural icons of virility like Theodore Roosevelt, Hart's star persona refused the notion that the West was "free of the effeminizing forces of the city" (Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians* 170). Instead, Hart's star persona in his representation of masculinity embraced femininity in all its domesticating power, forming an image that "synthesized […] the traditional ideals of self-control, respectability, and honor and the new notions of masculine aggressiveness, strength, and strenuousness" (ibid. 170).[140] Smith continues: "Although Hart's films were similar to other contemporary imaginative depictions of western manhood, they were distinguished by their Victorian sentimentality" (ibid. 171).

Hart's conceptualization of gender therefore presents a modification of the action-driven, aggressive, and wild representations of white masculinity of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and THE REDMAN'S VIEW, because in Hart's attempt to emphasize the reciprocity of white man and white woman as the anointed paragons of Anglo-Saxonism, the hitherto rigorously enforced doctrine of the separate spheres dissipates to a certain degree, revealing the paradoxical nature of domesticity that Kaplan speaks of. In HELL'S HINGES, the savage nature of open spaces, 'the world' as the man's domain, and the refined nature of confined spaces, 'the home' as the woman's domain, openly respond to and thus complement each other: Faith enters 'the world' to extend 'the home', just as Blaze embraces 'the home' to ultimately extend 'the world'. While primarily intended to single out the exceptionalism of the white heterosexual couple as the nucleus of an American Eden, this construction – repeated consistently in the star text of Hart's Western hero – equally emphasizes the centrality of the white woman as both catalyst and goal to white men's endeavors (cf. Wood "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK" 175).

However, this elevation of her significance, of her symbolic function, simultaneously marginalizes her. HELL'S HINGES requires her to be an actual character, but in order to be conducive to the film's underlying ideology, she must be abstract. This way, the film awards Faith (who always already signifies 'faith') with tremendous power over Blaze, and simultaneously refuses to reify that power by displacing it entirely to the realm of the symbolic. Blaze's power shows in his handling of a gun, keeping an entire crowd of men in check as he

[140] Smith notes that the reasons for this deliberate diversion from established ideals were twofold, as he argues that it "was in part the result of his writers' efforts to appeal to the widest possible middle-class audience, especially women, but it also stemmed from Hart's personal proclivities and distinctive performance style" (*Shooting Cowboys and Indians* 171). As such, Hart's "aesthetic of underplaying" (ibid. 172), evoking inner turmoil from restraint and rigorously suppressed emotions that only when provoked exploded in outbursts of excessive action, would prove immensely impactful and influential, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of THE VIRGINIAN.

begins his vengeful cleansing of Placer Center; Faith's power shows only in *her* ability to instill in Blaze the wish to change and utilize *his* abilities for the right cause. Either way, the power of domesticity manifests in support of hegemonic masculinity.

In this construction, at once granting women symbolic capital and denying them of it, Hart's film articulates its ideological foundation and confirms white male hegemony as society's organizing principle even though his rather Victorian conceptualization of gender (cf. ibid. 170) visibly differs from hitherto established cultural ideals.

At the same time, though, the film reveals this foundation to be built on contradictory grounds, because, as blissful and Edenic as their eventual coexistence as ideal white man and ideal white woman may seem, HELL'S HINGES requires them to commence yet another migration West, this time to California. The completion of *Manifest Destiny*, or the fulfilment of the Puritan promise, must perpetually continue in order to be actualized; must be imperfect to be perfect; must be elusive to be manifest; must expand *ad infinitum*, to horizons without end, to yet another actualization of hegemonic white masculinity as elicited by the domesticating influence of white femininity. Because only then can the doctrine of the separate spheres be upheld. Because only then can nature remain nature (in its cyclical reaffirmation) and avoid become culture (in a transcendence of natural *difference*).

To clarify, it is essential that Placer Center burns, so that Faith and Blaze's kingdom of heaven can rise from the ashes,[141] behind a new frontier. As the very definitions of femininity/domesticity and masculinity/expansion inextricably and reciprocally depend on each other, they must be repeated and extended in perpetuity in order not to implode; that is, not to overtly contradict each other. It would revoke the definition of the American character if Blaze became domesticated to the point that there were no new frontiers to conquer; just as it would revoke the definition of the American character if his essential counterpart, Faith, had completed her task of instilling him with the fervor to expand, and the promise to become civilized. Forevermore he must conquer the wild, so that she can forevermore make it a home, "erecting an infinitely expanding edifice" (Kaplan 30). They must move on, because only then can they affirm each other's identity, forever turning the wheel that revolves around each other's union and dissociation, as the film opaquely and yet so very precisely concludes: "Whatever the future, theirs to share together" (01:03:02-01:03:05).

[141] Corresponding with the Purtian tone of the film, the last sequence shows Blaze and Faith as American Adam and Eve standing underneath a tree, burying Robert, before they make their way to California.

4.1.5. Conformization and Normativization: THE VIRGINIAN (1929)

The Western in the 1920s

The 1920s in the United States were a decade of incisive historical events, astounding technological advancement, and “momentous transitions” (Cashman 220; also cf. Robinson 9). And although the 1920s were financially trying for both private households and industries, remarkably, Classical Hollywood Cinema solidified its dominant position in the entertainment business in the early years of the decade. A few bumps aside, studios quickly responded and adapted to the United States’ socio-economic situation and cultural expectations, emerging at the end of the 1920s stronger than ever, as “Hollywood had streamlined its production, distribution, and exhibition practices, and was regularly exhibiting its opulent entertainments in lush movie palaces attended by middle- and upper-class patrons” (Benshoff & Griffin 34).

As Hollywood invested considerable amounts in technological innovations and infrastructural improvements, the industry and its movies ascended to one of Americans’ most favorite past-time activities. With bigger audiences, Hollywood in the early Twenties catered to a significantly broader range of tastes, resulting in the articulation of astonishingly liberal, even risqué subjects that reflected the mood of the jazz age (cf. Studlar, “Barrymore, the Body, and Bliss” 162). But as “[s]elf-appointed guardians of public morality” (Cashman 202) voiced their outrage over movies’ allegedly corrupting influence, Hollywood reversed its course with policies of self-regulation (or rather, self-censorship); first, with the establishment of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1922, presided over by former postmaster general William Hays, and, ultimately, with Hays’s introduction of the Production Code in 1930 (cf. Maltby 37-43), which was made compulsory for pictures to abide by in 1934 “when Catholic journalist Joseph I. Breen took charge” (Cashman 203).[142]

The Western, too, benefitted from technological advancements that, for instance, allowed filmmakers to depict the visual grandeur of the outdoors-genre, and responded to the progressive, albeit combated, ideological currents of the time (Hefner 463-4). Combining both elements, the most popular and most acclaimed Western films of the decade were those that assumed the style and tone of the national epic, reflecting the progressiveness of the post-war *zeitgeist* through mostly self-confident, affirmative, and visually spectacular adaptations of

[142] Relativizing the significance that the Production Code Administration (PCA) had for Hollywood’s creative output, specifically following the Great Depression, Iwan Morgan contends: “The notion that Breen was to blame for Hollywood’s increasing reluctance to tackle controversial socio-political subjects as the decade progressed is particularly unpersuasive. As profit-making enterprises, film companies had no interest in making movies that would not find an audience. This put a premium on escapism rather than depictions of unpleasant reality. […] Seen in this context, the PCA was not an instrument of control but part of the Hollywood consensus about the inter-related cultural functions and economic needs of the film industry in the 1930s” (18).

'historical' frontier narratives (cf. Scheugl 22; cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 253).[143] With the beginning of the 1920s, many studios overtly addressed the building of empire, and celebrated the actuation of *Manifest Destiny* by looking back with "a new seriousness" (Hefner 464) to the not-so-distant past during which this empire had been conceived and realized.

The first and perhaps most influential of these epics was Paramount's THE COVERED WAGON (James Cruze, 1923).[144] Often has the groundbreaking impact of THE COVERED WAGON been described (Fenin & Everson 131; Grob, Kiefer, and Stiglegger 47; Slotkin 253). This impact, however, owes less to the film's "negligible creative value" (Fenin & Everson 132) than it does to the unprecedented revenues the film generated at box offices (Brownlow, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness* 368). Thus, THE COVERED WAGON is frequently overlooked in both popular perception and scholarly discussion for another epic, commissioned by William Fox to replicate Paramount's phenomenal success: THE IRON HORSE (John Ford, 1924).

One of his few surviving silent films, John Ford's THE IRON HORSE represents his first major directorial effort and incidentally his critical and commercial international breakthrough (Gallagher 32). Fox spared hardly any expense to realize Ford's colossal vision of the building of the transcontinental railroad between 1862 and 1869.[145] In THE IRON HORSE, Ford combines visual grandeur as inspired by the landscape paintings of Albert Bierstadt (cf. Jones)[146] with a clear ideological moral that constitutes "a celebration of national unity and particularly of the contributions made by immigrants in conquering the West" (McBride 144).

Though the two films vary considerably in their ideological stance – Cruze "emphasizing the importance of national and racial homogeneity to American identity" and Ford issuing "a radical critique of anti-immigrant nativism in its depiction of a multi-ethnic and

---

[143] Richard Slotkin describes the different ways of approaching the epic Western: "Although there were some respectable literary works on which a Western could be based – *The Virginian* was one – the obvious way to aggrandize a Western would be to enlarge upon its implicit historical referents. This had been attempted in earlier films like Ince's CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT (1912), but in the post-Griffith era the scale and sophistication of the historical epic were incomparably greater (*Gunfighter Nation* 253)." On a similar note, Brooks Hefner notes the formal and stylistic characteristics of the (Western) epic: "Such an interplay between individual and national story manifests in a number of ways: in the distinction between plot and subplot; in the oscillation between foreground and background narrative; in the use of alternating aesthetic choices, such as the shift between closeups and extreme long shots. In certain cases this offers a story, fictionalized to a greater or lesser degree, of a historical figure, set against a detailed historical background. In other cases the epic offers fictionalized and iconic protagonists interacting with real historical figures and events in a detailed background" (465).

[144] To be clear, as Fenin and Everson have argued, "[i]n 1923 Westerns were generally out of favor" (131). The Western epics, and THE COVERED WAGON in particular, helped revive the genre's popularity.

[145] Kevin Brownlow gives a fascinating and detailed account of the efforts of the making of THE IRON HORSE in *The War, the West, and the Wilderness* (386-97).

[146] In his article, Jones also implies the painter Frederick Church as a potential source for Ford's visual inspiration. Given that two famous American painters went by that name – one Frederick Stuart Church, the other Frederic Edwin Church – and given that the former is mainly known for his work as an illustrator, whereas the latter is best known for his panoramic landscape paintings, I can only assume that the author has confused the spelling of the painter in question, and that he intended to relate Ford's visuals to those of Frederic Edwin Church, the landscape painter.

decidedly heterogeneous USA" (Hefner 464, 465) – they share an almost identical plot structure. In fact, with regards to their narratives, most national epics offer striking parallels: in one way or another, they re-invent the paradigm-shifting experience of forging the American nation in the example of a concrete historical event, forming a union between "individual story and national metanarrative" (Hefner 465).[147] As such, they fill the historical void of white America with a migrant-narrative that, in interpreting westward expansion as *Manifest Destiny*, awards that migration with divine purpose and seemingly axiomatic justification after the fact.[148]

Accordingly, these films are mostly comprised of several set-pieces, providing a precise historical referent as their scenario,[149] and pitting against it a melodramatic love-story (Lusted, *The Western* 124, 127),[150] often in form of a romantic triangle with two rivalling male suitors vying for a woman. Frequently, these unions are framed as the completion of racial and sexual obligations or the fulfilment of a religious errand, the bringing together of the heterosexual couple as well as America from coast to coast.

THE COVERED WAGON (James Cruze, 1923) combines the monumental, arduous westward expansion of the Oregon Trail with the romantic to-and-fro between hero Will Banion (James Kerrigan), heroine Molly Wingate (Lois Wilson), and villain Sam Woodhull (Alan Hale). In THE IRON HORSE (John Ford, 1924), it is the dauting endeavor of building a transcontinental railroad, the completion of which has its humanized equivalent in the formation of the heterosexual couple, Miriam Marsh (Madge Bellamy) and hero Dave Brandon (George

[147] In this regard, the Western epics closely followed the subgenre's likely progenitor, D.W. Griffith's seminal success THE BIRTH OF A NATION (1915): Coupling historical events with personal drama and fervent ideological pathos, these films intend to humanize a certain, acutely White Anglo-Saxon version history (cf. Nowotny 177; Roloff & Seeßlen 56, 57).

[148] With that, the Western epic fully ties on to the narrative of the *American jeremiad*, as prominently described by Sacvan Bercovitch as "a *cultural phenomenon*, embodying a symbiosis (not a dichotomy) – a fusion of social and literary traditions that opened into an interactive network of art, economy, value system, and public ritual. […] It became the office of the jeremiad to ritualize that configuration of spiritual and worldly ends to an identity for an emergent modern country. As such, it sanctified the capitalist way of life that developed in the United States as the American Dream, where 'dream,' as prophecy, held a material promise ('golden opportunity'), and where 'America,' as this nation, represented the last, best hope of mankind. These, then, were the twin pillars of the ritual: on the one hand, the changing, conflicted, but steady growth of a capitalist United States; on the other hand, an aesthetic shaped by, and shaping, that expanding society through a rhetoric of spiritual purpose" (*The American Jeremiad*, xii-xiv; emphasis in original). That said, early indications of what Bercovitch describes as 'the ritual' can also be found in HELL'S HINGES, and to some extent in THE REDMAN'S VIEW.

[149] Sometimes, the notion of historicity or historical accuracy is implied by a detailed record of times and places like in THE COVERED WAGON (cf. Fenin & Everson 133). Sometimes, it is boldly claimed via title cards that precede the story, such as in THE IRON HORSE, where one title card emphatically declares: "Accurate and faithful in every particular of fact and atmosphere is this pictorial history of the building of the first transcontinental railroad" (00:01:03-00:01:18) – a clear overstatement (cf. Hefner 477).

[150] Elsewhere, David Lusted has retraced the Western's longstanding kinship with melodrama to the earliest of Western films (Lusted, "Social Class and The Western as Male Melodrama" 66-69). Similar observations have also been made by Brooks Hefner about the stylistic conflation of "an epic foreground dedicated to melodrama and an epic background devoted to national history" (465).

O'Brien).[151] Accordingly, in THE PONY EXPRESS (James Cruze, 1925) it is an assemblage of several foundational American myths – as the film ambitiously tries to capture in one picture fragments of westward expansion, the advent of the Civil War, and the Union's annexation of the State of California –, linked to the overarching love triangle between Molly Jones (Betty Compson), hero Jack Weston (Ricardo Cortez) and villain Jack Slade (George Bancroft). In TUMBLEWEEDS (William S. Hart, 1925) and 3 BAD MEN (John Ford, 1926) it is the Oklahoma Land Rush, which again is juxtaposed with a heterosexual romantic arrangement.

This construction would prevail without much modification until way into the Talkie era (cf. Stanfield 42). Most prominently, Fox's doomed 70mm grandeur extravaganza THE BIG TRAIL (Raoul Walsh, 1930), which allegedly almost stymied John Wayne's career (cf. Wills 46-54; cf. Roberts & Olson 79-96; cf. Davis 39-46; cf. Belton 45-68; Everschor 48-49), emphasizes the parabolic formation of the heterosexual couple. Augmented with a heavy dose of Puritan fundamentalism reminiscent of the fervor of William S. Hart,[152] and a rediscovered interest in Transcendentalism (cf. Wills 52),[153] in this picture Breck Coleman (John Wayne) and Ruth Cameron (Marguerite Churchill) once more complete the arduous journey of the Oregon Trail, as they ultimately find themselves in each other's arms under the canopy of mighty sequoia trees.

---

[151] Comparing THE COVERED WAGON and THE IRON HORSE, Brooks Hefner notes accordingly: "From a purely structural standpoint the narrative 'foregrounds' of these two films (the conflict between the virtuous young man and the corrupted older man over the hand of a young woman) are near-identical" (467).

[152] For instance, the film contains several scenes of communal prayer and devotion. The two most prominent ones – at journey's start and journey's end – markedly mirror Christian imagery as they relate the excruciating peregrination of the Oregon Trail to the Israelite's Exodus (cf. Ricci, Zmijewsky and Zwijeswsky 35), with Pa Bascom (Frederick Burton) addressing his parish: "Oh God, our Father, as you sit high and look down on us poor mortals, forgive our frailties. I am about to lead these people into a wild and dangerous country. Give me strength and wisdom, O God, to lead them through" (00:27:48-00:28:06). In the same vein, hero Breck Coleman delivers perhaps the most paradigmatic address of Puritan ideology to the trail of people he is leading westward to the Promised Land, reiterating the nature of *Manifest Destiny* as divine errand and emphasizing as he does that salvation is nigh, but comes only from hardship and perseverance: "We can't turn back! We're blazing a trail that started in England. Not even the storms of the sea could turn back those first settlers. And they carried on further. They blazed it on through the wilderness of Kentucky. Famine, hunger, not even massacres could stop them! And now we've picked up the trail again. And nothing can stop us – not even the snows of the winter, not the peaks of the highest mountains! We're building a nation! But we've got to suffer! No great trail was ever blazed without hardship. And you gotta fight! That's life! And when you stop fightin', that's death! What're you going to do? Lie down and die? […] Not in a thousand years! You're going on with me! (01:44:29-01:45:18)

[153] A little over forty minutes into the film, John Wayne's character Breck delivers the following soliloquy, rich in transcendentalist imagery: "Why, there's trees out there – big, tall pines – just a-reachin' and a-reachin' as if they wanted to climb right through the gates of heaven. And there's brooks, too, with the water smiling all day long. But the part I like best is the night, lying out there beneath a blanket of stars with that old moon smiling down on you. And every time you look up, there she is, sort of guarding over you, like a mother minding her young. Sometimes it's so beautiful that I just lie there, listening. Birds singing, brooks laughing, and the wind sort of crooning through the forest like some great organ. Oh, I've always loved it" (00:43:02-00:43:58).

My point being, that all epics in some shape or form equate the formation of the heterosexual couple with the emergence/progression of the United States as a nation. Whether it is the Oregon Trail or the completion of the transcontinental railroad or the Oklahoma Land Rush, these films entertain and ultimately propagate the illusion that either of these sweeping historical events, from which the United States emerged as a nation, could only have come to pass because a white man found the 'right' white woman. In their strongly aggrandizing, overtly self-congratulatory and overwhelmingly affirmative tone, the epics of the 1920s form a continuation of the ideological premises of the previous decade.

Considering the greater socio-cultural and political developments of the 1920s, this means the Western epics reproduced a conceptualization of gender that was seemingly at odds with the incrementally more accommodating and sexually liberating cinesphere of Hollywood film production (cf. Scheugl 28),[154] and American popular culture, in general. While elsewhere luxurious ladies, flappers, jazz babies, and vamps called into question governing codes of gender and sexuality (cf. Studlar, "Barrymore, the Body, and Bliss" 161) and openly gauged the institutionalization of heterosexuality in marriage (cf. Scheugl 30-34), while stage (and later screen) icon Mae West publicly "wrote about interracial relationships, prostitution, homosexuality, and drag queens" and glamorously "danced the line between what was sexually provocative and what was socially permissible" (Cashman 194), the Western, apparently, remained somewhat conservative. Time and again, the Western – especially in the at the time most viable format, the epic – reiterated the parabolic monogamous union of a decent white man and a decent white woman as the foundation of American civilization, while elsewhere the status of that reductive axiom of civilization was gradually debased.

Consequently, the genre's popularity with metropolitan audiences decreased significantly. Brooks E. Hefner has retraced the development of the genre during the twenties, noting that "[a]s the popularity of Hart's typically conservative films began to wane at the beginning of the 1920s, the genre started to move away from big-budget pictures" (463). For years to come, the Western would specifically cater to either "'rural and small-town audiences" (Hefner 463) with a myriad of subprime (albeit, still extremely popular) B-productions, starring the likes of Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, Buck Jones, and Ken Maynard, or to the urban middle-class audiences who flocked the lavish movie palaces with select epic extravaganzas.

---

[154] Hans Scheugl lists and elaborates on several films which reflected a growing awareness of and support for emancipatory agendas, as well as cinema's increasing interest in overt depictions of female sexuality (cf. 28-34). However, to put things into perspective, it should be said that although Scheugl detects a growing social consciousness in Hollywood films of the time, other researchers have shown that this was limited to a development in the representation of minority groups, the modes of which were still governed by white patriarchy. Social awareness in films did not extend to the actual participation of minority groups, who still found it next to impossible to spread their own (his)stories (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 31-36).

On Christmas Day 1928, however, with the Los Angeles premier of Fox's IN OLD ARIZONA (Irving Cummings), sound came to the Western.[155] The film turned out to be a remarkable success, both critically and commercially, to the surprise of many who had believed that the new technology could not satisfactorily be implemented to outdoor pictures like Westerns (cf. Davids 41; cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 254; cf. Stanfield 17). But not only did IN OLD ARIZONA prove that sound could indeed enhance the Western, the film also inaugurated the A-Western's (temporary) return to the big screen, as IN OLD ARIZONA "continued […] along the lines laid down in silent Westerns" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 254) and thus managed to appeal to both rural and urban audiences' tastes with its combination of "high production values and […] emphasis on romance" (Stanfield 18).

As a result, Hollywood rushed to make Westerns again, and as audiences expressly demanded more "Westerns of the 'Zane Grey type and quality'" (ibid. 18), studios commissioned a number of literary adaptations of classic material as well as "the remaking of several established Western favorites" (Fenin & Everson, *The Western* 176).

Without question among the most successful and influential of these talkie-remakes ranks Victor Fleming's THE VIRGINIAN (1929) (cf. Stanfield 22). A longer version of Cecil B. DeMille's feature of 1914,[156] and with the original literary material provided by Owen Wister's novel of the same title, THE VIRGINIAN amalgamated several of the most pervasive narrative and stylistic devices of the Western (cf. Grob, "Der Virginier" 62-63; cf. Brown 199-200), and, crucially, successfully enhanced the existing formula with psychological depth (cf. Roloff & Seeßlen 71) and with the novelty sensation of sound (cf. Stanfield 22).[157] Moreover, with Gary Cooper in the leading role, Fleming's reworking of THE VIRGINIAN featured a worthy successor of William S. Hart as a commensurate Hollywood star (cf. Brown 193, 198).

THE VIRGINIAN begins with its nameless protagonist, the Virginian (Gary Cooper), returning from a cattle-drive to a Wyoming Western town. He meets an old friend, Steve (Richard Arlen), who, as it turns out, has partnered with the town's heavy, a crook named

---

[155] For a detailed discussion of the relation of *sound* and *genre* in the context of early talkie Western films I refer to Luke Stadel's analysis in his paper "Natural Sound in the Early Talkie Western".

[156] Both films list Kirk La Shelle and Owen Wister as screenwriters.

[157] Critics of the film are divided about the quality of the implementation of sound in THE VIRGINIAN. Fenin and Everson, for instance, have argued that THE VIRGINIAN's pacing suffered tremendously from the addition of sound (cf. 173). But Fenin and Everson seem somewhat outnumbered by those who commend the film's efficient use of sound as a means to supplement the narrative. Crafton, for example, applauds how voices and sound-effects create "a believable diegetic world" (178). Stanfield, perhaps most laudatory of them all, bases his verdict mostly on technological craftsmanship when he writes: "THE VIRGINIAN has a beautifully crafted soundtrack. Ambient sound is wonderfully balanced, particularly during the scenes of cattle-herding. The braying and movement of cattle is overlaid with the soft and harsh calls of the cowboys. Snatches of song sung by the cowboys are phased in an out unobtrusively. Dialogue is laid over the top of the ambient sound so that there are no disruptive cut-ins and breaks, and it is finely wrought and laced with neat throwaway lines" (22). But he, too, asserts that "[t]he filmmakers reworked, to good effect, the meandering plot of the source novel while keeping its latent sense of drama" (ibid. 22).

Trampas (Walter Huston), in cattle rustling. The Virginian struggles desperately to reason with Steve and make him see his erring ways, but his efforts are in vain. As a posse, headed by the Virginian, eventually catches Steve right-handed, the Virginian finds himself compelled to hang his friend for his crimes, before facing Trampas in a climactic duel. Parallel to this story, THE VIRGINIAN tells of the developing romance between the Virginian and Molly Wood (Mary Brian), the newly arrived schoolteacher from the East. First, Steve and the Virginian both vie for her interest, but eventually the romance between her and the Virginian fortifies, as she learns to strike a balance between administering her civilizing influence over the Virginian and the Western community on the one hand, and reciprocally accepting the Western ways of living on the other.

Fleming's film constitutes the prime example of "the emergence of the Western as a genre for feature films" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 254). Inherited from other art forms and folklore, successfully transposed to the screen in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and developed over more than two decades to explore and negotiate collective American identity within a complex network of discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality, the generic formula finds its temporary culmination (cf. ibid. 254).

In the following, I will discuss THE VIRGINIAN under this premise, attempting to tie together the narrative threads, stylistic developments, and ideological implications that had evolved in the past twenty-six years of Western filmmaking that comprise the genre's genesis up to the point of the introduction of sound. THE VIRGINIAN portrays American identity – encompassing notions of gender, sexuality, class, and race – as something that is attained by white men and women by making sacrifices and by undergoing multiple, reciprocal transformations that ultimately confirm heteronormativity and Whiteness as society's organizing principle. As the Virginian sacrifices his transgressive homosexual desire in killing his best friend, and as Molly Wood accepts and assumes the domestic ideal of femininity, they can embrace each other as the adult white heterosexual couple that constitutes the nucleus of American society.

However, even though THE VIRGINIAN thus culminates in an object lesson of conformization and normativization, the film equally dramatizes the pain and suffering caused by the burden of repression, especially the taxing expectations for the hero's performance of heterosexual masculinity. The film emphasizes in the Virginian's and in Molly's developing romance the process of *becoming* cultural ideals of gender, sexuality, class, and race, as they inspire each other to relinquish old habits (hence: repress contingencies) and, by recognizing each other, establish intelligibility, hence order. And yet, at the same time, THE VIRGINIAN offers an intriguing insight that explorations of male homosexuality, though ultimately expelled as deviant, were fundamentally inscribed into the genre's formula, thus illustrating the fundamental necessity of constructing abject identities in processes of subjectivation. More

than anything, THE VIRGINIAN exemplifies the genre's seemingly irresolvable conundrum of simultaneously constructing and naturalizing gender, of revealing gender's contingency only to disavow it. Although the film upholds the cultural ideal of domestic conformity as a paradigm of American cultural identity and thus stabilizes heteronormativity, it equally produces alternatives to this somewhat confining system, as it dramatizes the struggle to assume, maintain, and defend heterosexuality and gender intelligibility.

From Cowboy to Husband

In his inspired study on homoeroticism[158] in Hollywood cinema, Robert Lang retraces much of "the transgressive potential" inherent to the way the relationships between the male characters in Howard Hughes's 1946 Western spectacle, THE OUTLAW, are portrayed to "that ur-text of the twentieth-century western, Owen Wister's *The Virginian*" (84). Incidentally, he lays out the significance of the dynamics set by Victor Fleming's 1929 adaption of the material to the narrative and visual transposition of repressed homoeroticism (ibid. 85), noting, however, with reference to Jane Tompkins's psychobiographical reading of the novel, that repressing and eventually surpassing homoeroticism in both novel and film function to exemplify episodes of conformization, of abandoning anything that would qualify as transgressive as well as of embracing and embodying the societal consensus (cf. Lang 85-86; cf. Tompkins 151).[159]

In a related context, Olaf Stieglitz has studied the intentionally moralizing and socializing impact of representations of gender – specifically, representations of masculinity – in Hollywood cinema during the 1930s. Highlighting how discourses of the social sciences coalesced with representations of gender on screen, Stieglitz asserts that "if nothing else because of Hollywood's willingness to collaborate, images of deviant and righteous masculinity solidified culturally" ("Film, Vorbilder und männliche Sozialisation in den 1930er Jahren" 241; Transl. T.S.). Stieglitz concludes that "the actions and performances of role models distilled normative conceptualizations as well as transgressive potentials, constructing instances that

[158] Richard Dyer defines homoeroticism as follows: "Homo-eroticism tends to stress libidinal attraction without sexual expression, sometimes even at the level of imagination and feeling. While in some usages homo-eroticism can be a wider term which includes homosexuality, or can be a euphemism for homosexuality, it importantly indicates a sense of male pleasure in the physical presence of men, or even sometimes in their spiritually or ethically masculine qualities, which cannot be contained by (or, discourses of homo-eroticism would tend to say, reduced to) the idea of queerness" (Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* 3).

[159] Jane Tompkins notes on the dynamics in Wister's novel: "The death of Steve is the price the hero pays for becoming successful, being foreman, getting money for a ranch, acquiring authority. His own legitimation and Steve's death are inseparable. Everything Steve stands for is forbidden – same-sex love, breaking the laws of property, being physical and devil-may-care – so in killing Steve, Wister is stamping out something in himself. Not a desire to steal or to have sex with other men, necessarily, but the courage to transgress, whatever form it might take" (151).

could stabilize and thus directly influence adolescent male behavior, if it coalesced with the authority and aura of the film star" (ibid. 242; Transl. T.S.).[160]

Incidentally, and applied to the dynamics of THE VIRGINIAN, Jeffrey A. Brown has shown in his study "'Putting on the Ritz': Masculinity and the Young Gary Cooper" that Gary Cooper's early star persona constituted "a sexualized masculine ideal" that "managed successfully to reconcile […] apparently disparate archetypes," as he combined in his star image "the *soft* masculinity of the 'pretty-boy' and the *hard* masculinity of the 'he-man' (193; emphasis in original).

Jointly, these three studies predicate the following premise for analysis: Reflecting social discourse of the late 1920s, THE VIRGINIAN conflates and negotiates in Gary Cooper's representation of gender transgressive and conformative aspects of masculinity, thus engendering processes of constructing gender contingency only to disparage them by enforcing a narrative of normativization. As such, as I will demonstrate in the following, THE VIRGINIAN chronicles the meandering journey of its protagonist from transgressive desire, which the film associates with homosexuality and boyhood, to institutionalized heterosexual monogamy, which the film associates with adulthood. Regarded by several critics as the archetypal hero character of the Western film (cf. Brown 198; cf. Wood, "RIO BRAVO & Retrospect" 179), Gary Cooper's nameless Virginian thus not only combines in his identity both the allure of transgressive and the contents of conformative conduct and normative subjecthood, but also illustrates that gender, contrary to the deterministic, racist conceptualizations of William S. Hart, is performative. Whereas Blaze Tracy carried the latent potential to embody heroic masculinity in himself as an innate element of White Anglo-Saxonism, only waiting to be activated by the right woman of corresponding racial disposition, the Virginian (and Molly Wood, for that matter) has to *unlearn* (allegedly) socially incompatible traits and *learn* how to perform in compliance with the societal consensus.

The film begins with the Virginian coming to town after a long cattle drive, working in his new position as a foreman. A young man, leaning at a wooden post, discovers the Virginian in the crowd of passing cowhands. We later learn this is Steve, an old friend of the Virginian's. The camera appropriates Steve's gaze, albeit at an angle, as he presents his body to the viewer while he surveys the goings-on in the streets. He seems to spot somebody he knows: the Virginian. The short sequence is immediately followed by a shot of Steve smiling, and three

[160] On a related note, Michael Kimmel asserts with reference to George Chauncey's study *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* about the increasing fragility of straight male identity: "The late 1920s and 1930s witnessed a 'pansy craze,' as new fears of gay men were raised. Once, a gay man had been seen as 'an effeminate fairy whom one might ridicule but had no reason to fear'; now, though, tabloid newspapers terrified and titillated their readers with stories of degenerate child molesters who committed acts of unspeakable depravity. Gender arrangements were now so fragile, it seems, that 'even a glimpse of an alternative might endanger them.' The closet was hastily built, and gay men immediately pushed into it" (204).

consecutive shots during which the two men exchange their secret quail-like whistle, a wordless and sentimental, and therefore fitting metaphor for their mysterious mutual past. As they recognize each other as close friends, THE VIRGINIAN implicitly validates men looking at each other – an arrangement that seems at odds with later gaze constructions in the Western (cf. Liebrand 10-11; cf. Mitchell 160).

Upon meeting in front of the saloon, Steve and the Virginian muster each other with their eyes and repeatedly pat each other's backs. Facing each other very closely, they further confirm to the viewer their intimate relation through physical contact and colloquial language. Together they enter the saloon for a drink. In crossing this threshold, the Virginian leaves the professional homosocial sphere of manual labor. Together with Steve he enters a different space, the saloon, commonly associated with recreation and vice (cf. Stanfield 175-6, with reference to Allen, *Horrible Prettiness* 73-78).

The first subject of their ensuing conversation, however, recalls the Virginian's professional occupation: Steve chuckles, bemused by the thought of his old friend making an honest living as a foreman. Opaquely recalling escapades in which they "burned up the border down in Texas" (00:03:51-00:03:56), their ambiguous body language and conversation,[161] though "consigned to connotation" (Miller 118), adds to the mystery surrounding their mutual past as it implies a carefree time of unrestraint and potentially illicit adventures – a lifestyle that Steve still seems to embrace, while the Virginian has seemingly surpassed it. Thus, having suggested an intimate relationship between the Virginian and Steve,[162] THE VIRGINIAN displaces the nature of this relationship to the obscure and to the morally objectionable, given the saloon locale and Steve's questionable work ethic.

On one level, the sequence thereby links the relationship between the two men, past and present, with different standpoints regarding labor. The Virginian advocates the perks of capitalist wage labor, which mostly comprise the pleasures of a steady, albeit small income, in return of which he is promised the means to acquire land and thus ownership of his own labor. Steve, meanwhile, maintains the privileges of pre-capitalist labor, as he rhapsodizes about his unlimited freedom of movement and his determination to never compromise his independence.[163] On another level, this negotiation of disparate attitudes towards labor and

---

[161] With the Virginian's taking up of a permanent employment he has seemingly outgrown this past and therefore also Steve, who is still all about "having fun" and "not wasting [his] time working". After a brief exchange of anecdotes, the Virginian inquires: "Aren't you ever gonna settle down?", which Steve jovially declines: "[…] Why should I?". The Virginian's question suggests that he himself is trying to settle down. At the same time, it translates as a curious inquiry about whether Steve is committed to the same. Steve's answer informs the Virginian (and the viewer) he is not (00:03:20-00:04:01).

[162] To visually emulate the intimacy of their conversation, the sequence consists entirely of medium shots of the two men from different angles.

[163] This aspect will be amplified in a later conversation between the two, when the Virginian watches Steve branding cattle that is not his (see below). Steve's defense in their ensuing argument rests on his conviction that capital (i.e., cattle) is unjustly spread among the ranchers of the territory, and that no harm would be done if he and Trampas take it upon themselves to redistribute said capital. As Steve's

the systems that regulate it draw from the sexualized and gendered rhetoric of domesticity and individualism, as the men jovially discuss the liberties of male homosociality versus the pursuit of steadfast heterosexual monogamy (cf. Lang 85) and domesticity, or in the language of the film, the Virginian's wish to "settling down" (00:03:57-00:03:59) versus his assessment of Steve: "You're just the same as always, taking no account from nobody, nowhere" (00:03:30-00:03:34).

Inside the saloon, the Virginian and Steve encounter (and eventually begin to compete over) a 'saloon girl'. Her strong Hispanic accent suggests that she is of Mexican descent. Immediately blending discourses of ethnicity, sexuality, and gender (cf. Dyer, "White" 743-4), she appears on the scene presenting her bottom to the all-male environment, as she bends over the saloon's counter to retrieve a comb immediately after Steve has spoken his "Why should I?".[164] Steve's gaze is immediately fixated on the saloon girl's sexualized display of her body. Tellingly, at the same time the Virginian offers Steve to join him in his line of work. Through this construction of gazes – Steve looking at the sexualized and racialized display of the saloon girl, the Virginian looking at Steve, offering him an invitation to a settled life – the film confronts the Virginian's attempt of 'settling down' with Steve's insistence on 'staying transgressive'. Therefore, drawing from established images of Whiteness and Puritan sexual ideology (in the manner of HELL'S HINGES), THE VIRGINIAN visually and narratively engenders a continuum in which heterosexual monogamy, racial purity, wage labor, and the pursuit of domesticity are associated with conventional, normative gender performances, while everything else, specifically Steve's advocacy of excessive individualism, is coded as aberrant and transgressive.[165]

In his short treatment of the film, Robert Lang has put forward the idea that the saloon girl "appears at this point in the scene […] [to suggest] that Steve intends to remain heterosexually promiscuous" (85). Even more to the point, I contend that her appearance not only suggests heterosexual promiscuity, but comprises a peculiarly displaced expression of

reasoning clashes with the Virginian's championing of capitalist wage labor and thus deviates from the film's moral center, THE VIRGINIAN links anti-capitalist convictions with villainy, hence, non-conformity and transgression.

[164] As if to visually underscore the rupture her appearance causes to the carefully established, fragile homosocial sphere, the following sequence is introduced with a long shot framing the characters inside the saloon, breaking for one shot with the series of medium shots.

[165] On discourses of race, Peter Stanfield notes with reference to THE VIRGINIAN and IN OLD ARIZONA: "In IN OLD ARIZONA the Cisco Kid's language of love is contrasted to the more taciturn language of the white American. When Tonia [the film's racialized female love interest; T.S:] sells out the Kid it is not just a lover's betrayal but also a betrayal of race. She is a lower-class Mexican and is clearly not destined, as Molly is with the Virginian, to form a couple. Within contemporary discourse on race, miscegenation between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans is only sanctioned when the female love interest is characterised as the daughter of a 'Spanish' grandee, her European bloodline unbesmirched by the taint of the Native" (25). These observations certainly ring with Sean Dennis Cashman's assessment of the rising institutionalization of racism and ideologies of white superiority in the United States during the 1920s, such as the widespread scientific acknowledgement and teaching of eugenics, or stricter immigration laws (cf. 220-4).

transgressive demeanor. Steve's directing the Virginian's gaze to the Mexican saloon girl suggests not his interest in her, specifically, but rather in what she represents: transgression. The film abstracts the tokens of 'sexual promiscuity', 'racial Otherness' and 'moral corruption' from her body to signify the threat and allure of deviation from normative behavior, and thus mediate whatever tensions are between the two men. Unable to reconcile the eroticized gaze onto male characters as the object of desire, THE VIRGINIAN introduces a wholly functionalized female *copula* (cf. Schößler 115), who "mask[s] the fact that what the men are really interested in is one another" (Tompkins 40) (Fig. 5).[166] Whatever form of intimacy there is or has been between Steve and the Virginian, they are unable to communicate it openly, hence displacing 'it' to a medium who by design codifies 'it' as a form of deviancy, and, most importantly, facilitates 'its' repression.[167] 'It' has no name, 'it' must not be spoken of, 'it' must be repressed, silenced, ciphered in the call of a quail.[168]

The saloon scene continues: Another man enters the barroom. The other guests recognize him as Trampas. His reputation precedes him. He approaches one of the tables. A group of cowhands is playing poker there. Trampas helps himself to one of the men's drinks and subsequently mocks them for their attempt to make an honest living. Thus, THE VIRGINIAN uses several visual and narrative cues, drawing extensively from the genre's established visual iconography, to characterize Trampas as the film's villain. On one level, he is even more explicit about his dubious work ethics and respect for property than Steve. On another, he wears a black hat (which visually aligns him with Steve),[169] sports a bushy mustache, and moves waveringly and slyly through the saloon, comfortable with the fact that he is attracting the gaze of the other male patrons. Trampas is an ostentatious dandy, exuberant and exceedingly self-confident, which denotes arrogance as well as narcissism, and thus earmarks him as THE VIRGINIAN's undisputed villain (cf. Bayer 152).

Trampas observes, then interrupts the playful competition between Steve, the Virginian and the Mexican saloon girl. He confronts the Virginian and Steve, claiming a prerogative to drink with the lady. She declines. Both Trampas and the Virginian speak on her behalf, underscoring her marginalized function as the *copula*: this conflict is exclusively about

---

[166] In this episode, THE VIRGINIAN also commodifies the female body-as-*copula* – the Mexican saloon girl is initially the object of a $ 5 bet between Steve and the Virginian – to facilitate competition between the two men. With the Virginian winning her favor, the film establishes a hierarchy between him and Steve, a hierarchy that the film will contest and confirm over and again throughout the film.

[167] I use the pronoun 'it' deliberately here to refer to Clara Bow, another prominent figure of overt female sexuality of the 1920s, and her 1927 feature film IT, wherein the pronoun is playfully used to connote sex appeal and transgressive desire (cf. Cashman 202).

[168] The contents and semiotics of the quail call are highly indicative of the Virginian's relationship with Steve and how the film deals with it. The quail call paradigmatically describes their relationship in that it expresses the inexpressible, characterizing their ambiguous relationship by connotation, which transcends the primary meaning – the denotation – of the call (cf. Barthes 6-7; cf. Miller 118).

[169] Incidentally, THE VIRGINIAN also uses sound to establish a connection between Trampas and the Virginian, as both men are introduced singing.

negotiating inter-male dominance and repressed inter-male desire. Trampas insists she drink with him, dragging her and pushing her around. The Virginian does nothing to stop the physical abuse. He does, however, react when Trampas yanks her out of his immediate purview, now confronting Trampas. Central-yet-peripheral to the ensuing conflict, the Mexican saloon girl functions to indicate the dominance of the man she currently sides with (literally speaking) and, a corollary to this dynamic, absorbs any form of overt transgressive sexuality between the men, safeguarding "the radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds" (Sedgwick 5) – up until the point at which she is no longer required, because the film explicates that the competition was never about her.

Suddenly, in one very forceful movement, Trampas drags the saloon girl away from the counter, and thus out of the camera's frame, to which she never returns. He reinforces his threat towards the Virginian, stating: "Now, who's talking to you?". The background noises abruptly stop, followed by a brief shot of the other guests turning their heads in tense anticipation of what might transpire next. The insert opens up the internal audience (cf. Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 13), creating a paradigmatic constellation for a film's representation of two men – the Western hero and his nemesis, the Virginian and Trampas – negotiating hegemonic masculinity. Crucially however, with the Mexican saloon girl expelled from the scene, Steve now occupies her former position (visually) and function (narratively) as a token of male dominance. As the confrontation between Trampas and the Virginian begins to escalate, Steve moves to the background, as he slowly transitions from subject in a playful competition with the Virginian over the Mexican saloon girl to object in the more serious competition between the Virginian and Trampas. With the appearance of Trampas, Steve, at first, shares the intermediate position of the Mexican saloon girl (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7), until Trampas dispels her from the conflict. At this point, Steve alone occupies the space between the two adversaries (Fig. 8), rendering him the tokenized signifier of male dominance and, by corollary, the object of displaced, repressed desire. [170]

[170] Aptly, during the climax of the verbal showdown between Trampas and the Virginian, Steve moves from the Virginian's side to Trampas's side, guarding his back. Not only does this serve as another visual cue to associate Steve with Trampas's villainy, but also does the space Steve occupies simultaneously protect and threaten the area of a man's body most closely associated with homoerotic desire and homophobia.

Fig. 5. 00:05:38. Fig. 6. 00:06:00.

Fig. 7. 00:06:18. Fig. 8. 00:06:26.[171]

Source: THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929). Paramount. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1j3omWoswek>. 29 Jun 2021.

Steve's shift in this constellation illustrates the film's complex discussion of gender and sexuality. Qua the Mexican saloon girl-as-*copula*, we learn of a deep connection between Steve and the Virginian that cannot be openly expressed but must be displaced (as one strategy of repression). They are parts of each other; with Steve – via his alignment with transgressive individualism as opposed to the Virginian's striving for domestic conformity – representing the part of the hero's identity that must be repressed. The subsequent arrangement replaces the saloon girl with Steve in the same position, caught between hero and another man: the villain. Steve becomes the *copula* who links the two (cf. Stanfield 22), foreshadowing that what separates hero and villain (and hence, their respective representations of gender and sexuality) is not only the visible white hat/black hat dichotomy, but, more importantly, the way they embrace transgression, as personified by Steve-as-*copula*. Resolving the tensions of this triangular all-male constellation is at the heart of the Virginian, and, for that matter, THE VIRGINIAN. Over the course of the film, Steve's affection for either

[171] The war of words between the Virginian and Trampas soon reaches a dead end, and Western canon demands a resolution in violence, aligning the utilization of phallic gunplay with the only possible way of release. But as the Virginian easily beats Trampas to the draw, he does not fire his gun, instead embellishing his victory with the film's most memorable line: "You wanna call me that – smile!". In this initial competition no bullets are exchanged, no real physical violence is dealt out, no ultimate release is granted. It retards the tensions and lingers only as the premonition of later actions (cf. Bayer 149).

Trampas or the Virginian swings back and forth: Trampas encourages Steve's transgressions, inciting him to rustle cattle and operate within the conspicuously anti-capitalist, homosocial consortium of abject masculinities; the Virginian, meanwhile, endeavors to sway his friend back to the path of righteousness, imploring him to settle down, hence commit to an adult, domestic lifestyle, wage labor, and heterosexual monogamy. When the Virginian eventually spots Steve brand someone else's cattle, he confronts him. Patting Steve's thigh tenderly with one hand and holding on to Steve's saddle horn with the other, he begs of him:

> The Virginian: You and I did a lot of loco things together. But there's some things that ain't only loco, they are plum wrong.
>
> Steve: Aw, you take life too seriously.
>
> The Virginian: This whole country is taking things more seriously. I ain't trying to lecture you. […] Time's a-changing, Steve. And they can't get away with this sorta thing much longer. […] I reckon I couldn't be sore at you no matter what you did. But listen, Steve, you and I have been friends too long to find ourselves lined up on opposite sides in anything like this. Don't put me in any hole like that.
>
> Steve: Aw, shucks. How do I know what I'm gonna do? This country is getting too civilized.
>
> Source: THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929). Paramount. *YouTube*. 00:42:18-00:43:37.

Especially following an episode of heterosexual romance between the Virginian and Molly Wood (they discuss the applicability of a *Romeo and Juliet*-kind of romance to the cultural ethos of the West), the sequence between Steve and the Virginian illustrates their conflicting trajectories: The Virginian remembers the transgressive acts that have characterized their mutual past ('loco things'), but he beseeches Steve to join him in abandoning them. Society, in order to function, demands they relinquish transgressions and adhere to a consensus ('this whole country is taking things more seriously' and 'times a-changing'). The tensions between them, - 'it' – must be repressed, stamped out, and overcome ('can't get away with this sorta thing much longer'). But Steve remains obstinate, rejecting the idea of embracing heterosexual monogamy and capitalist wage labor (as two sides of the same coin), as he laments that 'this country is getting too civilized'.

Eventually, a posse, headed by the Virginian, forms to track down and punish the cattle rustlers, Steve, now confirmed as "the Hero's Fallible Friend" (Wood, "RIO BRAVO & Retrospect" 180), among them. Though it visibly pains him, the Virginian joins the posse in enforcing swift capital punishment, as they lynch Steve and the cattle rustlers. The American collective, of which the Virginian has chosen to be an ambassador, has come to police the boundaries of societal consensus and eliminate transgressive behavior – a dramatized reprise of the dynamics of the dancehall tableau from THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, in which it is an explicitly

male assignment to vicariously enforce social justice and act as a 'natural' societal corrective by making society's power visible.[172] However, unlike in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, in which the act of correcting transgression was presented in terms of spectacle, the Virginian is shown to be in excruciating pain as he is forced to kill his friend in order to reify society's power over the deviant individual and thus, symbolically, demonstrate publicly his adherence to the societal consensus, of which his abandoning transgressive desire and committing to heterosexual monogamy (and hence ascending to adult maturity) are essential, reciprocal elements. Accordingly, Lang notes:

> [T]he trajectory of the Virginian's evolving (sexual) subjectivity will be revealed to entail a dire form of repression, according to which he must kill the wild and free sexuality in himself (represented by Steve), if he is to achieve the proper, adult – i.e., monogamously heterosexual – identity that will enable him to marry Molly Wood. (85)

As Lang's assessment indicates, THE VIRGINIAN compartmentalizes male identity: Steve is a part of the Virginian's Self that is displaced onto an abject Other, illustrating the struggle to form a coherent identity (or: achieve subjecthood) from the seemingly paradoxical cultural expectations of striving for domestic conformity on the one hand (the Virginian's relationship with Molly), and for excessive individualism on the other (the Virginian's relationship with Steve). Using, as Brown has suggested, Gary Cooper's somewhat ambiguous star persona, the film negotiates the allure of transgression and the determination to conform as viable, if ultimately mutually exclusive, elements of male identity. THE VIRGINIAN reifies transgressiveness in the bodies of characters/actors other than the Virginian's/Gary Cooper's,

[172] It is interesting to read the profound symbolism that permeates this scene against the backdrop of Foucault's elaborations on public ceremonies of capital punishment. The dispersion of Steve's body, which reifies and represents both his diegetically legal and, more importantly, symbolically social offense (cattle rustling on the one hand, male homosexuality on the other), has a dual function: first, as Steve has threatened the coherence and legitimacy of the heteronormative matrix, his death at the hands of the hero reconstitutes the "momentarily injured sovereignty" of heterosexual orthodoxy; second, staged as a public ritual and spectacle, the hanging functions as the ultimate deterrent, "an exercise of 'terror' […] to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power" (*Discipline and Punish* 48, 49). Equally significant in this context, then, is the note that Steve passes on to a bystander named Honey (Eugene Pallette), asking him to deliver it to the Virginian. The note reads: "Goodbye. I couldn't have spoke [sic] to you without playing the baby. Steve" (00:58:23). It is a confession; however, not so much with regards to the legal offense Steve has committed, is found guilty of, and that diegetically mandates the hanging. Rather, the note is a written confession of the deep, intimate feelings that Steve has harbored for the Virginian, as well as a sad recognition of the social construct of masculine restraint that prohibited him from orally confessing them to the Virginian. In any case, the confession functions to produce 'truth,' but not in a way that unequivocally confirms post hoc the hanging as just (cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 37-39). Rather, the note produces truth about their desire for each other. It transforms subtext (the construction of gazes) into text (a written piece of evidence for the unspeakableness of their desire). It widens the gap between the truth before law (heteronormativity must be restored) and a deeper, emotional truth before conscience (that maybe it should not). It advertently produces truth about the constraints and hegemonic power of heteronormativity.

who are, however, visually and narratively portrayed as inextricably tied to his character (and thus, star persona). The construction of the abject is constitutive to the construction of the subject.

In the following, however, it will be the hero's task to sever those ties and confirm his status as hero by expelling whatever elements of his character/star persona are irreconcilable with culturally dominant conceptualizations of gender and sexuality. It will be the hero's task to establish, police, and enforce cultural norms. It will be his task to conceal the process of construction by confirming the discursive presuppositions of a natural heteronormativity. More than that, the scene illustrates in the hero's enforcement of cultural norms the concurrent production and prohibition of male homosexuality in relation to male gender identity (cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 104). That which is disavowed and forever repressed through the lynching, the law of compulsory sexuality, must be constructed in the very same act.

THE VIRGINIAN thus chronicles its eponymous male protagonist's transformation and renders it as a process of learning to comply with cultural norms. His original state is personified by Steve; that is, the Virginian's relationship with him. The film characterizes this relationship with images and representations of deviancy: both sexual (the Mexican saloon girl as an embodiment of displaced desire; Steve's relegation to an object of desire in the Virginian's confrontation with Trampas) and economic (Steve's refusal to commit to wage labor; the Virginian's repeated advocacy of the same), which are but two manifestations of a dichotomy between conformity and transgression that the film opens up. Step by step, the Virginian dissociates himself from Steve's transgressions, which the film characterizes as acts of maturation. Killing Steve takes the shape of a rite of passage, in which the Virginian staves off boyish insouciances and illicit, repressed homosexual desire (which in the logic of the film, are inextricably linked and somewhat interdependent) in order to transition to adulthood and manhood. In other words, killing Steve (and eventually Trampas) marks the Virginian's conformization. Crucially though, in accentuating the emotional weight of the Virginian's transformation, and in allegorizing the trauma that results from repression, THE VIRGINIAN explores the implications of normativization rather than confirm its necessity unquestioned. Indeed, in amalgamating the prohibition of homosexual desire with the production of both hetero- and homosexual desire, THE VIRGINIAN illustrates the paradoxical nature of constructions of sex and gender, and with that instantiates the generativity of heteronormativity as well as the contingency of gender.

From Schoolteacher to Wife

Intertwined with this side of the story, THE VIRGINIAN portrays another normative transformation: the conformization of Molly Wood. As she changes from a strongheaded

careerist to an altruistic, domestic frontierswoman, Molly parallels the Virginian's expelling of transgressive and adopting of conformative behavior, and she, too, gradually learns to emulate the axioms of idealized American cultural identity.

At the same time the Virginian arrives in town from the cattle drive, a train comes in. Aboard is Molly Wood, the new schoolteacher from New England, as we will later learn. She wears fine clothes and even sports a fashionable hat that aligns her more with the flappers of the 1920s than the 1880s. Anxiously holding on to her luggage as she waits for someone to help her disembark the train, she declares in awe and dread: “My Goodness, this is terrible. I never saw so many wild cows in my life” (00:08:50-00:08:55), to which the train's conductor replies: “Not much like Vermont, is it?”. With her first line, then, Molly expresses the general sentiment of her introduction: she is totally out of place in this Western territory. Subsequently, the sequences portraying her arrival amplify this notion, subtly conveyed through language, as her way of speaking is contrasted with a group of cowhands (including Steve) who briefly engage her in conversation while they ride beside her, to comic effect. One inquires: “Ma'am, what are you gonna learn them kids? Reading, writing and figuring up figures?”, to which she replies: “Yes, and history and geography” (00:09:47-00:09:55).

Shortly after however, the discrepancy in education between her and the cowhands that represent this Western town is overturned; that is, rendered inessential, ineffective, as Molly is frightened by a single stray cow stampeding through main street. Ostensibly chivalrously, the Virginian, who had watched the events transpire, steps in, chases after Molly and picks her up, supposedly rescuing her from what she experienced as a grave danger. He then declares the cow was, in fact, an “ornery” wild steer, a lie that is quickly rebutted when a little girl, who had initially walked the cow through town, catches up with the animal, and Steve hands her back the rope to her “moo-cow” (00:11:04-00:12:21). The joke is on the Virginian, who used Molly's lack of knowledge to present himself in a favorable light, trying to appear as the knight in shining armor to save the damsel in distress and impress the fine lady – who as it turns out had never been in danger in the first place. Most importantly, however, the scene underscores the notion of Molly's out-of-placeness as she cannot tell a cow from a steer, and sheepishly jumps at completely harmless but essentially Western situations.

The scene also establishes the romantic triangle between Molly, Steve, and the Virginian, as both men begin to vie for her interest. In a way, therefore, Molly, too, inhabits a kind of *copula* function to the narrative, as she both absorbs the illicit desire between the two friends and serves as a tokenized object of hegemonic masculinity, awarding whoever she currently fancies with gendered authority over the other. Accordingly, the two men converse after her departure on the stagecoach, using language that at once indicates that the ensuing rivalry is more about male dominance than it is about romantic inclinations, and, using cowboy

jargon that suggests physicality above everything else, accentuates the repressed sexual tensions between the men:

> Steve: In case you got any ideas about my new lady friend, I just want to warn you that schoolmarm's ain't in your class!
>
> The Virginian: Oh... You're warning me! Well, Steve, usually I just punch a guy in the nose. But this time I'm going to throw you and hog-tie you!
>
> Steve: You don't tell me!
>
> Source: THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929). Paramount. *YouTube*. 00:13:01-00:13:26.

As the story develops, Molly's romantic interest in the Virginian steadily increases, mostly because the Virginian, though equally out-of-place with Eastern etiquettes of courtship, is willing to undergo what he experiences as the humiliating ordeal of ritualized heterosexual romance. But at the same time as the Virginian's becoming an initiate to the rules of adult manhood and heterosexual monogamy, expelling his transgressive desires, some of Molly's traits are presented as similarly transgressive, as they openly clash with expectations of femininity within the cultural sphere of the West. For instance, when Molly and the Virginian discuss their appreciation for *Romeo and Juliet*, with Molly making a case for the poetics of romance and gallantry, and the Virginian applauding Romeo's determination to face and kill his enemies as the hallmarks of a "pretty good hombre" (00:36:27), Molly's prioritization of décor is contrasted with the Virginian's Westernized preference for utilitarianism and functionality. More to the point however, Molly reveals elements of transgressive white femininity when she rebuffs his honest advances and marriage proposal because she intends to focus on developing a career, instead:

> Molly: But I don't want to get married, yet. I've got my school and I'm just getting started, and those children…
>
> The Virginian [interrupts her; condescendingly]: Teaching school… That ain't no real woman's job in life. Listen Molly, I don't aim to stay here. Not if you'd be my wife and partner. What I aim to do… I'm pushing out farther West to Utah or Nevada. To do out there just what Judge Henry done right here in Wyoming: Make more United States out of raw prairie land.
>
> Molly: I like you, and I admire you more than any man I've ever known. But I'm not sure of myself, yet. This country's so new and strange. I feel like an alien. An outsider. Oh, I don't know how to explain it, but I just feel that I'm different!
>
> Source: THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929). Paramount. *YouTube*. 00:38:42-00:39:36.

At the end of this scene, Molly characterizes herself as different, her understanding of a woman's part in the West as deviant from that which the Virginian desires and expects. Most poignantly, however, the deviancy of her representation of white femininity, as well as her ultimate decision to learn how to conform, surface in a conversation with Mrs. Taylor (Helen Ware), the resolute matriarch of a nearby homestead and paragon of frontier femininity. During this conversation, the two women debate their role in a system that endorses violence and capital punishment;[173] which translates to a negotiation of their respective understandings of domesticity and women's domesticating influence in relation to 'the world' – the sphere of violence and competition that is controlled and policed by men. Specifically, their conversation ensues after the lynching of Steve at the hands of the Virginian and the posse. Shortly after, the Virginian is ambushed and shot by Trampas. He barely makes it back to the safety of Mrs. Taylor's homestead, where the two women tend to his wounds. But only by coincidence does Molly learn of the circumstances of the Virginian's injuries, as children start re-enacting the scenes of the hanging in the streets. Appalled by the news that it was, in fact, the Virginian who killed his friend, she turns to Mrs. Taylor:

> Molly: Don't you realize that was downright murder?
>
> Mrs. Taylor: Now there ain't no use talking about it, deary. Crimes are ranked different in different countries, and out here, stealing is about the meanest, the lowest thing a man can do.
>
> Molly: But that doesn't justify killing! And Steve's his friend!
>
> Mrs. Taylor: It ain't a question of friends, or enemies! It's a question of right and wrong. Why, if we didn't hold a rope and a six-shooter over them outlaws, you couldn't teach your school at all. Well, our lives wouldn't be worth nothing.
>
> Molly: You think I'll teach my children to believe in that? Do you think I'll raise a new generation to approve of murder?
>
> Mrs. Taylor: Where you come from, they have policemen and courts and jails to enforce the law. Here, we got nothing. So, when we have to, we do things our own way. Do you think it was easy for him to have to hang a friend? It was a durn side harder for him to do it than for us to bear it. And there he is, just because of lawlessness. Somebody took a shot at him, and you can't tell me it was Indians.
>
> Molly: I suppose this country has destroyed every human feeling in you. And in him. I suppose in time I'd feel that way, too. But I won't.

---

[173] In his article *Movie Chronicle: The Westerner*, dating 1954, Robert Warshow wrote about the function of Molly's repudiation of Steve's lynching in THE VIRGINIAN in contrast to later instances of the same: "With the growth of American 'social consciousness,' it is no longer possible to present a lynching in the movies unless the point is the illegality and injustice of the lynching itself; THE OXBOW-INCIDENT, made in 1943, explicitly puts forward the newer point of view and can be regarded as a kind of 'anti-Western.' But in 1929, when THE VIRGINIAN was made, the present inhibition about lynching was not yet in force; the justice, and therefore the necessity, of the hanging is never questioned – except by the schoolteacher from the East, whose refusal to understand serves as usual to set forth more sharply the deeper seriousness of the West" (40).

Mrs. Taylor: Then why don't you go back where you come from?

Molly: I will. As soon as he's well. I won't stay in this place for any longer.

Mrs. Taylor: Alright. Go on back home. You don't belong here. We don't want your kind. Go on back East where living's soft and easy. Sit on your silk cushions and get hired girls to wait on you and drink your pink tea. Why, when I married Taylor I drove an ox-team a thousand miles from [incomprehensible] to this very spot. I fought Indians with my father's rifle, and him lying dead across my knees. I killed a Sioux squaw with her own axe. And you are talking… This is a new country we're building up here and there ain't no room in it for weaklings, men or women. Go on back East, and I, for one, will say 'Good Riddance'.

Molly: Now you listen to me. My people built a country in New England, too. And they fought and died just as bravely as you Westerners. You think you're the only people who ever fought Indians? Did you ever hear of the Cherry Valley Massacre? Well, my grandfather Stark was killed in the [incomprehensible] of Cherry Valley and my grandmother walked ninety miles on foot to get help to save the fourteen survivors. Don't tell me I can't do anything when it's got to be done. I can stand anything you can and more. I'm not going away. I'm going to stay here and look after him. And now you get out of here. Get out!

Source: THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929). Paramount. *YouTube*. 01:07:35-01:10:35.

In the course of their conversation, Molly shifts from accusing the Virginian of murder, trying to dissociate herself from the Western ways, to accepting and embracing them as her own once challenged by Mrs. Taylor. Accordingly, Stanfield asserts: "Despite Molly's status as the school teacher [sic] it is she who has to undertake the hard lessons of life. Twice she gives the Virginian an ultimatum […], and each time she backs down, having understood that she has been wrong" (23). Equating Western justice with immorality, Molly fails to see what Mrs. Taylor is trying to describe to her: that, in the West, violence begets civilization ("if we didn't hold a rope and a six-shooter over them outlaws, you couldn't teach your school at all. Well, our lives wouldn't be worth nothing"). And while, according to Mrs. Taylor, it is a man's privilege *and* burden to enforce violence, she insists that when actions call for it, women, too, must do their (at times violent) part. Deriding Molly as a weakling, Mrs. Taylor challenges Molly's understanding of her part as a woman in the West, by which THE VIRGINIAN opens a discrepancy between Mrs. Taylor's understanding of white femininity as resilience to hardship and Molly's as forgiveness to transgression. According to Mrs. Taylor, society must be forged by exterminating those who forfeit their right to belong by choosing to violate its rules (or: by eliminating abject identities); Molly (at first) emphasizes that those who transgress must be forgiven (or: that abject identities are constitutive to the process of becoming a subject), only to learn better once reminded of her colonial, hence equally violent past (thus adopting Mrs. Taylor's assertion).

Crucially, this sequence of Molly's accepting violence as part of her identity mirrors the paradoxical nature of domesticity as oscillating between symbolic power and marginalization that I have described above in my discussion of HELL'S HINGES with reference to Amy Kaplan's study *The Anarchy of Empire*. During this conversation, Molly transitions from embodying white femininity as domesticity to accepting the symbolic power that rests in domestication, which manifests itself in her sudden epiphany and subsequent decision to stay with the Virginian and care for him, hence accepting a powerful, albeit utterly marginalized, place.[174] Reminded of the strength of her pioneering American lineage, she decides that those powers be best implemented in support of her man. As she kicks Mrs. Taylor out of the house, she closes the domestic space for anybody else. She alone is going to stay with him, and she alone is going to look after him, nurturing him back to health. Embracing the rules of monogamous heterosexuality, Molly consigns to the paradoxical notion of domesticity as entailed previously in the Virginian's marriage proposal: If she agreed to be his wife and partner, together they would "make more United States out of raw prairie land", or, to reiterate Kaplan's words, they would be "erecting an infinitely expanding edifice" (30). Molly thus completes the next rite of passage in her transformation to a Western woman and idealized representation of decidedly white American femininity, substituting her career plans for becoming a wife and mother. THE VIRGINIAN thus re-codifies female self-fulfilment from entering 'the world' to expanding 'the home', and purports this process as conformization, of learning how to comply with social orthodoxy, hence heteronormativity.

But THE VIRGINIAN emphasizes that this process is not without struggle or sacrifice. Immediately after the heated conversation between Molly and Mrs. Taylor, Molly retreats to the bedroom, in which the Virginian is resting and recovering. As she enters, he experiences a feverous dream, processing the traumatic events of killing his friend and relinquishing that part of his identity. Deliriously, he mutters: "I warned you, Steve. I warned you! How could you done [sic] this to me?", to which Molly replies: "It's alright, darling. It's alright. I'm trying to understand. Let's never talk about it. Never let it come between us. Forget it ever happened." Shaking his head, the Virginian speaks once more: "I can't help it, Ma'am. I think this Romeo was a mangy hombre," before he falls unconscious, overpowered, and Molly, sobbing and crying, buries her head deeply in his chest (01:10:45-01:11:35).

Lang has commented on the Virginian's peculiar displacement of emotions in this scene, as the hero does not allow himself to show his feelings during and immediately after

[174] Conceptualized as a conversation between two white women arguing about white women's place in society, and specifically seeing that the conversation ends with the women themselves determining that this place is structured to disadvantage and disenfranchise women for the well-being of society, THE VIRGINIAN employs one of the most powerful strategies of hegemony. As Wullweber states: "[A] hegemonic system operates all the stronger if people actively support it rather than just passively tolerate it" (cf. 34, Transl. T.S).

the hanging, which instead surface in a later moment of injury when he is weakened and unable to practice restraint.[175] Moreover, referring to Molly's peculiarly closeting, silencing rhetoric ("let's never talk about it," "forget it ever happened"), Lang asserts that "Molly's anguished attempts in this scene to soothe the unhappy hero are perhaps even more telling than his delirium, of the sense that something passionate, almost carnal, and illicit, is being repressed in order that the couple might have a future as man and wife" (85).

Jointly, both observations suggest that coinciding in this scene are Molly's acceptance of her role as future wife and mother – that is, her commitment to heterosexual monogamy – and the Virginian's struggle to do the same, as he is still combating with the repressed desire for Steve and unsure about the promise of heterosexual monogamy (decrying Romeo, a paragon of heterosexual romance, as a "mangy hombre").

In fact, he will do so for the rest of the film. Steve passes on his gun to him before he is hanged, which the Virginian literally closets away in a chest in his room, only to retrieve it when he decides to kill Trampas. The sequestered gun will serve as a recurring, phallic reminder of their relationship and the repressed desire that still lingers inside of him, up until the very last moments of the film, when THE VIRGINIAN even features a fetishized close-up of the gun that carries Steve's name engraved in its butt. The transformational process of conformization, of openly subscribing to cultural norms of sexuality and gender while eliminating all transgressive elements in one's gender and sexual identity, THE VIRGINIAN illustrates, requires sacrifice, and, perhaps even more importantly, demands perpetual repression in order not to resurface.

To illustrate this dynamic further, I will fast forward to the film's climactic showdown. Preceding the inevitable gunfight between the Virginian and Trampas, teased and boded in the early stages of the film during their first encounter in the saloon, the Virginian tries to explain to Molly, still adamant about her pacifist ideals, once more the fundamental necessity of his plan to kill Trampas. He says: "I let him say things to me no man ever said before. If I hadn't been thinking hard of you, I reckon I'd have killed him then! I gave him a chance to quit. But he had gone too far before the others" (01:21:51-01:22:08). The Virginian's reasoning illustrates the fragility of his heterosexual identity, which is perpetually challenged by other men's transgressions ("I let him say things to me…"), exposed to other men's gazes and expectations ("… in front of the others"), and always oscillates between the strenuous performance of practicing restraint ("I gave him a chance to quit") – which fundamentally rests in redrawing the thin line between homosociality and homosexuality through compulsory, affirmative acts of heterosexuality ("If I hadn't been thinking hard of you…") – and giving in to

[175] I will elaborate on this pattern in my discussion of THE NAKED SPUR (see 4.5.1.)

regenerative violence as a form of release (“But he had gone too far…”). In fact, as the Virginian continues his line of argument to Molly, these dynamics become even clearer:

> The Virginian: If folks came to think of me as a coward, I couldn’t look ‘em square in the eye ever again. Or you either.
>
> Molly: But that’s just pride!
>
> The Virginian: I don’t know what you call it, but it’s something in the feelings of a man. Down deep inside. Something a man can’t go back on. If anybody happened to say I was a thief, I couldn’t let ‘em go on saying it! It wouldn’t matter what other people thought, but I’d have to know inside of me that I thought enough of my own honesty to fight for it.
>
> Molly: Then it will be like this always. When will it ever end?
>
> The Virginian: There will always be killing to do until this country ain’t a meeting place for men like Trampas.
>
> Molly: Then think of us. You and me. Our life together.
>
> The Virginian: That’s what I am thinking of.
>
> Source: THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929). Paramount. *YouTube*. 01:23:24-01:24:19.

To protect heteronormativity and his identification as a white man, the Virginian must erase the threat posed by Trampas, must forevermore vanquish and repress transgression and non-conformity to stabilize social order. It is the thought of the idealized heterosexual couple that warrants his actions and gives them purpose. The Virginian’s thinking of heterosexuality in order to facilitate it, barring “men like Trampas” from becoming members of society so that he and Molly can found it, signifies the cyclical teleology of heteronormativity. Like Blaze Tracy’s cleansing of Hell’s Hinges, the Virginian is motivated by Molly as the representation of domestic conformity and heteronormative order to actuate precisely that domestic conformity and heteronormative order: she is both catalyst and promise; incentive and goal.

When the gunfight is over and Trampas killed, Molly runs towards the Virginian. Throwing her arms around him, she sighs: “Oh, I love you so!” (01:30:25-01:30:27). The transformation is complete. Not one threat to their heterosexual identity alive, not one personification of transgressive demeanor left, they can embrace each other as man and woman before the film fades to black and ends with the adumbrated promise of them “making more United States,” moving on to new horizons like Blaze Tracy and Faith Henley, carrying forth and passing on the torch of a community ordered by heteronormativity, albeit one that appears so fragile it incessantly requires careful maintenance, and sometimes even hermetic defense.

THE VIRGINIAN thus chronicles the journey of its two central characters as they learn and gradually incorporate socially acceptable forms of behavior. Since this story of identity and community formation coincides with the peak of Hollywood's status within (and beyond) the United States as a hugely popular site of American culture and thus a major agent of moralizing influence in terms of collective socialization (cf. Cashman 201; cf. Stieglitz 241-242), it seems within reason to suggest that the film's depiction of processes of conformization directly comments on social discourse to seize that influence. Using the star personae of Gary Cooper and Mary Brian, THE VIRGINIAN constructs role models of what it conceives of as exemplary American identity, particularly with regards to discourses of gender, sexuality, and race, to probe the limits of but ultimately stabilize societal consensus.

In THE VIRGINIAN, the developing generic formula of the Western that had begun to take shape with the unprecedented success of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY in 1903 reaches its temporary completion. What had seemed embryonic in Porter's film and crystallized more and more over the years until the arrival of sound in the late 1920s appears so clearly articulated in THE VIRGINIAN that one is tempted to infer a level of self-awareness on the film's part about the discourses it is engaging in: In THE VIRGINIAN momentarily culminates the genre's ambition to establish the Western as an explicitly and exclusively American art form that explores and gives meaning to American identity. Each in their own way, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, THE REDMAN'S VIEW, HELL'S HINGES, the Western epics, as well as THE VIRGINIAN portray the shaping of American community, of social order, as a perpetual negotiation of forces that are, for one reason or another, deemed alien to the American collective, and such that must be embraced and defended. In terms of representations of gender (and, as I have illustrated specifically in my discussion of THE REDMAN'S VIEW, structurally cognate discourses, such as representations of race), the Westerns between 1903 and 1929 imagine a social order predicated on heteronormativity, which manifests itself in representations of men and women trying to form coherent, intelligible identities as they situate themselves in relation to a binary gender order, narratively transposed to the interplay of the concepts of individualism and domesticity. In one way or another, these films reveal the conflicting dynamics upon which the genre's formula is built: with growing self-awareness about the processes they are engaging in, these Westerns explore gender between the opposing forces of construction and naturalization, between illustrating the diversity and contingency of gender in a plentitude of abject representations (the dandy, Minnewanna and Silver Eagle, Robert Henley, Steve) and subsequently denying their existence through the reciprocal normativization of (white) men and (white) women through ritualized performances of heterosexuality.

In his very perceptive analysis of John Ford's DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK (1939), Robin Wood paradigmatically illustrates the Western's suggestion of a symbolical narrative linearity that progresses from the formation of the heterosexual *couple*, to the *family*, to

community, only to culminate in the building of *nation* (cf. "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK" 175). Incidentally, Wood points out the centrality of the white woman as "at once pretext for civilisation […] and (as wife and mother) the guarantee of its continuity" (175). THE VIRGINIAN, in the dynamics between Molly Wood and the Virginian perfectly exemplifies this paradigm as inscribed into the genre's formula.

However, as especially the latter part of this analysis has evidenced, these constructs and the social order they are supposed to cement, are exposed to increasing scrutiny and appear progressively fragile and inadequate as the years go by. This development will be of particular significance to the next part of my analysis, as I discuss the Western's evolution during the years of the Great Depression.

4.2. Depression (1930-1938)

Economic interests have played a significant role in any film-production, especially in mainstream cinema (cf. Hißnauer & Klein 36-37; cf. Neale, "Questions of Genre" 172). Consequently, economic considerations have a tremendous impact on the construction and representation of gender (cf. Hißnauer & Klein 37). Seeing that American society during 1930s by and large was immensely affected by the collapse of the economy, it seems plausible to lead the following analysis with a brief survey of the interconnections of film, gender, and the economy.

In his historical investigation Manhood in America, Michael Kimmel notes that "[f]or most men the Depression was emasculating both at work and at home. Unemployed men lost status with their wives and children and saw themselves as impotent patriarchs" (199). Correspondingly, in scholarship of the decade, gender-specific discussions of the 1930s have often been guided by the assumption of "masculinity in crisis" (see, for instance, David M. Lugowski's study "Queering the (New) Deal" or Jürgen Martschukat's article "'I relinquished power in the family': Von Männlichkeits-, Sozial- und Wirtschaftskrisen in den 1930er Jahren"). In fact, Lugowski's study offers a great overview of established literature that has read changing representations of gender in American cinema of the 1930s as a reaction to changing conceptualizations of gender in the social world, which resulted predominantly from a dramatic change in the configuration of employment and labor (cf. 264-7).[176]

[176] It should be noted that such approaches that pivot on the centrality of an assumed 'masculinity in crisis' have attracted a great deal of valid criticism, in particular for the tendency of its advocates "to reduce images and discourses of masculinity to consequences of processes of social change" which devalues the internal dynamics of gender regimes and gender politics (Opitz-Belakhal 34; Transl. T.S.). Moreover, especially in light of the countless alleged crises that have been attributed to American masculinities (cf. Martschukat, "'I Relinquished Power in the Family'" 18; Kimmel 259-328), the ostensibly abnormal status of crisis seems to have become the norm over time (Horlacher, Jansen, and Schwanebeck 2). If anything, then, crisis appears to be a constitutive element and a very productive and symptomatic narrative of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Erhart, "Deutschsprachige

Following victory in World War I, the United States' economy experienced an enormous boost during the 1920s, as it benefitted enormously from supplying domestic and foreign markets (cf. Cashman 220). However, as Sean Dennis Cashman notes, "the nation's economic structure was now seriously warped," as "America's capacity to produce was way beyond its capacity to consume during peacetime or to export abroad once other nations had resumed their normal production" (220). Cashman concludes: "In the 1920s few discerned these bad omens that would shatter the economy in 1929" (220).

With the Wall Street crash of 1929, the Great Depression took hold in the United States as it suddenly "exposed the underlying instability of the American economic system" (ibid. 242). Malpractices and structural inefficiencies, such as the "bad distribution of income," "a bad corporate structure" that hampered the investment of operating companies in new technology and thus "fueled deflation," "the inherently weak banking structure of the United States," "the imbalance of trade," and "the poor state of economic intelligence," silently but incrementally paved the way for economic and social disaster, which ended "the tawdry affluence of the twenties" with a vengeance (ibid. 242-3).[177] Over the next three years alone, "national income dropped from $81 billion in 1929 to $68 billion in 1930, to $53 billion in 1931, and to $41 billion in 1932, which was rock-bottom" (Balio 13), severely curtailing wages, or worse, rendering approximately one quarter of the population without income (cf. Morgan 4),[178] as both corporations and the workforce found themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of "overproduction and underconsumption" (Cashman 257).

The entertainment industry was no exception. Crafton notes a "rush to expand business by heavy borrowing and investing"[179] which "created unprecedented growth" (181). This led many to initially believe that Hollywood might be impervious to the effects of the Depression. However, in 1931, the ruinous consequences of the collapse of America's banking system eventually took shape and brought most studios to its knees (cf. Balio 13-18). Tino Balio notes:

> No longer able to avoid the ignominy of bankruptcy and receivership, RKO went down first, in January 1933, followed soon after by Paramount and Fox. Warners, battered by losses of $14 million in 1932 and $6 million in 1933, was fighting to stay afloat. Of the Big Five, only Loew's had yet to show a deficit; however, its earnings plunged from $15 million in 1930 to $4.3 million in 1933. As for the Little

---

Männlichkeitsforschung" 19-20; cf. Cuordileone, "'Politics in the Age of Anxiety'…" 525) rather than a viable vantage point for determining or theorizing historical idiosyncrasies or contingencies with regard to masculinity.

[177] Cashman lists these contributing factors with reference to economist's John Kenneth Galbraith account, *The Great Crash – 1929*.

[178] Iwan Morgan elaborates: "Unemployment, which stood at 3.1 per cent of the nation's work force in 1929 (1.5 million people), rose to 8.7 per cent (4.3 million) in 1930, to 15.8 per cent (8 million) in 1931, and to 23.5 per cent (12 million) in 1932" (4).

[179] The introduction of sound to cinema in the late 1920s constitutes one such investment.

Three, Universal had gone into receivership, and Columbia and United Artists were wounded, but not down. (15)

Balio subsequently argues that Hollywood studios, to mitigate the effects of the Depression, quickly adapted to the new situation by significantly diversifying their program in response to rapidly shifting audience's tastes (cf. 310). Now more than ever incentivized to amortize their investments in production and talent, "Hollywood tailored pictures for specific audiences and simultaneously promoted them to reach as many people as possible" (ibid. 311). This intensified with the implementation of the Production Code Administration in 1934, which "underwrote film industry commercialism through ensuring that movies were acceptable for the largest possible undifferentiated audience" (Morgan 22).

Balio concludes that women were arguably the largest group to be targeted by this plan to appeal to a wider and more diverse viewership (cf. ibid. 312), a point that has been picked up on by Peter Stanfield specifically with regards to the Western in his study *Hollywood, Westerns and the 1930s*.

Stanfield argues that, inspired by the circumstances of the Great Depression, "Hollywood tried to solicit a diverse audience for its A-feature Western productions, undertaken through an overt address to the female filmgoer," which manifested itself most saliently in studios' attempt to "[emphasise] the drama of courtship and romance" (ibid. 15), thus blurring the boundaries of genre (cf. ibid. 15-17).[180] Arguably, romance, courtship, and melodrama had always been essential pillars of the Western's formula throughout the years of its development, but as Stanfield subsequently lays out with reference to Miriam Hansen's study "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship" that this diversification of audience and dissolution of generic boundaries entailed the recognition of women as "primary targets in the shift to consumer economy (Hansen 7)," calling for "notions of femininity in terms other than domesticity and motherhood" (ibid. 7), he suggests that these processes during the Great Depression on the one hand facilitated the erosion of hitherto dominant conceptualizations and representations of gender but preserved "patriarchal containment" on the other (Stanfield 35).

Stanfield's elaborations help explain the change of representation during 1930s American cinema as a phenomenon caused by social *and* economic factors. Thus, considerations of marketability more often than not outweighed the intent to issue socially conscious commentaries. As such, images of transgressive, highly sexualized, and explicitly

[180] It has been widely accepted that "[b]ecause of the contract between filmmaker and audience, the promise of something new based on something familiar, genres may also respond quickly to social trends" (Bordwell, *Film Art* 55).

promiscuous femininity[181] are primarily indicative of Hollywood's struggle to combat the changing social tides in a financially perilous situation by trying to have it both ways: appealing to as broad and diverse an audience as conceivable while respecting its highly particularized tastes and demands.[182]

As a result, quite a number of Hollywood hits during the 1930s subliminally featured or even openly addressed discourses of racial, ethnic, sexual and gender liberation that momentarily defied heteronormativity as society's organizing principle – only to eventually rebound and constrain such emancipatory representations and reconcile them with the hegemonic status quo. That notwithstanding, Depression era Hollywood offered frequent, remarkable, and complex explorations of gender and gender relations, which often manifested themselves in expressions of sexuality and, as such, "queer imagery" (Lugowski 265).

The following section will investigate gender representations in Depression era Western films against the backdrop of two dialectical hegemonic systems: Hollywood production structures and corporate capitalism. How did Hollywood respond to the rapidly fluctuating social dynamics during the financially taxing years of the Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies? And how does Hollywood's response impact the representation of gender during the 1930s in Western films?

To illustrate, I will analyze two Hollywood A-Westerns of the decade: Wesley Ruggles's 1931 epic CIMARRON and Cecil B. DeMille's 1936 feature THE PLAINSMAN. Building on the works of, most notably, Peter Stanfield, J.E. Smyth, and Mark E. Wildermuth's recent study *Feminism and the Western in Film and Television*, as well as my previous remarks about the creation and establishment of a generic Western formula during the formative years 1903-1929, I will single out in this section a remarkable correlation. Using CIMARRON and J.E. Smyth's insightful analysis of the film as starting points, I propose a link between the film's dissolution of generic boundaries, its time of release that succeeded first wave feminism and roughly coincided with the collapse of the American economy,[183] and the film's ambiguous exploration of transgressive representations of gender that includes a critique of heteronormativity. Likewise, I propose in my discussion of THE PLAINSMAN a link between the film's return to a relatively stricter adherence to the Western's generic formula, the film's time

[181] For example, this pertains to the idiosyncratic representations of gender and sexuality incorporated by 1930s' icon Mae West, or the "cross-gendered" behavior displayed "by such character actors as Franklin Pangborn, Edward Everett Horton, Grady Sutton, Erik Rhodes, Eric Blore, and Ernest Truex" (Lugowski 265).

[182] The rise of depictions of brutal violence done specifically and unapologetically to women in the extremely popular urban gangster drama is equally symptomatic for this. On this note, Benshoff and Griffin surmise that "the increased representation of men's violence toward women at this time seems to indicate an insecurity about male dominance – an insecurity that could only be quelled through excessively violent means" (264).

[183] As a result, the film did not do well at box offices, as Richard Jewell and Vernon Harbin note: "Despite all the publicity and kudos, the depressed business climate of the day wrecked the film's box-office performance, and CIMARRON recorded a $ 565,000 loss" (Jewell & Harbin 33).

of release that coincides with the gradually recovering American economy, and the film's notable effort to revalidate traditional conceptualizations of gender as rooted in allegedly naturally sexed bodies and correspondingly, as opposed to unintelligible abjects, while retaining an element of ambiguity.

Though the influences of first wave feminism are undeniably palpable in the Depression era Western, this link, I argue with Raewyn Connell, ultimately illustrates the "historically mobile" nature of male hegemony (*Masculinities* 77): "When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony" (ibid. 77). The development from CIMARRON to THE PLAINSMAN to films like WELLS FARGO (Frank Llyod, 1937), ARIZONA (Wesley Ruggles, 1940) mirrors the development of the Hollywood film industry and societal configurations of gender stabilizing themselves. At the same time, however, these films offer an insight to the contingency of gender as at once constitutive to both genre and society, and conducive to structural intervention and possible resignification.

4.2.1. An Inconsistent Critique I: CIMARRON (1931)

A film noted for its explicit dramatization of topical gender discourses (cf. Stanfield 36), CIMARRON investigates the limits of heteronormativity and male hegemony as the principles by which society is organized, at times implying their smothering grasp as a detriment to the American project, at other times revealing their absence as equally unsettling. Though the film fails to sustainably dismantle traditional hegemonic structures, it does call into question the legitimacy of hegemony. Moreover, CIMARRON's centering "the *woman's experience* of nation-building" (cf. Stanfield 32; emphasis in original) and its articulating of an open critique of conventional historiography (cf. Smyth, "CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931" 16)[184] reflect Hollywood's attempt to cater to a more diverse audience at a time when the American people experienced seismic shifts in their configuration of identity and assessment of history. CIMARRON tries to resolve the conventional with the unconventional, the traditional with the novel, the Western formula (and thus, America) with the New Woman.[185] Failing to do so, the film engages its characters in a tragedy that disturbs through bitter irony the conventionally progressive outlook of the American project, challenges white male hegemony, and disputes the legitimacy of heteronormativity as society's organizing principle.

---

[184] With this narrative arrangement, the film adopts the tone of the literary original. J.E. Smyth writes elsewhere of Ferber's novel to have been "unusual in that it gave equal weight to the experiences of both Sabra and Yancey" while traditionally "[m]ost literature about the frontier focused on the exploits of men and marginalized or ignored the presence of women" (*Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 117).

[185] For an assessment of the (scholarly) history of the image of the New Woman and its relation to feminism I refer to Estelle B. Freedman's study "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s".

Based on the eponymous novel by Edna Ferber, CIMARRON chronicles the lives of Sabra and Yancey Cravat (Irene Dunne and Richard Dix), parallel to and as humanized equivalents of American history from 1889 to 1930. Like its epic progenitors, such as THE COVERED WAGON, THE IRON HORSE, or even THE BIG TRAIL of the previous year, CIMARRON depicts the amalgamation of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse indetities into a unified American collective identity. The film features several mythologically established set pieces of westward expansion, most prominently the Oklahoma land rush. However, as most of its diegesis remains in Osage County, Oklahoma, CIMARRON's focus lies more on temporal than spatial advancement.[186] This and other elements in the film's formal configuration give CIMARRON a quasi-documentational perspective, as the film frequently references 'historical' evidence, and regularly prioritizes panoramic long-shots that award the viewer with an overview, rather than focalized insight.

More importantly though, unlike the conventional narrative trajectory of the Western epic, the linear progression of space and time does not bring together an ideal white man and an ideal white woman as the ideal white heterosexual couple (and thus the perfect embodiment of the American national character). Instead, the frontier experience drives Sabra and Yancey Cravat further and further apart. Originating the dysfunctionality of their union in either character's unyielding adherence to the doctrine of separate spheres, CIMARRON draws from the popular social problem melodrama to infuse the Western genre with a sense of topical realism and review (the destabilization of) contemporary gender norms.[187] Though undeniably a Western epic due to its locale and scope, CIMARRON upends the conventionally triumphalist formula of the Western epic and imbues it with elements of tragedy, which, because the film originates such tragedy in the failures of the white heterosexual couple, resonate as social critique.

The film begins with Yancey trying to stake a claim in the Oklahoma land rush. We experience him as somebody who enjoys a distinguished reputation among his many friends, as somebody who is admired by his (mostly male) associates. With bravado and folksy charm Yancey carries himself through the masses of people who greet him joyfully as they wait in line for the race to begin. During the race Yancey takes the lead and rides towards the most favorable patch of land available, Bear Creek. Only a well-dressed woman named Dixie Lee (Estelle Taylor), a conspicuous intruder to the mostly male affair, manages to keep up with him, when suddenly her horse trips during an attempt to traverse a perilous ravine. Seeing her fall, Yancey chivalrously turns around and offers his help. As he mercy-kills the fatally wounded

[186] As such, the film repeatedly concludes or introduces a scene by a panoramic shot of the town of Osage evolving through time, accompanied by a superimposed image that announces the number of the respective year.
[187] For a concise definition of the social problem film see: *Oxford Dictionary of Film Studies* 383-4.

animal, Dixie Lee absconds with Yancey's horse, leaving him behind as she races towards Bear Creek to claim the land he had wanted.

Right from the start, then, CIMARRON presents in a nutshell the nuclear conflict of its narrative: women's entering of traditionally male domains and the commensurate destabilization of established gender roles. Her presence at the starting line of the rush already turns heads, but as she outsmarts Yancey and uses his paternalism against him – his own conceptualization of gender demands he unsuspectingly helps the damsel in distress, and further forbids him to shoot her for horse theft (00:09:50-00:09:53) –, Dixie Lee defies the audience's expectations as well as Yancey's.[188] She enjoys the same access to mobility and open spaces as Yancey, she acts independently, self-confidently, and selfishly. Her demeanor is unlike that of the conventional white Western woman. She knows what she wants, and she will take no prisoners in getting it: she represents the New Woman, a contemporary image of white femininity that was constructed around the tenets of sexual liberation and economic freedom following first wave feminism (Hansen 7). Dixie Lee allegorizes women's entering a sphere from which they had hitherto been barred: 'the world'.[189]

But CIMARRON is careful not to universally condemn women for this: Even though Yancey is left shell-shocked from her recklessness and opportunism, he is also the first to defend her actions as he subsequently returns to Wichita, Kansas, and reports back to his wife and her outrageously haughty family, the Venables.

As he recounts his adventures and justifies his failure to acquire the land he had wanted to claim, Yancey vociferously declares to Sabra and her family his unabated desire to move West, to take his wife and son – named Cimarron – with him, to launch a newspaper in Osage county, to explore and conquer, to make "a new empire," second in significance only to Creation itself (00:10:15-00:10:20). And so, ignoring the Venable's disapproval, Yancey and Sabra move West to Oklahoma. In Osage County, they quickly settle and establish a newspaper, the Oklahoma Wigwam, though not without trouble. While Yancey thrives in the diverse, buzzing frontier environment, making grand gestures and even grander speeches about progressive ideas, about tolerance, and about egalitarianism, Sabra finds it increasingly

---

188 The film underscores the element of surprise by announcing Dixie's horse theft through sound: As the camera lingers on Yancey, who's face signifies empathy with the animal he just killed, we hear the galloping sound of hooves. Only when Yancey turns around do we get visual confirmation of the ominous sound, as the camera briefly assumes Yancey's gaze and tracks the absconding Dixie Lee (00:08:23-00:08:52).

189 In precipitating the ensuing narrative with this exposition, CIMARRON immediately references topical socio-cultural and socio-economic discourse. Mark Wildermuth notes on the development of gender conceptualizations and relations in the 1930s: "[T]his struggle for women's rights in the public realm intensified for women in the 1930s when the global depression and the American culture of the New Deal suggested that the American male, wounded as he had been by the trauma of an unpopular World War I and by the scarcity of work in America, needed to be protected from the feminism of Progressive era America. The job shortage led many to conclude that it was wrong for women to compete with men as professionals, and as a result the gendered paradigm of private and public reasserted itself" (9).

difficult to adjust, as she suddenly faces actual manifestations of the numerous anxieties and prejudices she apparently inherited from her overbearing family. Particularly Native Americans prompt Sabra to racist slurs and insults, deriding them on occasion as “dirty, filthy Indians” (00:31:58-00:32:36), even though, in this particular incidence, one individual made a kind gift to her little son, and, more generally, even though her own husband is part Cherokee. Through Yancey’s impassioned demonstrations of progressive ideas and Sabra’s blatant racism, CIMARRON once more introduces social discourse of the 1930s to the West, expanding on its realist approach to the genre.

In time though, the Cravats settle in. A shot of a newspaper title page, pinned at the wall outside their office, informs passersby (and the audience) of the year – 1890 – and several topical historical events to contextualize and authenticate the scene: “Ex-President Cleveland Boomed As Candidate To Succeed Harrison,” “Prince Bismark’s [sic] Resignation,” “Organize For World’s Fair” (00:53:45-00:54:05). But the camera highlights a different article, as it zooms in on a Card of Thanks, published by the Cravats on the front page to announce the birth of their second child, daughter Donna. Subsequently, we see that Sabra, next to raising two children, has furnished their home and joined a Women’s Club, while Yancey is busy running their newspaper, cultivating friendships and business relations, paternally protecting the feeble and weak, conducting a divine service, and dispersing the town from outlaws like Lon Yountis or The Kid (Yancey’s boyhood companion and preemptive “fallible friend” (Wood, “RIO BRAVO & Retrospect” 180)). Mostly, we see Sabra donning either parasol or apron, while we see him sporting his glisteningly white hat and guns. Following the destabilization of Dixie Lee’s intrusion to ‘the world’ during the Oklahoma land rush sequence, the film subsequently organizes Sabra and Yancey’s marriage along clearly gendered domains: As they consolidate themselves in the West, Sabra unequivocally occupies (and begins to extend) ‘the home’; Yancey enters and conquers ‘the world’. This way, CIMARRON aligns the time (and place) most closely associated with the still open frontier – the year is 1890, Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous proclamation of the closing of the frontier followed three years later – with a clear-cut implementation of heteronormativity and the doctrine of the separate spheres.

Immediately though, the film introduces conflicts that result from deviations from the paradigm, for instance, when Sabra is reprimanded by her husband for publicly meddling with men’s affairs, when she prevents an impending gunfight between Yancey and Lon Yountis. Approaching Lon Yountis, she crosses a line and abandons her ‘womanly domain’ – the transgression of which is marked by the camera tracking her determined walk as she angrily scolds the villain. Afterwards, however, Yancey, humiliated by his wife’s public appropriation of a male habitus (an active, fearless, response to a violent threat, displaying the ability to move freely and unrestraint in public spaces), puts her back in her place, noting: “You shouldn’t interfere while men are having a little friendly shooting” (00:29:57-00:30:01). Scenes like this

one instantiate and make visible the tensions that result from the heteronormative matrix, as Sabra's intervention indicates the contingency of gender (with ease she violates the assumed coherence of gendered performance and sexed body), while Yancey's admonishing assertion simultaneously addresses both the vehemence and fragility of the hegemonic paradigm. In Yancey's reprimanding Sabra for her transgression, CIMARRON reveals the perpetual maintenance and policing that the heteronormative matrix requires to sustain itself.

In 1893, news arrives that President Cleveland and his administration have bought former Cherokee land and are opening the strip for homesteaders, announced by a second insert of the Oklahoma Wigwam's front page (01:05:33-01:05:49). Dreading the complacency of his perfect home, Yancey is spurred on by his wanderlust once more. Despite Sabra's objections, Yancey wastes no second thoughts and instantaneously packs his things to set out with a group of other men for the Cherokee Strip, leaving Sabra, their two children, and their business behind. A title card informs us that for five years nobody hears a word from Yancey. There are rumors he fought in the Spanish-American War, others say he went to Cuba with Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders, others again say he married a Cherokee woman, went on to another adventure at the Kickapoo strip, or died drinking in Amarillo.

Meanwhile, Sabra has taken over the reins managing the Oklahoma Wigwam. She has hired a Native American servant girl, Ruby, to perform domestic chores while she runs the business. Sabra transgresses into the male 'world' while an indigenous body – notoriously feminized – takes her place in the domestic sphere. Together with her friends from the Women's League, Sabra campaigns for women's rights and defends public decency, which includes a crusade against Dixie Lee, who has come to Osage to run a brothel. Now a fully accepted and renowned figure of the public sphere, Sabra has established herself in 'the world' – and yet, she refuses to take Yancey's name off the editorial, which still lists him as proprietor and editor of the paper.

This conflict is mirrored in the formal arrangement of the film: Though the film ostensibly stays with Sabra, presenting her progression from left-behind mother and vanguard of domesticity to successful businesswoman and reputable public figure, the diegesis stays with Yancey (cf. Smyth, "*Cimarron*: The New Western History in 1931" 13). Through townspeople rumoring about his deeds and accomplishments, or – even more poignantly – through a close-up shot of his portrait looming over the Cravat's dinner table, CIMARRON never ceases to invoke Yancey's symbolic image (and power), thereby marking his absence and relating it to the unfolding events. Yancey's absence, CIMARRON makes clear, does not absolve him from the consequences we see; quite the contrary, they are inextricably tied to them. This way, the film opens a dichotomy between the visual evidence for Sabra's independent achievements on the one hand, and the narrative accentuation of Yancey's accomplishments on the other. Subtly,

CIMARRON introduces an element of social critique by formally emulating a social configuration that prioritizes men's achievements to those won by women.[190]

Then, suddenly, Yancey returns. The year is 1898. Riding into town to a cheering crowd, he finds his children partly estranged and his wife torn between relief and anger about his unannounced homecoming. Likening himself to Ulysses, he greets her "Ah, Penelope, strange lady, standing thus aloof: Your husband hath come home to thee" (01:20:55-01:21:03), praising her as "wife and mother" in complete disregard of her professional accomplishments. To make matters worse, his first endeavor upon returning is to defend Dixie Lee in court, despite his wife's objections, after he learns that the townspeople, spearheaded by Sabra, have banded together to trial Dixie Lee for public nuisance. Yancey wins the case and gaslights Sabra that her campaign against Dixie Lee had been driven by prejudices and had been predicated on a corrupt social order.[191]

The film moves ahead to the year 1907, when oil is found in the newly declared state of Oklahoma. The city of Osage has transformed from a prairie settlement to a vibrant, prosperous industrial town. Another newspaper insert informs us of yet another expropriation of Native American land, as oil has been struck at Bear Creek, of all places. We find Sabra preparing a dress for the now adolescent Donna, apparently overburdened with her children's post-pubescent histrionics. Donna displays a caricatured arrogance about her class and race reminiscent of the Venables, hence the worst of Sabra's qualities. Young Cimarron, on the other hand, is courting Ruby, the Native American hired girl and, according to Cimarron, incidentally the daughter of an Osage chief[192] – much to the dismay of Sabra, who sees in her son's romantic pursuit and love for Native Americans vestiges of the worst of her husband's qualities.[193] Meanwhile, Yancey is running for Governor as a candidate of the Progressive Party. But as his political opponent, Mr. Pat Leary (Robert McKenzie), pays him a visit to propose an act of corruption and gross abuse of power that involves further injustices done to the indigenous people of Oklahoma, Yancey, against Sabra's will, decides to sacrifice his political career and publish an article that holds the government to account for their unjust annexation of Native American land. Yancey postulates full citizenship for "the red man," not

[190] These observations confirm J.E. Smyth's assessment of the film, as she notes a "contrast between text and image" ("*Cimarron*: The New Western History in 1931" 11).
[191] I will discuss the courtroom scene in greater detail below.
[192] The contrast between Ruby's position within white society (as a hired girl) and within her Native community (the daughter of a chief) introduces another feminist narrative, as CIMARRON subtly relates Sabra's emancipation, which comes from a relatively privileged position, to Ruby's, who is made an immigrant in her own land.
[193] Young Cimarron, the all-too-idealistic son, ends up marrying Ruby, while Donna, the all-too-materialistic daughter, stubbornly decides to marry the richest white man in town, the much older Louis Hefner. Thematizing Yancey's and Sabra's legacy as parents, CIMARRON once more implicitly links their ambiguous developments as outdated patriarch and especially as reluctant New Woman to social discourse of the 1930s (cf. Freedman 382).

without aggrandizing himself as the prophet who speaks an inconvenient truth amidst unbending tides of ignorance (01:41:14-01:42:37).[194]

Another title card informs us that, subsequently, "with the fading glory of the pioneering days, Yancey, again stirred by wanderlust, had ridden away to newer fields, while Sabra carried on her work, alone…" (01:43:23-01:43:30). As the narrative jumps to the year of 1929, we learn that under Sabra's management, the newspaper has thrived into an empire, as she resides in a skyscraper office, awaiting a ceremony that celebrates her nomination for Congress as the first woman to receive this honor. Despite never hearing a word from Yancey in over twenty years, Sabra remains "steadfastly loyal in her love and respect for her husband" (Stanfield 35), which manifests itself most poignantly in the fact that she still, despite the advice of Sol Levy (George E. Stone), her closest friend, and Yancey himself, has not replaced his name as proprietor and editor of the paper with her own. Incidentally, the film inserts another close-up of Yancey's portrait, which still portends from the wall over her office desk.

After the ceremony, the dignitaries head to the Bowlegs oil fields for a self-congratulatory visit to the source of the town's wealth, as news arrives of an old drifter who in an act of bravery and self-sacrifice threw his body onto a torpedo of nitroglycerin to prevent the entire field from blowing up. It was Yancey. As Sabra rushes to find her husband dying in agony, she grabs him tightly, as he mutters his final words to her: "Wife and mother. Stainless woman" (01:57:12-01:57:17). The film ends with the unveiling of a memorial, commemorating the advancement of the Oklahoma pioneer: a bronze statue uncannily resembling Yancey, with a crouching Native American man walking devoutly behind him.

Ambiguity

J.E. Smyth has offered a detailed account of the genesis of Edna Ferber's material from literary original to RKO's first adaption in 1931 to MGM's 1960 remake,[195] demonstrating that Wesley Ruggles's film, and especially Howard Estabrook's script of the 1931 version, are largely true to Ferber's original in that both brilliantly challenge "traditional western historiography" (*Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 129). As Smyth shows, CIMARRON often places "written history," by which she means the film's referencing of historical events in written words via title cards or inserts of newspaper items, "in counterpoint to the visual narrative" (ibid. 130). Furthermore, she argues that the film perpetually entertains a not necessarily coherent

[194] The article reads: "The demagogues plan to rob them again. Stealing the vast ocean of oil gushing up through the miserable, barren land known as the Osage Indian reservation, again victimizing those duped and wretched Americans, the Osage Indians. Their treaties broken, their land stolen, and now there's about to burst forth the gaudiest star-spangled piece of crookedness ever played under the wing of a double-dealing government" (01:41:14-01:41:37).

[195] The 1960 version was helmed by Anthony Mann and starred, among others, Glenn Ford, Austrian actress Maria Schell, and Anne Baxter.

dialectic "between text and image" (Smyth, "CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931" 11). Consequently, Smyth classifies CIMARRON as a genre maverick that deliberately included a significant degree of ambiguity and thereby swayed from the traditionally triumphant, white supremacist frontier visions of previous Westerns (cf. *Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 133).

Most significantly, Smyth's argument suggests that in keeping with its eschewing a monadically white, male perspective, CIMARRON's critical, revisionist approach to American historiography inevitably entailed pursuing a feminist avenue – an aspect that has recently been supported by Mark Wildermuth's reading of the film in his study *Feminism and the Western in Film and Television*. According to Smyth, CIMARRON's pluralistic vision of the frontier acknowledges the contributions, sacrifices, flaws, and misconceptions of men *and* women in making and writing American history, "rather than presenting a strictly white masculine frontier, as had Turner, Roosevelt, and countless *Virginian*- and Leatherstocking-inspired western films" (*Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 130), and "embraces women's work as part of national history" while simultaneously "problematiz[ing] the nature and impact of that work" (ibid. 130). Reaching a similar conclusion, Wildermuth has noted that the film articulates an "implicit [critique] of the comradely ideal and support for the more progressive companionly ideal" of gender relations (11).[196]

Smyth attributes much of CIMARRON's revisionism to its idiosyncratic lead characters. She points out the film's subtle handling of Yancey's mixed racial heritage, which breaches racial stereotypes of male heroism specifically in the Western genre, arguing that "Yancey [...] is neither the white gunfighter cleansing the frontier of redskins, nor the pure-blooded Indian condemned to extinction in a changing environment" (*Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 134). Neither does he fit the devout-if-proud racial subservience of Silver Eagle, nor the *noble savage* trope of Uncas, and most certainly does he not fit the taciturn, down-to-earth matter-of-factness of The Virginian. Quite the contrary, Smyth describes Yancey as "a bit of a dandy" (ibid. 123). She continues: "His swarthy complexion and Cherokee war whoops function with his Prince Albert coat, impeccable white hat, and elaborately tooled high-heeled boots. He is no Virginian with dusty chaps, a battered hat, and an unassuming demeanor" (ibid. 123). Bearing in mind previous iterations of the dandy-character in, for instance, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY or THE VIRGINIAN (see above), Smyth's association is apt, because clearly Yancey is a character marked by contradictions and ambiguity, hence he is a character that marks contradictions and ambiguity.

[196] Wildermuth defines his distinction between comradely and companionly ideal of gender relations as follows: "In the [companionly ideal], men and women pursue relationships where both seek companionship based in intellectual and sexual compatibility as well as social equality. In the [comradely] paradigm, no matter how much responsibility the woman may take in the public and private realms, she remains subordinate to her mate" (9-10).

Therefore, according to Smyth's interpretation, Yancey is prominently defined by what he is not: the classical, formulaic white male Western hero. Rather, Yancey seems to oscillate between a modern, civilized masculinity and the lingering vestiges of a wild, untamable frontier masculinity. As he meanders between public office and open plains, CIMARRON creates in Yancey the image of a restless wanderer, neither here nor there, yet seemingly omnipotent, a charismatic, natural born leader, the standard by which everyone else is measured.

At the same time though, CIMARRON implies that Yancey is of hollow principles, an opportunist rather than an idealist of conviction. For instance, Yancey advocates independence and full citizenships for Native Americans. He condemns antisemitism,[197] publicly defends women's rights, and raises the Venable's black servant boy Isaiah (Eugene Jackson) as part of his family. However, these "integrationist abilit[ies]" (Stanfield 36) are counterpointed by his repeated adventures that have him quite habitually and unashamedly expropriate and exile Native Americans (cf. Wildermuth 25). Subtly, the film ambiguates his own sequestered ethnic roots, shows him to ignore his wife's professional accomplishments and, to top it off, implicates him to be unfaithful to her. Lastly, in the film's perhaps most striking dramatization of Yancey's lofty superiority and double standards towards discourses of race, CIMARRON shows him walk past the dying Isaiah who was shot protecting the Cravats' children.[198]

Indeed, Yancey is best characterized by his portrait that is repeatedly inserted to indicate his symbolic presence in times of physical absence. He *is* an image, at once essentializing patriarchy's seemingly invisible-yet-palpable hegemonic grasp on women's progress and dramatizing the desperate and ultimately devastating efforts of Yancey to maintain its symbolic capital. What is more, Yancey's emblematic reduction to an image draws clear attention to the constructedness of his gender and its symbolic capital, at once visual

---

[197] Elsewhere, Smyth describes the most prominent episode of antisemitism in the film: "Sol is pushed against a grain scale by one of the town bullies, and as his arms lock around the balance he resembles a crucified Christ. Yancey saves Sol and gently extricates, or deposes him from his cross" ("CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931" 12). In one and the same gesture, CIMARRON shows Yancey helping the film's stereotyped representation of a Jewish man and implements a hierarchy that shows Yancey paternalistically towering over the subservient Jew. This ethnic stereotype, tellingly, is reinforced in a later scene, and thereby even codified in terms of gender, when Sol Levy wistfully discloses to Sabra: "Oh, they will always talk about Yancey. He's gonna be part of the history of the great Southwest. It's men like him that build the world. The rest of them, like me, well, we just come along and live in it" (01:16:25-01:16:38). Again, however, Sol's reference to Yancey's empire-building spirit is as much gendered expression of admiration as it is another example of CIMARRON's attack on traditional cultures of historiography-as-white male hegemony.

[198] Incidentally, Isaiah's body is found and retrieved by Sol Levy, whom the film repeatedly inserts in sequences that negotiate the plight of socially marginalized group, thus aligning the struggles of those ostracized by race, sex, and creed. For instance, when Yancey makes his impassioned speech in his court defense of Dixie Lee (see below), the film for several seconds cuts to a close-up of Sol's face before it moves on to a close-up of Dixie Lee's face, as Yancey declares with reference to Matthew 11:28: "Who was it that said: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest?'" (01:30:14-01:30:22). In the image of Sol Levy, CIMARRON eclectically unites the marginalized.

proof of the seemingly irrefutable omnipotence of male hegemony and its lack of substance. Yancey's image reveals that the gendered power of white masculinity requires no corporeal materialization (a sexed body) in order to exude and effect hegemony. His portray is but a sign of masculine dominance, illustrating as it does both the absence of a natural sex that is assumed to precede the display of gendered power and the inescapable compulsion to comply with the heteronormative matrix that it is meant to enforce.

This double-bind reverberates throughout the film: What are Yancey's repeated spurs of wanderlust but spells of refusal, renouncing domesticity and civilization, the feminine domain, for cyclical reaffirmations of masculine individualism? What are they but explications occasioning the struggle conferred upon him to make sense of a societal order that demands he simultaneously embraces and relinquishes an allegedly diametrical opposite in order to attain and defend identity? What are they but attempts to "escape from the urbanizing forces of history and a conscious retreat into myth" (Smyth, "CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931" 13)? CIMARRON shows that Yancey tries incessantly to maintain, reinforce, and adhere to the doctrine of the separate spheres, even though – ironically – he publicly demands the paradigm be overcome, and even though he seemingly never convincingly understood or embraced its ideological significance in the first place.

Correspondingly, Smyth asserts that Sabra sets "precedent for cinematic pioneer women," emphasizing that while she is clearly not "a winsome prairie Madonna hidden behind the protecting arms of William S. Hart," the film equally does not shy away from "[capturing] the racial and social arrogance behind her grit, practicality, and endurance" (*Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 134). Sabra profoundly lacks the moral impeccability that conventionally mandated the white heroine's propensity to redeem the white hero from his erring ways, and that had informed previous representations of idealized white femininity such as Faith Henley or Molly Wood. Though the film goes to great lengths to address, depict, and thereby acknowledge Sabra's achievements in both the domestic and the professional sphere, CIMARRON frequently implicates her incentives to excel as based on a long-internalized racial and class-related elitism. Sabra's upbringing in the South,[199] we learn early on, has corrupted her worldview with inhumane preconceptions of white superiority, which rise to the surface in the overtly racist lessons she teaches her children, or her fervent attempts to expel Dixie Lee from Osage because she ostensibly deviates from Sabra's Victorian conceptualization of reputable femininity.

---

[199] Early on, CIMARRON features a caricatured introduction to Sabra's degenerate family, in which the film portrays her mother's racist treatment of Isaiah as a socially unacceptable vestige of Slavery, but at the same time depicts her brother's overly camp sensibilities as gender failure in opposition to Yancey's manly determinism.

Moreover, CIMARRON makes clear that Sabra is the last to acknowledge, let alone accept, her own accomplishments in 'the world', as she either attributes them to Yancey or recodifies them as extensions of 'the home': Even when prompted, she refuses to replace his name as proprietor and editor of the newspaper she has effectively managed by herself for more than three decades. Even more poignantly, when she is appointed to the office of first Congresswoman, thereby officially consolidating herself in 'the world', the film has her frame this achievement as yet another domestic act, as she attempts to transmogrify the public space of a political ceremony to a domestic event, asking the audience "to meet my family as if you were in my home" (01:50:05).

In Sabra, CIMARRON manages to problematize the reach and the consequences of *Manifest Domesticity*, that is: of the underlying gendered colonial power structures that inform Sabra's attempt to civilize the West, transform this 'wilderness' into a 'garden', extend 'the home', and shape the West according to the South/East (which the film characterizes as morally corrupt).[200] On the other hand, in Sabra – and in her relation and continued, unremitting loyalty to Yancey – the film makes palpable the invisible power structures of male hegemony, the internalized gender role models Sabra so ineluctably holds on to, despite the suffering they cause her, and despite the steps she takes to transcend them. Accordingly, Mark Wildermuth interprets the dynamics of their relationship:

> The married couple seems to embody the comradely ideal […] with Yancey paying [sic] the heroic role of the Western hero and Sabra being his dutiful wife who subordinates herself to her husband and embodies the domestic values that are separated from the active public world of heroism that her husband occupies. Nevertheless, as the plot develops, the comradely paradigm seems to show pressures from strained gender relations that point to the enduring iconography of feminist paradigms from the Progressive era. And Yancey Cravat's masculinism, which divorces him at times from the domestic realm, points to an aggressive egoism suggesting that the rampant individualism that underlies it is highly problematic and potentially quite destructive to society. (24)

CIMARRON's complicated, idiosyncratic conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity (while still predicated on that binary opposition), factor in a radical divergence from the outlook of the Western as a reification of the American project. Unlike the silent epics before it, the frontier in CIMARRON is ultimately not the crucible from which society emerges regenerated and reformed. Instead, the frontier precipitates degeneration. Broadly speaking, the Western formula up until this point – while entertaining the notion of hardship, suffering, sacrifice, and

---

[200] What was represented by Molly Wood's or Faith Henley's Eastern origin in THE VIRGINIAN or HELL'S HINGES, respectively, is demarcated by Sabra's Southern roots. South and East are interchangeable as harbingers of civilization; yet while this virtue signified the completion of a divine promise in THE VIRGINIAN or HELL'S HINGES, it signifies corruption and degeneration in CIMARRON.

restoration – allegorized the formation of American collective identity in the simple trope of an ideal white man and an ideal white woman finding and complementing each other during the crucial, formative mythographic experience of the frontier, thus confirming each other and, consequently, stabilizing Whiteness and heteronormativity as society's organizing principle. In its exploration of identity and search for a societal consensus, the Western was always inherently optimistic. Struggles could always be overcome because a white man found a white woman.

THE VIRGINIAN had perfected the contours of this ritual. In CIMARRON, however, the protagonists are far from ideal, and their mythological genesis as the allegorical champions of American identity is reversed. Especially for Sabra, the frontier withholds private fulfilment and neglects public achievement, and therefore causes her perpetual suffering. Struggles shape her life even though, if not *because* she found a husband. As Yancey and Sabra's marriage drifts further and further apart, CIMARRON undoes the optimistic promise of progression that usually in the genre culminates in heterosexual union (and further progression). Instead, their relationship incrementally regresses and, in the end, virtually explodes. As Yancey, in a final embrace with Sabra, once more neglects her achievements and reduces her to an outmoded image of femininity, describing her as "wife and mother, stainless woman" (01:57:12-01:57:16) – a discrepancy that is then even brought to a head in the final scene of the film, which features the unveiling of a statue that heralds the Oklahoma pioneer and closely resembles Yancey, again omitting women's contributions in westward expansion –, CIMARRON provokes its most poignant feminist sentiment through irony and hyperbolic juxtaposition (cf. Smyth, "CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931" 15). Though neither Yancey nor Sabra acknowledge this, the film all the more vividly declares: "Women have arrived. They can perform public and private functions equally well and can help strengthen their community, their homes and their entire country by taking on the tasks in the private and public sphere with equal gusto. And they are to be congratulated for this" (Wildermuth 28). At the same time, CIMARRON illustrates that a society organized by heteronormativity constitutes a severe, seemingly insurmountable obstacle to the dissolution of white male hegemony.

The Fair Name of Womanhood

In an article about one of Hollywood's most enduringly popular classics, TWELVE ANGRY MEN (Sidney Lumet, 1957), Elisabeth Bronfen has described the Hollywood courtroom drama as an act of cinematic self-reflection that addresses the conundrum of legal versus ethical justice, and as such is deeply engrained in American culture (cf. Bronfen "Die Zwölf Geschworenen" 378-9). Bronfen argues that in American law, as well as in films that deal with American law, the presentation of evidence unfolds as a theatrical competition between

prosecution and defense over the interpretational sovereignty – or "property of discourse," to speak with Foucault (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 75) – of determining one narrative as truth, which is never fully distinct from subjective prejudices and political ambition because of the multitude of players and interests involved (cf. Bronfen "Die Zwölf Geschworenen" 379). Bronfen thus asserts: "Receiving its currency from the discrepancy between trust in abstract law and desire for humane justice, which puts mercy before justice, most often in the classic *courtroom drama* jurisdiction itself is on trial" (ibid. 379; Transl. T.S.; emphasis in original). Not rarely, this creates ambiguities that encourage viewers to assume a mitigating position (cf. ibid. 379).

Eighty minutes into the film, CIMARRON features a courtroom scene that is informed by very similar dynamics. In this scene, Sabra, the respectable women of Osage, and their prosecuting attorney, hold trial against Dixie Lee, accusing her of public nuisance. Though she displays civil manners at every public appearance, Dixie has fallen into ill-repute because of her profession, as she works and manages a brothel (cf. Wildermuth 26). Yancey, who has just returned from one of his fighting adventures, immediately jumps to Dixie Lee's defense, invoking the right of every person to a fair trial as his sole, idealistic motivation. Sabra, on the other hand, suspects that Yancey and Dixie might be romantically entangled. As a result, Sabra fears public humiliation, as her husband takes the opposition in a trial that she has actively instigated through her press and lobby work, and that openly threatens the public image of their marriage. Yet even more to the point, the courtroom scene thematizes and pits against each other ostensibly different conceptualizations of femininity, and openly challenges not only individual conceptualizations of gender but investigates the legitimacy and consequences of the system that produces them.

In analogy to Bronfen's notes on the courtroom drama, CIMARRON, too, constructs a conflict between what is lawfully right and what is morally right to create an ambiguity that is for the viewer to evaluate. However, this ambiguity, or the conflict between law and moral, does not pertain to narratives of truth presented by either the prosecution or the defense. Instead, CIMARRON complicates Yancey's passionate ideological speech as the defendant's attorney with divergent, alternative visual information. Again, the film uses images to ambiguate text.

Pat Leary, the prosecution's attorney (and therefore, Sabra's champion) articulates what exactly is on trial: As he closes his opening plea by calling Dixie Lee's presence in town "a disgrace to the fair name of our womanhood" (01:24:44-01:24:48), CIMARRON candidly identifies the discourse it is going to engage in. What is really at stake is the domestic ideal, the doctrine of the separate sphere, as the prejudiced and sanctimonious women of Osage, represented by Sabra and Mrs. Tracy Wyatt (Edna May Oliver), accuse Dixie of having violated that ideal.

Sabra and the Women's League, as self-appointed guardians of civilization, dread the decline of moral standards because Dixie Lee's professional enterprises encourage promiscuity, thus violating the sacrosanct paradigm of heterosexual monogamy (while only chastising one end of the transgressive bargain (cf. Wildermuth 26)). More importantly though, Dixie's conceptualization of femininity, or what she stands for as a woman, reads for Sabra and the Women's League as an active dismissal of the pursuit of *Manifest Domesticity*, as Dixie's conjectured image of femininity openly denies the traditional, womanly responsibility of taming men's transgressions.[201] Instead, they fear, she but encourages them.

Yet CIMARRON challenges this position narratively and visually – and therefore calls into question the hitherto inviolable status of the white woman as the frontier's moral epicenter. Preceding the trial, we have witnessed Dixie Lee tricking Yancey and stealing his horse during the Oklahoma land rush, a transgression that Yancey himself acquits her from. Other than that, Dixie Lee appears in several scenes that feature her public conduct prior to the courtroom scene, at no point of which she behaves indecently. Quite the contrary, she is associated very much in accordance with the domestic ideal of femininity, as she attends church service and is shown to care for her employees (Fig. 9), and at one point even attempts to take care of a lost child (Fig. 10), an endeavor that is thwarted by Mrs. Wyatt, who misinterprets and then misconstrues Dixie Lee's conduct, because of her own prejudiced, snobbish moral standards.

Fig. 9. 00:43:32. Fig. 10. 01:08:34.
Source: CIMARRON, Wesley Ruggles (1931). RKO. DVD.

Moreover, during the trial, Yancey asks Dixie Lee to tell the jury exactly how she ended up in her line of work, at which point she reveals that she had been fooled into an unlawful marriage and left alone with a child, which died shortly after. With her reputation thus vilified, nobody, she reports, would employ her. And so, out of desperation, she became a prostitute as the only way to make a living.

[201] The fact that Sabra herself is obviously failing to embrace this paradigm further ambiguates the text.

Three things are of significance here: First, as Stanfield has shown, "Dixie allows the film to raise the issue of independent women" and serves "to show what can happen if women are denied the means of legitimately supporting themselves" (36, 37). Her story retroactively exonerates her (morally) from the horse theft we have witnessed in the opening scene as we now learn her crime was motivated by the anxious attempt to obviate the life of a prostitute. In the same vein, the fact that we saw her owning land only to reappear in the narrative as an urban prostitute adds weight to her account, as her story of perpetual prejudice and rejection corroborates her trajectory from independent landowner to the wholly disenfranchised.[202] Approached from this angle, CIMARRON indeed recounts a "*woman's experience* of nation-building" (ibid. 32; emphasis in original), albeit – in Dixie Lee's case – a desperate and ultimately futile one, as America is shown unwilling to accommodate her. Still, the film gives voice and image to a hitherto neglected historiography.

Second, although Dixie Lee vanishes from the narrative immediately after her case is won, CIMARRON offers her something previously unseen in the Western. Unlike Dolly (HELL'S HINGES) or the Mexican saloon girl (THE VIRGINIAN), a prostitute character is given context, and a mode of representation beyond the stigmatizing and stereotypical.[203] In their complex histories and ambiguities, Dixie and Sabra eschew the aforementioned verdict of directors Budd Boetticher and Anthony Mann, who jointly described women's *function* in Westerns as central-yet-peripheral (cf. Cook, "Women and the Western" 293). Dixie and Sabra are not functionalized, if anything they are focalizers to the story. They act not to complement men but as independent agents of their stories. Only internalized and institutionalized images of gender seem to hamper their advancement. In context and text, therefore, CIMARRON follows a progressive, feminist agenda.

Third, however, CIMARRON's novel, empowering perspective and plot do not translate to a correspondingly novel visual language. Though text and context call into question the self-evidence of how the Western customarily tells a harlot from a heroine, CIMARRON's way of visually substantiating our perception of one or the other further ambiguates the film's ideology.

To illustrate: To appeal to the Jury's conscience and compassion, Yancey characterizes Dixie as a "poor", "helpless", "defenseless" woman, noting about her upbringing

[202] This ties in with well-established narratives of women's labor and sex trade of the time CIMARRON claims to depict (Hapke 141-61).

[203] In fact, CIMARRON turns the stereotype on its head: As Sabra and the Women's League petition to put Dixie Lee on trial, none of the accusations they hold against her are substantiated by visual or narrative evidence in the film. Sabra and the Women's league base their judgement on stereotypes, while the audience – mediated by Yancey – experience her for more than what a woman of her profession conventionally stands for. Again, CIMARRON gives voice and credence to a hitherto unheard perspective and noticeably abandons the social stigmatization of women based on stereotypes. In fact, CIMARRON uses the stereotype against itself, as it subjects those who cast and feed off stereotypes to an ironic, most superficial characterization, i.e., Mrs. Wyatt, who is reduced to a one-dimensional representation of haughty, sanctimonious, misguided, and, most importantly, pathetic domesticity.

that she was "bred in the gentle surroundings of a pure home such as you would choose for your own daughters" (01:25:57-01:26:17). His words cause outrage in the courtroom's audience, mirroring – or caricaturing – perchance the assumed response of the film's audience in the cinema, as they are confronted with a severe transgression, or incoherence: Yancey's characterization of Dixie, the signified, does not match the projected image of a whore in a booming Western town, the signifier. However, it does match the way Dixie is visually presented to the cinema audience, as the film makes frequent use of the conventional mode of representing the innocent, morally superior, female White heroine: using long, static close-ups of Dixie Lee's glisteningly white face, indulging in the serene, teary-eyed visage as she forlornly stares into the distance, stoically accepting whatever fate the men of the jury will pick for her (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Source: CIMARRON, Wesley Ruggles (1931). RKO. DVD. 01:31:06-01:31:12.

This way, the film likens her image to the angelic iconography of Faith Henley or Molly Wood, after all. Likewise, in the earlier scene of Yancey's divine service, we see Dixie quietly and devoutly finding her place in the makeshift church. She listens to and solemnly takes in the words of the preaching white man. She is receptive to his wisdom, and herein lies her power and appeal.[204] Like Yancey's portrait, then, Dixie Lee's face functions as an image.

[204] Furthermore, in this scene and the courtroom scene, Dixie is shown to be accompanied by an entourage of employees, of whom she takes motherly care – a flock of outcasts, all "victims of a foul disease called social prejudice" (00:06:14-00:06:17), united in their suffering from "the blessings of civilizations" (01:31:05), as Doc Boone puts in STAGECOACH. Indeed, Dixie would make a great older sister to Dallas (Claire Trevor).

Framed by the camera, she, too, serves as but a simulacrum of male hegemony. Yancey's image and hers are recto and verso to patriarchy's asphyxiating grasp on women's liberation, as they both simultaneously signify the constructedness of and strict adherence to obsolete gender images and dramatize the devastating consequences of that adherence for individuals, especially women, as it functions to conceal gender's constructedness.

So far then, the courtroom drama battle between legal and moral right seems rather straightforward, as the film deploys context, text, and visuals to portray Dixie Lee as innocent. Yet this clear-cut distinction is destabilized when Yancey in his concluding remarks to the jury draws their attention explicitly to the discrepancy between moral right and legal right. Passionately, Yancey declares: "She [Dixie Lee] is indeed heavy laden with the persecution of her own sex. Why, gentlemen, a thief or murderer may sin alone and is alone to blame. But this woman is not alone. Social order is her accomplice. If she is guilty, then all in this room are guilty" (01:30:23-01:30:40).

According to Yancey's rationale, the law as it stands is morally wrong. A law that allows for honest, upright women like Dixie Lee to be castigated because of treacherous stereotypes that denigrate them on the basis of gender, is immoral and therefore unjust. Yancey attacks the social structures that privilege one image of femininity over another, to the point that any failure to comply with said image inevitably entails sustained and irreversible reprimands for innocent members of society. Through no fault of her own, Dixie, according to Yancey's reasoning, failed to embrace the ideal of female domesticity, coercing her into an aberrant life. Society has created and perpetuated gender ideals, and therefore society must be held accountable for its own constraining order; not the individual who, despite her best efforts and noblest of intentions, was thwarted in her attempts to conform. Through Yancey's words, CIMARRON's text therefore attacks a system that constructs gender ideals and that defends those ideals to the point where the system no longer tolerates divergence. In his words, Yancey attacks the cultural capital of the doctrine of the separate sphere that verges on dogmatism, and he condemns the way society blindly polices its hegemony. Like in the classical courtroom drama, "jurisdiction itself is on trial" (cf. Bronfen "Die Zwölf Geschworenen" 379) – as the system standing in for civilization and social order.

However, as he speaks, not only does he through his rhetoric invoke the image of the pure, angelic white woman to further his case, but also does the film weaponize that image and its visual tradition to, paradoxically, absolve Dixie from the stigma of the stereotype, and legitimatize her eventual acquittal. CIMARRON ultimately relies on the system to formulate its attack of the same. Yancey can only persuade the jury and point out the constraints of a system that dictates gender-specific behavior by drawing from pre-established gender-specific axioms. He simultaneously argues that Dixie could not conform to the domestic ideal and uses

language that insinuates she does nonetheless, only to indict the system that produced the domestic ideal – all the while the film approximates her visually to that very domestic ideal.

This already complex arrangement of conflicting and inherently contradictory messages is then further complicated during the trial's private epilogue between Sabra and Yancey. Dixie Lee is found not guilty, and the couple returns home. Sabra is fuming. She feels embarrassed by her husband who took the side of her opponent, and she interprets his actions as both a rebuttal of her traditional worldview and further evidence that her husband may still be romantically attached to Dixie. Suggesting an astonishing level of self-awareness, the film draws attention to the incongruency of Yancey's defense, as Sabra openly accuses her husband of having deployed lies and tricks to sway the jury and win the case – to which he partly agrees, denying having lied but admitting to a trick, although he rephrases his manipulation as a means to an end (01:31:41-01:31:51). Next, they argue:

> Yancey: Dixie Lees have been stoned in the marketplace for 2,000 years. You've got to drive the devil out first. Can't you see, honey, your conscience will be clear? You haven't sent to prison a woman instead of a real criminal: social order, which you can't change, yet. My only interest in Dixie Lee was to see that she got one less kick.
>
> Sabra: You mean, what she said about herself was true?
>
> Yancey: Every word, sugar.
>
> Sabra: At times I saw a look in her eyes... I'll never forget.
>
> Yancey: It's a wonder to me that she hasn't killed herself.
>
> Sabra: Maybe, if things had been different, she might be like I am... married, safe. Oh, I'm thankful I've got you, that we've got each other... and our home.
>
> Yancey: Oh, sugar, sugar, I love you. Hell and high water, all the way... there's never been anybody but you, and you know it.
>
> Sabra: Oh, hold me close. Oh, my boy.
>
> Source: CIMARRON, Wesley Ruggles (1931). RKO. DVD. 01:32:26-01:33:40.

Again, Yancey calls into mind the millennia-old history of social prejudice towards women, and expresses his discontent with a system that constructs, reinforces, and polices images of femininity. Except this time, Sabra concurs. Ironically, however, her conclusion suggests that her newfound empathy for her former nemesis results from realizing that she herself has been privy to a certain privilege, which life had denied Dixie Lee: the alleged safe haven of institutionalized heterosexual monogamy: marriage. Mark Wildermuth has correctly pointed out that this turn of events comes as a sudden surprise, given that the film offers little in Sabra's marriage with Yancey that would condone her feeling safe, let alone warrant her feeling thankful for her situation (cf. 27). And as Yancey emphatically chimes in, vowing that

he has never been and will never be unfaithful to his wife, their ensuing embrace eventually consecrates their union as the ideal heterosexual couple after all, albeit only temporarily.

True to Ferber's novel, then, CIMARRON in this scene illustrates in its characters, its narrative trajectory, and its visual iconography "the powerful and contradictory drives of the American frontier" (Smyth, *Edna Ferber's Hollywood* 117). Through conflicting messages – visually, narratively, subtextually – CIMARRON perpetually subverts previous positions and utterly ambiguates its ideological stance. Rather than purporting the white heterosexual couple as an allegorical blissful union, Yancey and Sabra's marriage is wholly dysfunctional and signals the constraints of the gender images they frantically cling on to. Likewise, in Dixie Lee's trial, CIMARRON first establishes a vision of America not yet prepared to transcend those images, then seems to embrace her through her acquittal, which, however, only comes to pass because Yancey reinforces the very same hegemonic structures he claims to attack. Ultimately, CIMARRON vacillates between condoning and condemning their union, at once showing them blissfully in love and dramatizing especially Sabra's suffering. While the classical Western, and the Western epics in particular, had heretofore put an exclamation mark behind the heterosexual couple as a symbol of American progress, CIMARRON attaches a question mark.

Ending on Yancey's death, and the juxtaposition of Sabra's political ascension being eclipsed and trivialized by the unveiling of a statue that commemorates only Yancey's achievements and posthumously declares him a hero and the singular drive behind westward expansion – for better or for worse – CIMARRON encapsulates the essence of 1930s gender dynamics in the one phrase preceding the montage, Yancey's final words: "Wife and mother, stainless woman" (01:57:12-01:57:17). Wildermuth suggests the reference contains a level of ambiguity. While the phrase "wife and mother" most certainly calls to mind the dominant cultural ideal of white femininity that is associated with nurturing and domesticity, Wildermuth argues that the adjunct "stainless woman" could also "evoke the idea of her hardness, her capacity for clean competition in the masculine public realm" (28). In one sequence then, CIMARRON distills its conflicting currents: Yancey's dying body clashes with the invulnerable bronze statue, at once pointing out patriarchy's demise and its lingering symbolic legacy; his reducing of Sabra to "wife and mother" and acknowledgment as "stainless woman", at once constraining her to a gender role image she has ostensibly transcended and finally, if opaquely, acknowledging her independent achievements, at once barring and authorizing liberation, at once indicting and cementing social order. From these contradictions and ambiguities results CIMARRON's deviance from conventional Western narratives, and herein lies its strongest critique. Smyth concludes:

CIMARRON's projection of Oklahoma's elegy to the Pioneer, a mythic symbol, is ironic. Yancey, a historic figure in the film's diegesis, has become an abstract hero, a larger-than-life, flawless statue embodying the society's perception of the passing of an age. The man who repeatedly dispossessed the Oklahoma Indians of their land and even denied his own mixed Indian heritage, while still acting as a friend to the oppressed, has become the savior of the weak at the film's conclusion. Popular history has written him as a hero. The final shots of the unveiled monument are not simply the filmmakers' patriotic coda; rather, Yancey's heroic stature belongs to a narrative structure that consistently draws attention to the present generation's transformation of the past. ("CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931" 15) [205]

More than that, I argue, the circumstance of abstracting the image of somewhat illegitimate masculine dominance from the quasi-corporeal form of Yancey to a representation of Yancey in the shape of a bronze statue mirrors the efficacy of gender while revealing its constructedness and detachment from a body, who in itself dramatizes conflicting gender dynamics. CIMARRON uncovers white male hegemony and discusses its privilege in the social processes of *writing history* and *shaping a societal order*. Concomitantly, CIMARRON also makes gender politics text; in fact, it makes heteronormativity as social consensus text, at times covertly relying on its legitimacy and reproducing its ubiquity, at other times pointing out its dysfunctionality and exploring gender contingency.

4.2.2. Contingent Calamities: THE PLAINSMAN (1936)

It has been described by various scholars that the Western nearly vanished as an A-feature[206] during the Great Depression until its renaissance as America's most popular film genre in 1939 (cf. Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western* 41; cf. Maddrey 8; cf. Scheugl 56; cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 271), save for a select few notable successes.[207]

---

[205] Indeed, Smyth's wording of "popular history has written him as a hero" very strikingly beckons a connection to John Ford's THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962) (see 4.6.1.), specifically the film's most memorable aphorism: "This is the West, Sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend" (01:54:50-01:54:56).

[206] Edward Buscombe describes the emergence of a bifurcation between A-and B-feature films: "It was the effect of the Depression, with a dramatic decline in box-office receipts, which led in the mid-1930s to the introduction of the double-feature as a novel attraction. This opened an opportunity for the production of films, many produced by small independent companies, which were expressly designed for the bottom or 'B' half of a double bill" (*The BFI Companion to the Western* 37).

[207] Meanwhile, as Stanfield's study can also account for, the B-Western (or Series Western) enjoyed continued popularity especially in rural areas of the United States. Given their reliance on recognizable codes and values that resulted from quasi-industrial, cheap productions for a very specific target audience (rural, male adolescents), the B-Westerns of the 1930s are a highly interesting, complex field of film studies research, especially for gender specific inquiries, seeing that, as Bandy and Stoehr have observed, "[o]ften these B-Westerns reflected Depression-era realities by dealing with the land ownership problems of struggling individuals, especially those who faced the threat of greedy capitalists out to acquire their land" (103). Yet this is an investigation that this study cannot provide. For a detailed account that has started to contextualize gender representations in B-Western within the unique set of

Those include LAW AND ORDER (Edward L. Cahn, 1932), ANNIE OAKLEY (George Stevens, 1935), THE PLAINSMAN (1936), RAMONA (Henry King, 1936), THE TEXAS RANGERS (King Vidor, 1936), and WELLS FARGO (1937). Though especially ANNIE OAKLEY[208] and RAMONA[209] each provide exceptionally interesting objects for a gender-specific analysis, I will focus on THE PLAINSMAN, as the film offers the perhaps most apparent negotiation of the allure of gender contingency versus the societal obligation to return to a coherent, intelligible, heteronormative gender order.

If CIMARRON showcased the momentary destabilization of the legitimacy of heteronormativity and the hitherto pre-eminent belief in the doctrine of the separate spheres, THE PLAINSMAN conversely, reveals a rollback to more conventional hegemonic structures. Deliberately confusing the coherence between the sex of a body and conventional gender performances, THE PLAINSMAN, too, negotiates the effects of first wave feminism and the Great Depression in economic and explicitly sexualized terms. While much of the films allure and marketability results from lead character's Calamity Jane's (Jean Arthur) performance of "female masculinity" (Halberstam 1),[210] THE PLAINSMAN consistently portrays such a conceptualization as a token of chaos, disaster, or, worse, a harbinger of societal partition. Here, the functioning of society hinges on characters' willingness to reconcile such 'new' images of gender with more conventional ones, of disregard abject elements of their gender identity to assume subjecthood. However, this moderate conceptualization of gender closely resembles the 'old' doctrine of the separate spheres in all but the female protagonist's relatively subsidiary integration to the working sphere. Ultimately, THE PLAINSMAN concludes that for

circumstances of 1930s rural America, I refer to Roderick McGillis's study *He Was Some Kind of a Man: Masculinities in the B Western*.

[208] For a concise analysis of the film, I refer to Mark E. Wildermuth's study *Feminism and the Western in Film and Television* (28-33).

[209] Henry King's RAMONA of 1936 already marked the third adaption for the screen of Helen Hunt Jackson's novel, and incidentally constituted Fox studio's debut using cutting-edge Technicolor technology. The film centers a charismatic female protagonist in Loretta Young's Ramona, who defies social conventions personified by her noble foster family, which deny her to pursue a transgressive romantic affair with Alessandro (Don Ameche). Even though the film eventually rebounds to sanitize their ethnically transgressive romance, revealing that Ramona always carried 'Indian blood', their relationship must end in tragedy, as Alessandro, after years of battling the racism their relationship had provoked, dies an unjust death and Ramona is forced to return to her family and marry Felipe (Kent Taylor), a former suitor. Like THE REDMAN'S VIEW and THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, RAMONA conflates modes of representing ethnicity and gender, associating Native American ethnic identity with femininity to explain Alessandro's inferiority, and hence the tragedy of their romance. Stanfield asserts: "To gain sympathy for the Indians, the story calls for him to be a victim, not a hero" (136). Furthermore, as Stanfield's subsequent comparison illustrates, RAMONA establishes an intra-male gender order to emphasize this fact: "Visually, his [Alessandro's, T.S.] inadequacy is compounded when he is juxtaposed to the Native American actor Chief Thunder Cloud. Next to the hard chiselled features of Thunder Cloud [that is, a display of excessive, unrestraint masculinity reminiscent of Magua of THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, T.S.], Ameche looks like a clown" (ibid. 136).

[210] In his eponymously titled book, Jack Halberstam defines the common narrative trajectory of female masculinities as follows: "In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing" (1).

America to re-stabilize, women must rediscover their femininity and men must rediscover their masculinity – only then will they find each other and confirm social order.

When Paramount commissioned the project and gave it to Cecil B. DeMille, the veteran director had not made a Western since the release of his talkie-remake of THE SQUAW MAN in 1931. However, he "felt that he had been too long away from American subjects […]," and so, "[f]or this reason, he made up his mind to have his next picture a Western" (Higham 184).[211] Featuring Gary Cooper as the infamous Wild Bill Hickok, Jean Arthur as Calamity Jane, and a notable supporting cast that sported the roles of such iconic American characters as Buffalo Bill Cody, Jack McCall, George Custer, Abraham Lincoln, and Chief Yellow Hand, THE PLAINSMAN markedly and quite deliberately deviates from the former generic credo of authenticity, despite the director's minute attention to detail.[212] Instead of historical accuracy, as film historian Scott Simmon notes, Paramount wanted this film to be "in the service of a larger national truth" (*The Invention of the Western Film* 108).

Obfuscating the lines between history and myth, THE PLAINSMAN aims at capturing the spirit that conquered half a continent and made it *his* own; in other words: the essence of American collective identity. With Gary Cooper as Wild Bill Hickok epitomizing this spirit, the film characterizes this ideological thrust as definitively white and male. Accordingly, the film opens with a title card that passionately declares that "Among the men who thrust forward America's frontier were *Wild Bill Hickok* and *Buffalo Bill Cody*. The story that follows compresses many years, many lives, and widely separated events in one narrative… in an attempt to do justice to the courage of the plainsman [note the singular; T.S.] of our West" (00:01:48-00:02:14; emphasis in original). In the same vein, it ends with a superimposition of Wild Bill and a coda that reads: "It shall be as it was in the past.. Not with dreams, but with strength and courage, shall a nation be molded to last" (01:47:37-01:47:53). Yet for all the pathos and mythological gravitas that precedes the narrative, thus likening the film to the generic rhetoric of the Western epic, THE PLAINSMAN turns out to be, for the better part of its story, "an entertaining spectacle" (Hardy 63) that confounds several genres, including elements of the *screwball comedy*.

An extremely popular subgenre of the romantic comedy that emerged during the 1930s, the screwball comedy centers the struggles of an "isolated male" with heterosexual romance and derives its comedic element from a reversal of conventional gender roles that, in a highly sexualized rhetoric and imagery, challenges the dominance of white masculinity (Dancyger & Rush 84-85). Featuring a stylized, far-from-historically accurate version of Calamity Jane (cf.

---

[211] In in the years preceding THE PLAINSMAN, DeMille had mostly directed costly and monumental historical dramas, such as THE SIGN OF THE CROSS (1932), CLEOPATRA (1934), and THE CRUSADES (1935).
[212] For instance, according to one researcher, "all the 64 pistols used in the film came from his [DeMille's] personal collection" and "De Mille [sic] was insistent that the phrase 'Go West, young man' be correctly attributed to John B. Searle, the editor of *The Terra Haute Express*" (Hardy 63).

Higham 184-5) as the film's strong, independent-minded, and ostentatiously "breezy" female lead (Hardy 63), THE PLAINSMAN turns many a Western convention on its head, only to eventually rebound to a coherent gender order that stabilizes the primacy of domestic conformity; that is, THE PLAINSMAN, described by Phil Hardy as a "doggedly domestic drama of Cooper and Arthur's relationship" (63), depicts the incompatibility of archaic white Western masculinity with modern white femininity.

With that in mind, I propose a reading of THE PLAINSMAN against the backdrop of the genre's most conventional, formulaic film: THE VIRGINIAN. Not only does THE PLAINSMAN, like THE VIRGINIAN, feature Gary Cooper as its lead protagonist, but both films share a cognate approach to representing gender.[213] THE PLAINSMAN, too, allegorizes the formation of American identity by a white heterosexual man and a white heterosexual woman through processes of reciprocal transformations. However, whereas THE VIRGINIAN ultimately confirmed in the union of the white heterosexual couple heteronormativity and Whiteness as society's organizing principles, THE PLAINSMAN dramatizes the dissolution of gender coherence, which had traditionally served as the basis of heterosexual couple formation. With the congruency of sex and gender performance, specifically of *female* and *femininity*, perpetually in flux, so is Wild Bill's consent to heterosexual romance and domestic conformity.

That notwithstanding, THE PLAINSMAN sends both lead characters – Gary Cooper's Wild Bill Hickok and Jean Arthur's Calamity Jane – on a journey of conformization. As Calamity gradually returns to a more conventional performance of white femininity that suggests to naturally originate in the distinctly sexed body of a woman, Wild Bill lets go of his outdated conceptualization of heroic masculinity. Traditionally, romance in the Western manifested itself in the taming, domesticating, or civilizing of a wild, primitive, individualist and therefore masculine man by a white woman's stable representation of white femininity. In THE PLAINSMAN, this pattern is somewhat modified: wild, primitive, individualist masculinity still requires taming, but for the bulk of the film this gender performance is no longer exclusive to the male sex. As this precludes the formation of the heterosexual couple, THE PLAINSMAN engages in processes of re-masculinization of men and emasculation (or re-feminization) of women to combat gender mobility in all its ideological ramifications and find an antidote to the destabilization of social order. THE PLAINSMAN constructs gender only to subject it to processes of naturalization in an attempt to conceal its construction.

[213] Incidentally, as Roloff and Seeßlen note, THE PLAINSMAN might well be one of the first Westerns to rely on a certain code of specifically masculine, heroic conduct, "which nobody mentions but which is tacitly agreed upon from the very moment we experience it on screen" (77; Transl. T.S.). Arguably, this code corresponds with the generic formula of representing gender set by THE VIRGINIAN.

"Your different!"

THE PLAINSMAN begins with a solemn prologue that immediately links the film's underlying narrative arc to the socio-economic context of a post-World War I, Depression era audience, as President Abraham Lincoln (Frank McGlynn Sr.) and a group of dignitaries discuss the state of the nation coming out of the Civil War. Lincoln foresees great economic and social instability with so many now unemployed men returning from a traumatic experience. He speaks: "We shall have hundreds of thousands of disbanded soldiers, idle men. […] Their return home in such great numbers might paralyze industry by furnishing suddenly a greater supply of labor than for which there could be a demand" (00:02:35-00:02:58). The solution to these problems, he discerns, lies out West, where "there is a place for men to live and work and be happy" (00:03:16-00:03:20). Except that the West ought to be made safe first, for which it requires honorable and courageous men to face adversity and tame the wilderness. "We see an America in disarray," Wildermuth remarks (33), and thus Lincoln formulates the Jeffersonian premise that adumbrates the film's moral epicenter. THE PLAINSMAN thus begins by articulating its ideological basis, which receives particular currency from its explicit connection to Abraham Lincoln as the (often tragic) representation of national unity and social justice. Making the West safe – that is, taming and domesticating its wild and savage forces – translates to the broader ideological thrust of the Great Depression: Restoring a stable social order.

The narrative swiftly progresses from Lincoln's assassination in the Ford Theater to the dignitaries' corrupt decision to boost the economy (and fill their own pockets) by recklessly selling rifles to the Cheyenne nation (thereby violating Lincoln's idea of peaceful yeoman settling, hence planting the seed for further conflicts). After the officials have introduced a man named John Lattimer (Charles Bickford) as the designated trader of said rifles (thus revealing the film's villain), THE PLAINSMAN eventually leaves Washington D.C. and moves the story to a St. Louis river port, where we first lay eyes on the familiar face of Gary Cooper as the as-yet-nameless hero of the film.

Having just returned from the Civil War, Gary Cooper's character, who we will later learn is the infamous gunslinger Wild Bill Hickok, still dons his Union uniform as he indulges a little boy with the ins and outs of frontier lore. The boy is eager to hear all about scouting and killing buffalo, as Wild Bill entertains him with – and educates him on – the legendary tall tales of the West, including one about another most legendary frontier icon: Buffalo Bill Cody. Naturally, the tale involves supreme skills with a gun, an obviously phallic metaphor for hegemonic masculinity. The boy responds in kind, exclaiming "Jimminies! That's the kind of shootin' I aim to do" (00:09:02-00:09:05), signaling his desire to one day inherit the same kind of phallic prowess. And so, THE PLAINSMAN reveals its narrative position and highlights one of

the main discourses it is going to engage with: Focalized through the eyes of a boy, THE PLAINSMAN, i.e., Wild Bill Hickok, will educate us on gender, explicating of what it means to *become* a man. We are that little boy: We look up to the Buffalo Bills and Wild Bill Hickoks of the West, we idolize them, we want to learn all about them, and, ultimately, we want to *become* them. They are paragons of the West and hence paragons of white American masculinity, and we wish to be mentored, tutored, initiated (cf. Joe Hembus in Roloff & Seeßlen 77).[214]

But there are two lessons that we must accept immediately. One, the introduction to hegemonic masculinity requires knowledge about its diametrical, or rather, dyadic opposite: white femininity. As Wild Bill reveals to the boy a pocket watch that features a picture of himself and a white woman with blonde hair, the boy wonders: "Say, you're dressed like a scout there. So's your sister,"[215] to which Wild Bill responds: "That's not my sister. That's Calamity Jane" (00:09:23-00:09:31). With Wild Bill denying kinship, and the boy furthering his curiosity – "Is she your best girl?" (00:09:31-00:09:33) – we infer a romantic relationship between Wild Bill and Calamity, especially given the circumstance of him carrying the picture in a pocket watch, close to his heart.[216]

Fig. 12: Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:09:23.

[214] Assuming the perspective of a child, most frequently a boy's, has been commonly noted as a standard trope of the Western genre, perhaps most prominently implemented in George Steven's SHANE (1953), in which "[t]he boy provides our point of view virtually throughout the film" (Countryman & von Heussen-Countryman 14).

[215] Incidentally, the boy's first innocent assumption that Calamity might be Wild Bill's sister already foreshadows their similitude in character, or, conversely, their incompatibility as romantic partners.

[216] Of course, the fact that an audience recognizes the face of lead actress Jean Arthur next to him further implies romance due to pre-established generic expectations.

Framed in a close-up, the two of them standing close to each other smiling happily, THE PLAINSMAN introduces to us the proverbial image of the idealized white heterosexual couple (Fig. 12). However, in Wild Bills elusive response to the boy's question, we can also infer that something in their relationship has gone awry, as he awkwardly tiptoes around the fact that despite his best intentions to impart paternal wisdom on the boy, Wild Bill has no idea how to relate to women, let alone make sense of them – at least with regards to Calamity Jane.[217]

> Wild Bill: Son, one of these days you're gonna grow up, and you oughta know about women. You see, the thing is this, women are, uh… Well, they're, uhm… Well, son, I can tell you what an Indian will do to you, but you'll never know what a woman will do.[218]
>
> Boy: Why?
>
> Wild Bill: Well… Let's go down and take a look at that fire engine.
>
> Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:09:33-00:09:58.

Image and 'reality' do not match. What the picture in the pocket watch promises – romance – remains unfulfilled in the film's actuality, a notion that Wild Bill Hickok's hapless rambling leads us to attribute to the allegedly inscrutable nature of women, but that equally signifies that in this narrative Wild Bill's ascension to adult masculinity, too, is not complete – for it has not yet been consummated by the formation of the heterosexual couple. Correspondingly, Wild Bill Hickok's elliptic lecture has another effect, in that the film dissociates him entirely from femininity. We infer that Wild Bill has amassed knowledge about the wilderness and the ethnic Other, about violence, about savagery, about men (he still wears the outfit of a Union soldier). He is firmly planted in the masculine domain of individualism, adventure, conflict, competition, combat, in short: 'the world'. But when it comes to women and the domestic, he is utterly clueless. This is a domain in which he, too, yet needs to be initiated. *Wild* Bill still needs to be tamed by the right white woman.

Two, as the scene continues, we learn that the kind of idealized gender performance invoked by the likes of Buffalo Bill requires "constant demonstration and reaffirmation" (Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 41), and crucially, that if one was to come short of such acts of reaffirmation, hegemonic masculinity can be challenged and lost. Through Wild Bill Hickok's subsequent introduction of Buffalo Bill (James Ellison), who so happens to board the same

---

[217] Recalling Gary Cooper's performance in THE VIRGINIAN, this sequence is very much in keeping with his star text.

[218] The trope introduced here would prove to be rather long-lasting in the Western. Still, in 1969, John Wayne as Col. John Henry Thomas delivers a very similar lesson about the inscrutability of women to his adoptive Cheyenne son Blue Boy (Roman Gabriel) in THE UNDEFEATED (Andrew V. McLaglen), noting: "I taught you what to do when the snow comes, how to survive in a blizzard, and I taught you how to deal with men. But women… Nobody knows what's on a woman's mind" (01:00:45-01:00:57).

river boat, we instantaneously experience the discrepancy between past legends about the frontier hero and the present 'reality'. It turns out Buffalo Bill has married and has thus apparently fallen prey to the complacency of domestic conformity.

At first, we learn that Wild Bill has spotted "an easy mark" for the boy to practice his slingshot skills (00:10:15). As the camera assumes Wild Bill's gaze, we see a man in a suit and bowler hat surrounded by women. The women wear fancy dresses, hats, and bonnets, while the man is carrying several hat boxes in one hand and a birdcage in the other: unfunctional, decorative items, or the insignia of affluence, civilization, and a domestic lifestyle. Wild Bill takes the slingshot from the boy and fires a pebble at the man, noting: "I see a right-good fighting man who's been fool enough to get himself married" (00:10:35-00:10:40). The following reverse shot reveals that Wild Bill hit the man right on his buttocks, "a homoerotic zone *par excellence*" (Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 217), as the man turns around in anger and swiftly approaches Wild Bill Hickok with determination.

Peter Verstraten has commented on a scene that involves similar dynamics in his discussion of RIO BRAVO (Howard Hawks, 1959), featuring John Wayne as John T. Chance and Walter Brennan as Stumpy. Citing the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (most notably, her seminal study *Between Men*), Verstraten reads the playful attack of a hierarchically inferior man (Stumpy) on the backside of a hierarchically superior one (Chance) as an act that "causes panic by temporarily making the division between homosexual and homosocial identity invisible and indistinguishable" (*Screening Cowboys* 217). THE PLAINSMAN, too, uses these homophobic signs primarily to negotiate gendered power relations. Except in DeMille's film, the scene confirms a gendered hierarchy between Wild Bill Hickok and Buffalo Bill Cody based on euphemistic, sexually coded performances of active penetration and passive reception, of perpetrator and victim, of violence *done* and violence *done to*.[219]

Furthermore, it adds to the subsequent dynamics in that it dissociates the image of Buffalo Bill – one who expertly shoots – from the actual representation they encounter on the riverbank – one who is feebly shot. The ensuing conversation, again filtered through the perception of the boy, who mostly stands between the men in a visual composition reminiscent of the *copula* arrangement from THE REDMAN'S VIEW or THE VIRGINIAN (Fig. 13), primarily revolves around the fact that the 'real' version of Buffalo Bill as it stands before us has surrendered his frontier credentials and adopted, in the logic of the film, the unmanly conduct of a married man.

[219] By the same token, the sequence draws from the well-established homoerotic subtext of Gary Cooper's star persona. To that end, implying an element of sexual ambiguity about Gary Cooper's character, Mrs Cody, upon first seeing Wild Bill Hickok, describes him as "a rather strange friend" of her husband's (00:11:30-00:11:32).

Fig. 13: Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:11:07.

Correspondingly, his outfit once again recalls the coded appearance of the dandy, on which the film does not hesitate to expound. After Wild Bill has visibly and visually mustered his friend, he notes condescendingly:

> Wild Bill: Well, I see she hasn't cut your hair, *yet*.
> Buffalo Bill: I don't know what you mean, Bill.
> Wild Bill: Well, you know what happened to Samson when Delilah opened her barber shop. Has she tamed you yet?
> Buffalo Bill: Now look here, Bill, that ain't fair. She's different.
> Wild Bill: You're different.
>
> Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:11:36-00:11:51.

To Wild Bill, the insinuation of Cody's losing his hair indicates he has forsaken the skills that made him a paragon of the American West, and an icon of heroic masculinity. Quite explicitly THE PLAINSMAN alludes to discourses of individualism and domesticity, with Wild Bill implying that in having allowed himself to be tamed, Buffalo Bill has sacrificed and relinquished his masculinity and accommodated himself contentedly in the feminine domain of domesticity, of civilization. In the damning indictment ("You're different!") Wild Bill and THE PLAINSMAN amalgamate signs of male homosexuality and domesticity to imply gender failure.

In *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell has written extensively about the symbolic imbrication of male homosexuality and femininity, as well as active practices of feminization in patriarchal systems to subordinate other men and thus establish hegemonic masculinity (as a position in a gender order) (77-78). Katrin Berkenkamp has issued a valuable effort to transpose Connell's theoretical deliberations specifically to gender analyses of the Western (cf. 30-31). Building on these insights while trying to enforce a description of gender that transcends binarity, I contend THE PLAINSMAN repeatedly draws from these signifiers and utilizes this rhetoric to construct a distinct gender hierarchy between Wild Bill Hickok and Buffalo Bill Cody, a dynamic not atypical especially in 1930s American cinema (cf. Lugowksi 273).

For instance, in invoking the legend of Samson and Delilah, Wild Bill suggests that Buffalo Bill's transformation – his 'being different' – is crucially an act of weakness, a degeneration elicited by the seductive and treacherous powers of women. Not only does the film thereby qua Wild Bill's biblical reference imply moral corruption to be historically and thus pathologically rooted in the female sex.[220] But also does the insinuation function to earmark Buffalo Bill's *difference* to originate in an abject gender performance in relation to the male subject, Wild Bill. The legend of the plainsman, the pioneer who courageously paved the way for civilization to take hold, has come to its fateful end in Buffalo Bill before the narrative even started, at least so we are first prompted to assume. In contrast to Wild Bill, who maintains that "women and me don't agree" (00:11:57), thereby again putting distance between himself and domesticity/femininity and thus forestalling similar intimations of an allegedly corrupting female influence with regards to his relation to Calamity Jane, Buffalo Bill has lost hegemonic masculinity because he has surrendered to the heteronormative matrix – a confusing paradox.

A sequence from a few minutes later elaborates on the main narrative trajectory that THE PLAINSMAN is going to take henceforth: the questions of whether Wild Bill Hickok, too, might eventually surrender his individualist, hegemonic masculinity for a domestic life, and embark on a journey of conformization. Correspondingly, THE PLAINSMAN will investigate if Buffalo Bill will be able to salvage elements of his masculine identity despite (or because of?) the fact that he has yielded to domestic conformity. In a paradigmatic conversation, Wild Bill meets Buffalo Bill's wife, Louisa Cody (Helen Burgess), who interrogates him outside the on-board saloon once the ship has left port. She approaches him:

> Louisa Cody: Mr. Hickok? I like to speak to you.
> Wild Bill: Good evening Ma'am.

---

[220] DeMille would continue to pursue his interest in this biblical tale and finally put it to the screen in 1949, starring Victor Mature as Samson and Hedy Lamarr as Delilah in the eponymously titled epic SAMSON AND DELILAH.

Louisa Cody: I'm Louisa Cody. Will's told me how long you have been friends and how you fought for him once. He says you don't trust women.

Wild Bill: Well, not as a rule, Mrs. Cody, but in your case… [he smiles and walks off]

Louisa Cody [stopping him once more]: Mr. Hickok. I'm going to help Will. Don't you believe I can?

Wild Bill: Well, I don't know, Ma'am. He killed his first Indian at 12…

Louisa Cody [interjecting]: But he's not…

Wild Bill [disregarding her interjection]: At 14, he was riding Pony Express. He's one of the best natural scouts on the frontier.

Louisa Cody [proudly]: Will's promised to give up scouting and killing Indians, and all that nonsense.

Wild Bill: Well, the West's in his blood. You can't change that.

Louisa Cody: Yeah, but you've been away from it so long. It is changing and why shouldn't Will change with it? You know, we're going to start a little hotel.

Wild Bill: Cody?

Louisa Cody: Yes. Someday you may be one of our neighbors with a wife of your own.

Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:14:17-00:15:15.

The unfolding story, then, like Mrs. Cody points out, will be one of accustoming to changes, of wild men like Wild Bill becoming accepting of and congruent with conventional ideals of gender and race, galvanized through the civilizing powers of the white woman. THE PLAINSMAN constructs a dual vision of the West, in which, to the focalizing character of Wild Bill, quintessential models of white American masculinity like Buffalo Bill Cody have become docile, complacent adjuncts to their wives. Yet this image, specifically Wild Bill's refusal to embrace female domesticity, is gravely and markedly at odds with the portrayal of the Codys' marriage (cf. Wildermuth 33) and the idealized image of heteronormative conformity they represent.

On the one hand, THE PLAINSMAN delineates Wild Bill's gender identity as the yardstick by which all other men are measured. In keeping with Peter Verstraten's findings about the narratological and visual peculiarities of the Western's negotiation of male heroism, who noted that "[m]asculine heroism in westerns requires an internal audience" and that "[t]hese spectators reward the best man in a competition with the 'gift' of masculinity" (*Screening Cowboys* 13), THE PLAINSMAN, too, establishes Wild Bill's position atop the gender order through the appraisal of other men.

Using a set piece not dissimilar from THE VIRGINIAN's saloon sequence between Gary Cooper's hero and the villain Trampas, THE PLAINSMAN shows Wild Bill assert his masculine dominance in a game of poker. When Wild Bill catches another gambler cheating, he draws

his gun, and confronts the delinquent. The all-male internal audience holds their breath, gasping in awe, reciting anxiously tales of the legendary skills of Wild Bill Hickok. One onlooker, Jack McCall (Porter Hall), who will later cowardly kill Wild Bill Hickok,[221] even brags about his alleged friendship with Wild Bill, even though, as it has been revealed to us, they just met moments before. As the surrounding men repeat his name, the scoundrel petrifies, dropping his cigar, scared to death upon realizing whom he tried to cheat (Fig. 14).[222]

Fig. 14: Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:18:06.

On the other hand, superior as he may be, THE PLAINSMAN also reveals that Wild Bill has grown out of touch with society. Although society still worships him and respects his

[221] Interestingly, as Cecil B. DeMille describes in his autobiography, the fact that in keeping with historical evidence, in THE PLAINSMAN Jack McCall should kill Wild Bill Hickok caused worries with the Paramount executives because they demanded “a more manly villain” (Hayne 352). He continues: “But history was adhered to, and the audience did not object to the much more effective, as well as truer, tragedy of Hickok’s being killed by a ‘little rat’” (ibid. 352). These remarks are very revealing, as DeMille yet again drew heavily from the established Western trope of the dandy in portraying THE PLAINSMAN’s villain: Jack McCall, dressed fancily, acting timidly, and subject to frequent belittlement by other characters for his smoking of tiny “cigareetes” [sic], reflects the semantic conflation of homophobia and deficient masculinity, of deviant sexuality and gender failure. His imposing character, seeking physical and spiritual proximity to other men, his intrusive sexualized gaze onto other men, as well as his callous, cowardly murder of Wild Bill by shooting him in the back (another “homoerotic zone *par excellence*” (Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 217; emphasis in original)) are but the most salient hallmarks of the Hollywood Western’s systematic demonization of male homosexuality.

[222] The scene, including the quickly edited close-ups of the internal male audience holding their breaths, had already become a classic set-piece of the Western. For instance, LAW AND ORDER features a very similar scene. Here, it is Walter Huston as Frame ‘Saint’ Johnson, a fictionalized version of Western legend Wyatt Earp, who interrupts the game with a gunshot as he witnesses one of the players cheating.

unparalleled skills, he is no longer the trailblazer for civilization because he refuses to embrace it. While Buffalo Bill Cody has found a wife and fulfilled the heterosexual contract, Wild Bill denies and suppresses his love for Calamity Jane, though we know from the picture in his pocket watch that deep down it is precisely that image of heterosexual union that he so desires. Instead, he uses Buffalo Bill's marital bliss against him and wanders the perilously fragile line between male homosociality and notions of male homosexuality.

Parallel to Wild Bill's development, which over the course of the narrative incrementally has him reconcile the idea of a domestic lifestyle (I will elaborate on this below), Buffalo Bill rediscovers his frontier individualism. When duty calls on him – General Custer requires a scout to lead an army supply trek through unfamiliar and hostile territory – he answers and obliges, albeit reluctantly, as he dreads the thought of leaving behind his wife in their newly built frontier home. Tasked to prove his professional abilities, Buffalo Bill complies and excels. Once more, he dons buckskin attire and a rifle, and, most significantly, assumes leadership. Abandoning, at least temporarily, the domestic realm of 'the home' – not because he wants to but because he must – he comfortably readjusts among other men within 'the world', and thus realigns the iconographic, pre-discursive image of the mythic Buffalo Bill with its cinematic representation in this film. Through his narrative trajectory, THE PLAINSMAN demonstrates that heroic masculinity, though necessarily acquiesced in domestic conformity, can and occasionally must be awakened.

The result is a paradoxical vision of gender mobility that reveals the aporia of heteronormativity. THE PLAINSMAN at once constructs gender as performance (which becomes visible as Wild Bill momentarily marks Buffalo Bill's gender as unintelligible, or 'different') and naturalizes gender as coherently and causally rooted in dimorphously sexed bodies (confirmed by the idealization of the Cody's institutionalized heterosexual union, which is revealed to be Wild Bill's ultimate, if temporarily repressed goal). In the same vein, through Buffalo Bill's alleviating realignment of male body and conventional performances of heroic masculinity – of sex and gender –, the film, on the one hand, strengthens the notion that the heteronormative matrix fundamentally requires intelligible genders to uphold the image of a natural order, and on the other hand simultaneously occasions the contingency of gender in that Buffalo Bill is able to move from abject to subject gender identity.

THE PLAINSMAN, in the narrative developments of Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, reveals two interconnected aspects of the mid-1930s Western's negotiation of gender. One, Wild Bill's habitual attempts to dissociate himself from everything feminine in order to reassure himself of his superior masculinity points towards the dependency of a binary gender order on the demarcation of oppositional, hierarchically arranged genders. Two, these gender configurations are predicated on a congruency of gender and biological sex, which manifests itself through compulsory heterosexuality (cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 192-3), leading to

situations of humiliation and rebuttal, homoerotic threat and "homosexual panic" (Sedgwick 201), if the congruency of these categories is openly challenged or if acts of compulsory heterosexuality are discontinued (cf. Sedgwick 5).

To that effect, THE PLAINSMAN from very early on ambiguates its own self-contradictory image of idealized heterosexuality (and the vision of a congruent gender order that is embedded in the image) – the picture in Wild Bill's pocket watch – with an ominous portend of a skewered reality, in which the promise of the image does not apply: Wild Bill and women "do not agree". Apparently, we must infer at this point, there is a stark discrepancy between the heteronormative ideal and Wild Bill's lived reality, compelling him not to find fulfillment in the pursuit of heterosexuality and domesticity, but in the renunciation of it.

"Well, she's a woman, isn't she?"

Ending the riverboat sequence is another close-up of Wild Bill's pocket watch. Prompted by Mrs. Cody's presentation of herself as a caring, supporting wife, who prides herself with how much she has helped her husband restrain and surpass his savage impulses, Wild Bill produces the pocket watch, plays and listens to its tune, and fondly eyes the picture of himself and Calamity Jane, captured in a moment of ostensible heterosexual bliss. The close-up fades into the next sequence, a superimposition that ultimately arrives at a shot of Calamity Jane holding the bridle of a team of horses by herself. The image in the pocket watch and Calamity in action – Wild Bill's expectation and 'reality' – present a huge discrepancy, intensified only by the direct juxtaposition with the image of femininity evoked moments before by Louisa Cody. Something about Calamity, we are made to infer, is amiss – at least for Wild Bill.

The following sequences reveal what Wild Bill might experience as amiss, as THE PLAINSMAN consistently dissociates Calamity from dominant conceptualizations of white femininity and instead approximates her to the conventional symbolic male body, both in terms of her outward appearance and her social habitus. Calamity carries a gun and a cartridge belt around her trouser-clad waist – and while this is commensurate with her professional position in the narrative as a stagecoach driver, it strongly violates the conventional mode of representing white femininity. She speaks plainly and candidly. She curses frequently, and she is shown to actively command and control the men around her, with THE PLAINSMAN at times even positioning her physically atop other men (Fig. 15). Accordingly, her posturing – keeping her arms akimbo, showcasing the inside of her thighs – enlarges her appearance, which equally defies conventionally female conduct. The film has her receive praise for her mastering of frontier skills, which is explicitly put in relation to masculine gender performances as she is introduced by Buffalo Bill as "a dead shot, rides better than a man, drives the stage" (00:24:09-

00:24:13), a sequence in which THE PLAINSMAN even awards her with the below-eye-level close-up conventionally reserved for the male hero (Fig. 16).

Fig. 15: 00:24:00.

Fig. 16: 00:24:09.

But at the same time THE PLAINSMAN insists repeatedly that her quasi-masculine conduct does not make her a man. For instance, in a later sequence, after Calamity has endangered the lives of many soldiers by revealing classified information to the Cheyenne, an angry crowd gathers around her, agitating what to do with her.

Fig. 17. Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 01:11:23.

Apparently unsure whether to judge her by her masculine conduct or her female body, the mob hesitates, with one man exclaiming: “If she was a man, we’d know what to do with her!” (Fig. 17; 01:11:31-01:11:33).[223]

Calamity’s unconventional display of gender is therefore mainly coded as such because it breaches gender coherence. Her bodily appearance disrupts the assumed congruency between sex and gender, between female and femininity, which includes a discrepancy between the sex/gender of the character (Calamity Jane) and the sex/gender of the actress (Jean Arthur). And while THE PLAINSMAN uses much of this gender mobility and role reversal for comedic effect – in keeping with the generic markers of the *screwball comedy* –, Calamity’s unintelligible gender performance contains several subversive elements. Expressing a similar point, Wildermuth observes in his reading of THE PLAINSMAN:

> She is a professional woman – a mule skinner by trade – wielding a whip with alacrity against both men and beasts. […] She dresses like a man and wears a soldier’s kepi hat, much like the one Hickock [sic] sported in the film’s beginning. In a film where the relationship between civilization and savagery is as complex as this one, she might well be the vey [sic] ticket for resolving problems since she represents a professional woman who has given up completely on the private domestic realm and focused solely on cultivating only hard masculine values in the world of public professionalism. (34)

What Wildermuth describes as Calamity’s “cultivating only hard masculine values” (34) has similarly been recognized by Peter Stanfield, who notes Calamity Jane’s “tomboyish charms” (137). Indeed, the descriptor “tomboyish” offers an intriguing concept, as Jack Halberstam defines the term to “generally [describe] an extended childhood period of female masculinity” (5). Halberstam continues:

> Tomboyism tends to be associated with a “natural” desire for the greater freedoms and mobilities enjoyed by boys. Very often it is read as a sign of independence and self-motivation, and tomboyism may even be encouraged to the extent that it remains comfortably linked to a stable sense of a girl

[223] Incidentally, it is Wild Bill who appears to resolve the situation by realigning her gender performance with her sex: As the townspeople are about to rail her through the streets, thus using her unintelligible display of gender as a license to violate the sanctity of the white female body, Wild Bill steps in and prevents her punishment. Confidently, he declares: “Well, she’s a woman, isn’t she?”, reminding everyone that women “talk a little too much sometimes” (01:12:05-01:12:12), which he says as much to alleviate Calamity’s transgression (and thus realign her gender performance with her female body) as he does to scold one angry mobster. Interestingly, the sequence continues with Wild Bill silencing the outraged mob, saying: “And men talk a little too much sometimes, too” (01:12:14-01:12:16). Commenting on the same scene, Wildermuth opines that “it would seem to suggest that the previous paradigm where masculine values seemed to prevail has just been undercut by the strange blurring of gender boundaries” (36). Indeed, Wild Bill’s retort – as another effort to silence the crowd and protect Calamity Jane – is most likely intended to be perceived as a gendered threat directed at the mostly male mob. In that he links the crowd’s angry voices with his previous remark – women and the mob both talk a little too much – he cements his pathologizing assessment and uses the strategy of abjectivation to subdue them under his masculine authority.

identity. Tomboyism is punished, however, when it appears to be the sign of extreme male identification (taking a boy's name or refusing girl clothing of any type) and when it threatens to extend beyond childhood and adolescence. (6)

Transposed to the context of THE PLAINSMAN, reading Calamity Jane as a tomboy contextualizes her gender performance as transgressive within the diegesis, and reveals the processes of gender conformization that descend on her in the ensuing narrative trajectory as the means of a patriarchal hegemony stabilizing itself by reasserting heteronormativity as society's dominant organizing principle, while inadvertently opening a caveat for subversion, as said trajectory of expulsion requires her abject gender identity to be constructed in the first place.

As in Halberstam's seminal study *Female Masculinity*, the tomboy "affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity" (1) in that it uncouples the performance of masculinity from the male body. Sporting a bullwhip, donning conventionally manly frontier attire and working successfully in the professional sphere – work that entails her traverse through dangerous open terrain and master the adversities of the wilderness –, THE PLAINSMAN presents in Calamity Jane a female body assuming and successfully appropriating the parameters of conventional, heroic white masculinity. While the bullwhip she uses repeatedly to prove her authority (mostly, to other men) already symbolically reifies a challenge to white male hegemony, THE PLAINSMAN introduces another, even more provocative and threatening element of her gender identity: the insinuation of wanton female sexual independence.

Repeatedly, the film includes sequences that explicitly and implicitly comment on Calamity's apparent refusal to make do with heterosexual monogamy. To illustrate: Upon their first reunion in Leavenworth, Calamity complains to Wild Bill that he never once wrote her a letter while he was away fighting, to which he, after some back and forth, defiantly responds: "A woman who has a fellow at every stage station and a beau in every cavalry troop west of the Missouri – that woman doesn't need any letters from me". On the defensive, Calamity retorts: "Ah, Bill. Those fellows didn't mean nothing to me" – an answer that seems to make matters worse, as it confirms Wild Bill's allegations of Calamity's promiscuity (00:21:52-00:22:14). More to the point, her answer potently illustrates her refusal to comply with conventional expectations of white femininity. Instead, her attempt to trivialize her sexual activities are part and parcel to her appropriation of the phallus and display of female masculinity.

Another scene, which in fact precedes Calamity's reunion with Wild Bill, sustains this interpretation: When Calamity is first introduced a sailor disembarking his ship walks past her. He stops, recognizes, and greets her, then immediately pronounces a sexualized invitation:

Sailor: Keepin' company tonight?
Calamity: Yeah, me and my six horses.
Sailor: Well, seven's a lucky number. Count me in.
[Calamity smiles, bemused, apparently relishing the flirt. She turns around, looks carefully at his body, and tracks his departure with her eyes].
Calamity: You sailors are all alike.

Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 00:19:41-00:19:53.

Crucially, the cinematography of the sequence does not go as far as making the male body an object of sexual desire, though that is clearly what Calamity is doing narratively. The sequence is entirely filmed as a back-view shot, which to an extent assumes the perspective of the sailor.[224] By means of this camera angle, the viewer is invited to look at Calamity looking at a man. It de-sexualizes the audience's view onto the male body, thus complying with the paradigm of the male gaze, but at the same time the arrangement emphasizes the way Calamity sexualizes men.

The ramifications of this are twofold: One, this configuration reveals the hitherto unchallenged link between masculinity and heterosexual promiscuity. While frequenting sexually ambiguous places like saloons (see THE VIRGINIAN) or going on adventures to distant lands that are rumored to entail sexual exploits (see CIMARRON) have generally not impeded the moral integrity and gender intelligibility of men, such intimations drastically destabilize the moral integrity and gender intelligibility of Calamity as a woman. Her sexual promiscuity is presented as an integral component of her gender performance; however, this in turn makes her 'unladylike' in Wild Bill's eyes (00:22:22-00:22:24; 00:23:19-00:23:27), hence undesirable, hence unintelligibly gendered. Consequently, Wild Bill ends the conversation: "Well, they did to me" (00:22:13).

Two, employing dynamics similar to the Dixie Lee courtroom sequence in CIMARRON, THE PLAINSMAN, in keeping with the dominant contemporaneous narrative on first wave feminism, envisions women's liberation on predominantly economic and sexual terms (cf. Hansen 7). THE PLAINSMAN presents a complex network in which Calamity's ascension to the public sphere coincides with her abandonment of conventionally feminine attributes and her assumption of a different gender habitus. Consequently, the film introduces a rationale in which the hero's sexual abstinence and refusal of the heterosexual contract is explained with the heroine's sexual overactivity, which results from her corruption through the forces of 'the world'.

[224] The fact the shot was not realized as an over-shoulder shot indicates the narrative irrelevance of the sailor character; the viewer does not need to identify with him, hence there is no need for proximity.

As “the locus of sin and evil” that traditionally “demanded greed and selfishness of a man, tempted him with power and sensual enjoyment, and set him against other men” (Rotundo 23), ‘the world’ has another effect. Situating Calamity as an outsider coming in to the otherwise exclusively male/masculine domain also serves to re-establish gender coherence in dramatizing how Calamity Jane eventually falls prey to the temptations and vices of ‘the world’. While her gender habitus grants her access and success in ‘the world’, her female body pre-determines her demise.

From there on, THE PLAINSMAN sends its characters on a narrative trajectory that incrementally realigns them with more conventional gender images. A conflict with the Cheyenne threatens the frontier community, compelling Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill to follow Lincoln’s ideological call to make the frontier safe for civilization. Buffalo Bill momentarily abandons his plans to open a hotel with his wife, putting his domestic complacency on hiatus in order to prove his masculinity once more. With the men gone, taking care of the pregnant Louisa Cody falls to Calamity, who seizes these unforeseen circumstances to familiarize herself with domesticity, hence with conventional white femininity: We see her fitting dresses and trying on hats (00:35:51-00:36:50), and furnishing the Cody’s frontier home together with Louisa Cody. With her help, Calamity re-learns conventional femininity,[225] and gradually relinquishes her fluctuating gender habitus – a recurring feature of the genre as described by Pam Cook:

> Not surprisingly, then, many Westerns work away at the problem of re-establishing sexual boundaries: it’s unusual for the woman who starts out wearing pants, carrying a gun and riding a horse to be still doing so at the end of the movie. Suitably re-clad in dress and skirt, she prepares to take her place in the family, leaving adventure to the men. (“Women and the Western” 294).

However, as has been illustrated by David M. Lugowski in a comprehensive effort of queering 1930s American cinema, such dynamics as displayed between Louisa Cody and Calamity Jane in their frontier home are equally suggestive of lesbian discourse (272-4). In a film that relies so heavily on exploring notions of gender through expressions of sexuality, the homely exchange between the two women is an example both of re-establishing gender coherence (using signifiers of conventional white femininity) and of entertaining the notion of lesbianism, thereby threatening the very premises the film wants ultimately stabilized. Calamity Jane’s seemingly suppressed, sudden burst of interest for conventionally feminine conduct both realigns her gender performance with dominant expectations for female bodies and constructs a queer *heterotopia*. Void of men, the film in this scene inadvertently imagines

[225] Correspondingly, Buffalo Bill Cody and Wild Bill Hickok address her by her nickname ‘Calamity’. But she introduces herself to Mrs. Cody with her real name, ‘Cannary’, suggesting a switch of identity which depends on the gender of whom she is interacting with.

romance, idealized domesticity, and 'the home' as objects of desire between the two women, thus formulating "an immanent critique of heteropatriarchy" by "positing men as optional to sexuality" (Lugowski 273). Accordingly, Lugowski concludes: "Heterocentric oppression relies upon queerness to establish normalcy, yet that queerness only breeds other queerness, undermining the system it means to bolster" (273).

In keeping with this idea, the act that ultimately realigns her gender performance with her biological sex – that is, re-feminizes her – and disperses the 'threat' of lesbianism, is an act of decidedly heterosexual compassion, love, caring, vulnerability, and weakness. Captured by Chief Yellow Hand, she confesses to Wild Bill that she will not be able to endure the Sioux' torturing that awaits them. She tells him she will not be able to sacrifice her life like Wild Bill intends to sacrifice his, nor will she be able to watch him doing it. She forgets the professional pragmatism she had evidenced before (and which Wild Bill, conversely, still maintains), and fully succumbs to her romantic feelings for him.[226] She refuses to accept Wild Bill's logic, who is happy to die if that means he can save 48 men, including his friend Buffalo Bill Cody, from a Sioux attack. Calamity, however, prioritizes her romantic feelings for Wild Bill to the harsh pragmatism of the frontier, and discloses the secret information that Wild Bill would have died to protect. Calamity is unable to fully conform with the male habitus that dictates restraint, selflessness, courage, and a sense of professional duty that defies self-preservation even in the face of the gravest adversity.

In the logic of the film, this existential situation reveals her true colors; that is, her female habitus, which is above all characterized by emotionality, vulnerability, and a sense for caring and protection. Only then, as Calamity apparently reveals her true Self, does Wild Bill finally confess his love to her. Only then, as the film momentarily establishes gender coherence, and Calamity performs in accordance with conventional expectations of a feminine woman, can heterosexuality ensue. Correspondingly, Wild Bill finally consents to the heterosexual contract, as the recognition of Calamity Jane as a feminine woman prompts him to confess his love and thus disclose his inherent desire to strive for the kind of domestic conformity previously exhibited by the Codys. Consequently, true to the generic formula perfected by THE VIRGINIAN, masculinity and femininity reciprocally confirm each other as the protagonists recognize each other as intelligible, oppositionally gendered subjects, and endorse the heteronormative

[226] Her extremely anxious reaction in this scene is, however, also motivated by personal trauma, as one previous scene shows Calamity surrounded by Sioux warriors "who turn off the lights as they close in on her" (Wildermuth 34). As the camera fades to black, the insinuation that Calamity will be "gang raped by the men" (ibid. 34) is clear. The sequence condenses several conflicting dynamics, as it on the one hand relies on the pre-established narrative trope of "a fate worse than death" that exposes (and thus identifies) the white female body to a sexualized, racially Othered threat. On the other hand, as the scene frames the rape as the consequence of Calamity sacrificing herself to protect the pregnant Louisa Cody, THE PLAINSMAN through this arrangement simultaneously emphasizes Calamity's propensity to act pragmatically, selflessly, and hence in accordance with the patterns of conventional, heroic white masculinity.

gender order. Only as they perform gender in line with the sex of their bodies, which are, however, evidently informed and determined by pre-conceived notions of gender, can heterosexual romance ensue.

However, THE PLAINSMAN retains an element of gender mobility throughout the film until the end. When called upon, Calamity relinquishes her newly acquired dress and demonstrates her talents of supreme horse-riding and scouting. Later, as fate separates Calamity and Wild Bill once more, she opens a saloon and becomes a well-known and respected businesswoman. Incrementally, THE PLAINSMAN moderates and appeases Calamity's gender incoherence: from a fornicating, bullwhipping tomboy to a caring, domesticating white woman – who so happens to run a business on the frontier. Wild Bill eventually arrives at the conclusion that he must embrace domesticity and relinquish his excessive individualism in order to be happy. And so, towards the end of the film, they meet again in Calamity's saloon.

> Calamity: Say, Bill, you won't have to move on, will ya?
>
> Wild Bill: No. I got a hunch this is gonna be my last camp.
>
> Calamity: You mean… You're settlin' down? You're gonna stay here?
>
> Wild Bill [ominously]: I got a feelin' I'm gonna stay here.
>
> Calamity [puzzled]: Bill, you need a drink.
>
> Wild Bill: I been thinking': The West is getting' to be a new kind of place. Bill Cody's done the right thing. He's changed. What room is there gonna be for a two-gun plainsman, huh?
>
> Calamity: You're talking crazy. You're the best man in this country.
>
> Wild Bill: I don't know who thinks so.
>
> Calamity: I think so, Bill. Say, if you think Cody's done right settlin' down and all, maybe that's what you'd like to do? I mean, have a home, and things, and have somebody to cook your meals for ya and…
>
> Wild Bill [interrupting her]: Doesn't sound so bad.
>
> Calamity: Oh, Bill.
>
> Source: THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936). Paramount. DVD. 01:36:12-01:37:07.

Ultimately, then, Calamity and Wild Bill express their desire to form the heterosexual couple, and in that act confirm heteronormativity as society's organizing principle. The gender troubling conflicts that had arisen through Calamity's performance of (and Wild Bill's intolerance toward) gender mobility are overcome as Calamity declares herself willing to become a nurturing domestic housewife, and Wild Bill declares himself willing to accept her that way. Though undeniably unique in her performance of gender mobility, Calamity's unusual role in THE PLAINSMAN in the end nevertheless arrives at the conventional consecration of a national union in "patriarchal heterosexual monogamy" (Benshoff & Griffin 314).

Except that it does not, because Wild Bill is cowardly killed by Jack McCall – the dandy, and male verso of Calamity's gender incoherence[227] – before their monogamous heterosexual union can be consummated. THE PLAINSMAN thus ends in tragedy, hence an implicit comment on the state of the nation and an 'elegant' solution that ultimately obeys Production Code ethics. Through unprecedented circumstances, social order in 1930s America has been destabilized. Women's entering of 'the world' has required them to assume a different, unfeminine, undesirable, unintelligible gender habitus, which, according to THE PLAINSMAN, has corrupted women and subsequently led them to betray the conventional virtues of their sex, thereby tilting and toppling social order as organized by heteronormativity and gender coherence. For society to re-stabilize, first, women must re-embrace their femininity like Calamity Jane, who must become more like Louisa Cody. Second, men must acknowledge women's efforts to realign their gender performance, and while they must perpetually prove their masculinity through acts of conquering and subduing others like Buffalo Bill Cody, they must also commit and consign themselves to the heterosexual contract, and allow women to domesticate them.

As the Depression hit the American population increasingly harder, the formerly robust gender order became destabilized. Hollywood responded to the growing uncertainties about gender arrangements with ambiguous messages that would simultaneously reflect the turbulent times and appease an audience with vestiges of conformity. At the start of the decade, the remarkably complex and critical CIMARRON offered an eloquent testimony to an uncertain, ambiguous time riddled with social change and the call for a revaluation of history and historiography.

In time though, American society would bounce back from the destabilizing economic setback. Correspondingly, the public perception of gender would roll back, a process which is explored in Hollywood cinema (and specifically in the, admittedly few, Western films of that period) in the reciprocal gender transformation; that is, the re-masculinization of men and re-feminization of women to fit binary gender representations as the nuclear units of the heteronormative matrix. Mid-1930s A-features like THE PLAINSMAN demonstrate how, fueled by economic necessity, Hollywood studios would target larger audiences by ostensibly loosening its rigid gender corset to accommodate women's interests in the West. On the one hand, therefore, THE PLAINSMAN provides a powerful example of a genre commonly perceived as a male refuge attempting to respond to an alleged crisis in gender politics. Crucially though, the film carefully manipulates conceptualizations of gender contingency to return to images of

---

[227] On a related note, Benshoff and Griffin have described how Hollywood films of the Production Code era often "subtly work to conflate deviance from traditional norms of gender and sexuality with murderous and psychotic criminality" (316), thereby suggesting that the patterns already evident in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY and THE VIRGINIAN became institutionalized with the Production Code Administration.

gender coherence, and thus defend male hegemony. Just like Mrs. Taylor brainwashing Molly Wood in THE VIRGINIAN, THE PLAINSMAN ultimately contains potential ruptures in the heteronormative order by realigning gender conceptualizations with the conventional doctrine of the separate spheres, arguing that heterosexual monogamy was and always has been in the best interest of men and women, because jointly and reciprocally they constitute the pillars of American collective national identity.

At the same time though, these films reveal the fundamental necessity of the heteronormative matrix to construct that which it subsequently conceals or expels. Transgressions must first be shown and marked as such before they can and will be repaired. For Calamity Jane's gender to be realigned with her allegedly natural sex, first THE PLAINSMAN must construct her gender as unnatural. For her to rediscover what it means to be a lady, first she must be univocally marked as unladylike. Likewise, for Buffalo Bill Cody to rediscover what it means to be a man, first he must be called out as different. It follows that for them to become intelligibly gendered subjects, they must align gendered performances with the discursively pre-determined sex of the body from which these performance stem.

This means that, one, Calamity's initial gender performance gives proof that gender can transcend the sexed image of a body; two, if performance can, in fact, transcend the body, it follows that the former does not naturally and inevitably succeed the other, and that the body does not naturally and inevitably determine performance; three, if the body comprises a distinct expectation of performance from which a subject can deviate as much as it may comply, it follows that the body itself is pre-determined by gender. We expect masculinity from a male body that is named Buffalo Bill Cody – instead we learn that he is *different* and are given visual evidence for this *difference*. We expect femininity from a female body that is named Calamity Jane – instead we learn that she is unladylike and are given plenty visual information which support that judgement. Therefore, THE PLAINSMAN, in its gender bending comedy, inadvertently refutes the apodictum of a natural origin of male and female bodies, revealing instead that the construction of sex is subject to gender – a binary vision of gender, to be precise. Conversely, in its gender constraining tragedy which manifests in the vehement recourse to strategies of naturalization, specifically the formation of the heterosexual couple, which concomitantly serve to conceal the contingency of gender that the film has just unfolded, THE PLAINSMAN also illustrates the hegemony of heteronormativity.

4.2.3. Excursion II: WELLS FARGO (1937) and ARIZONA (1940)

What is more, the Westerns of the 1930s – some more than others (for instance, ANNIE OAKLEY more than THE PLAINSMAN) are acknowledging and occasionally greatly appreciative of women's achievements. Yet their attempts of reconciling modern femininity, the New

Woman, with the conventional formula of the Western genre overwhelmingly assimilates new conceptualizations of gender to traditional ones.

In the run-up to the far-reaching caesura in Western film history that would be 1939, these tendencies and structures would even intensify. As the American people regained trust in their societal order, their government, and their economy, affirmative images of dominant masculinity – that is, of male self-confidence and prowess – would return to the screens. Correspondingly, potentially transgressive images of strong, authoritative women vanished from the narratives of most Westerns, at least temporarily.

A scene from WELLS FARGO (1937), one of the few lavish A-Western productions of the late 1930s, exemplifies the socio-political undercurrents of that period of Western films very well: As the film's hero, Ramsay McKay (Joel McCrea) is commissioned by the Wells Fargo Company for a job that requires him to move from St. Louis to San Francisco, leaving behind his love interest, the genteel lady Justine Pryor (Frances Dee), the following dialogue ensues:

> Ramsay: […]. I'm going to California.
> Justine: California?
> Ramsay: Yes, I'm leaving tomorrow.
> Justine: Alone?
> Ramsay: No, I'm expecting to take Hank York with me.
> Justine: Well, I wasn't thinking of Hank York. Surely you wouldn't go so far away without *me*.
> Ramsay: You? But that wouldn't be possible.
> Justine: It would. We'll be married at once. I don't care what mother says.
> Ramsay: That's wonderful of you to want to go. But I couldn't think of taking you away from all this and into such hardship and danger.
> Justine: Well, if there is danger, I want to be with you.
> Ramsay: Oh Justine, that'd be crazy to think of it. I have work to do. Big work. And after I made good, I…
> Justine: Do you mean that… that your work is more important to you than I am?
> Ramsay: Oh no, of course not. But… Well, it's my job, don't you see, Justine? You should be glad that I have this chance to do something so important.
> Justine: If you go without me now…
> Ramsay: …Justine…
> Justine: …then I never want to see you again. Never!
>
> Source: WELLS FARGO, Frank Lloyd (1937). Paramount. 00:26:24-00:27:26.

As the sequence illustrates, the film is completely enveloped in the socio-political discourses of its time: the ultimate necessity for a man to have a job, the separation of a masculine working sphere and a feminine domestic sphere, and principally the assignations of

oppositional values/concepts to a binary conceptualization of gender ("danger", "hardship", mobility, ratio, professionalism and a sense of duty are coded masculine; safety, domesticity, stasis, nurturing, and irrationality are coded feminine). Justine's coming along to Ramsay's professional obligations – which the film generally celebrates as spectacular outdoor homosocial adventures – would signify her transgressing the carefully re-established boundaries of the all-male working sphere. WELLS FARGO deems this proposal irrational, selfish, unsuitable for a lady and thus contrary to the expectations of feminine conduct. In fact, the film via its hero quite explicitly states what is expected of her: her interest ought to be with his completion of – and identification with – his job.

In very much a reversal of the authoritative, individualist, charismatic women displayed by Jean Arthur's Calamity Jane or Barbara Stanwyck's Annie Oakley a few years prior to this film – or in fact throughout the 1930s by Mae West[228] –, the vision of gender offered by WELLS FARGO indeed reconnects with the safely organized heteronormative cosmos of THE VIRGINIAN, and the conventional Victorian image of femininity à la Molly Wood.

As audience expectations are for Ramsay and Justine to eventually end up as the romantic couple, and Justine's storming out disrupts the notion of heterosexual harmony, the film, sure enough, resolves the issue in the very next scene:

[The next day (the next scene immediately). Ramsay is preparing to leave. Justine arrives just in time to speak to Ramsay before he leaves.]
Justine: Ramsay!
[They hug.]
Justine: I didn't mean it. Not a word of it. Please forgive me.
Ramsay: What? There is nothing to forgive.
Justine: Oh yes. I was made to think of going with you. But I just couldn't bear the thought of you leaving me, going into danger.
Ramsay: But I'll be alright. And perhaps I'll be back again before you had time to miss me.
Justine: Oh I'll wait for you forever. Don't make forever too long.
[They kiss. He leaves while we see a close-up of her face.]

Source: WELLS FARGO, Frank Lloyd (1937). Paramount. 00:28:29-00:29:30.

The film's melodramatic trajectory, the denouement of heterosexual love, can only ensue if Justine learns to know her place, which is acknowledging the essentiality of professional labor to masculine identity. As Justine and Ramsay kiss and the lovers forgive each other, the gender troubles of the Depression era seem forgotten, the potential act of

[228] Especially West's KLONDIKE ANNIE (Raoul Walsh, 1936) and MY LITTLE CHICKADEE (Edward F. Cline, 1940) are of interest in this regard (cf. Levitin 104-5).

gender transgression revoked, the notion of gender contingency concealed, the image of naturally allocated domains to naturally sexed bodies retained, and the genre's traditional formula restored.

Four years after THE PLAINSMAN, in 1940, Jean Arthur would reappear in a quite similar Western setting in Wesley Ruggles's ARIZONA. Here, Jean Arthur again plays a tomboyish, independent, individualist woman, Phoebe Titus, whose divergence from gender coherence is ultimately restored when she meets the right man in William Holden's character, Peter Muncie. Framed as a post-Depression parable, the film very explicitly suggests that a crisis, i.e., economic necessity, forced Phoebe to become the person that she is (read: to appropriate an 'unladylike', hence unintelligible gender habitus). She runs her own business, she carries a shotgun and uses it against men to get her way, and she often assumes a conventionally male pose (standing at the side of a table with one foot planted on a nearby chair, which opens her legs and presents her genital area, that is, the phallus she thereby symbolically appropriates, to the internal audience). Thus, early in the film Peter Muncie assumes about her: "Living in a place like this you couldn't afford to be a woman, unless you found the right man" (00:13:06-00:13:10).

Sure enough, in the film's denouement Phoebe and Peter marry, and together they build a ranch to raise cattle, thus forging an empire. The film thereby adopts the conventional iconography of the Western epic. Ideal white man and ideal white Woman have found each other once more to fulfill and affirm the American project. Perhaps with reference to Jean Arthur's star text of the preceding years, ARIZONA retroactively gives a causal explanation for the gender troubles of the 1930s, finding closure in the fact that such confusions have been overcome, or "that nothing will essentially change" (Levitin 98). Augmenting the film's ending with the corresponding epic gravitas, one character, Judge Bogardus (Edgar Buchanan), accordingly comments on their wedding: "This is the most important event in the history of the Arizona territory" (01:49:10-01:49:18). With their marriage, gender coherence can be restored: owning the ranch and having found the 'right man', in the logic of the film, finally allow for Phoebe to be a 'proper' – that is, feminine – woman again. Accordingly, Jacqueline Levitin remarks: "It takes this 'right man' to notice the woman beneath the mask, to help her out of her difficulties and to demonstrate that she should leave heroics to him" (98). In the same vein, Pam Cook notes on the film: "[…] Phoebe Titus' independence is revealed as masquerade and she cedes the struggle to laconic westerner Peter Hunsey [sic]" ("Women and the Western" 296). To that effect, she drops her shotgun, leaves most of the work to her husband, and starts wearing dresses for him. Ultimately, of course, she will don a wedding dress. Aptly, towards the end of the film, Peter teases Phoebe: "You're supposed to be the man around here"; to which she smilingly replies: "Not anymore" (01:47:00-01:47:03).

4.3. Mobilization (1939-1946)

In scholarly writing about classic Hollywood cinema, the year 1939 represents the pinnacle of the achievements of the studio system: GUNGA DIN (George Stevens), ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS (Howard Hawks), YOUNG MR LINCOLN (John Ford), THE WIZARD OF OZ (Victor Fleming), MR SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON (Frank Capra), NINOTCHKA (Ernst Lubitsch), THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (William Dieterle), and, of course, GONE WITH THE WIND (Victor Fleming) were all released in this "golden year for American cinema" (Weidinger 120; transl. T.S.). Incidentally, 1939 also constitutes the year of the "'renaissance' of the Western" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 256), noting successes such as JESSE JAMES (Henry King), STAGECOACH, DODGE CITY, THE OKLAHOMA KID (Lloyd Bacon), UNION PACIFIC (Cecil B. DeMille), DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK, or DESTRY RIDES AGAIN (George Marshall). Slotkin elaborates:

> Every studio made a major and nearly simultaneous commitment of resources to the production of 'prestige' feature Westerns. From a total of four 'A' Westerns in 1938, production by the major studios jumped to nine in 1939 and fourteen in 1940 – 2.3 percent and 3.5 percent of the majors' total production in those years, a level exceeding that of the previous peak in 1930. The 'renaissance' inaugurated a thirty-year period – briefly interrupted during the war years 1942-1945 – in which the Western was the most consistently popular and most widely produced form of action film and a significant field for the active fabrication and revision of public myth and ideology. (*Gunfighter Nation* 256)[229]

Especially Slotkin's last point is of import for this study: in asserting the Western's aptitude for the public negotiation of myth and ideology, Slotkin implies a logical link between the genre's revival and renewed public demand for the exploration of topical American subjects. Striking a similar note, Bandy and Stoehr remark that "the surge in A-Western production might be related to the complex spirit of its times by encompassing both prospective and retrospective feelings about the recent social, political, and economic situation" (101) – implying that other contributing factors also apply.[230]

That notwithstanding, a resurgence of public interest in and a general mobilization for American issues is certainly one of the major reasons for the renaissance of the Western (cf. Stanfield 152-60).[231] Having just overcome the Great Depression and potentially facing the

---

[229] Slotkin quotes these numbers from the tables in Buscombe's *BFI Companion to the Western*. He also references Phil Hardy's *The Western*.

[230] As such, Bandy and Stoehr mention a continued interest in escapist fares, the ongoing success of the B-Western throughout the Depression years, as well as the aptitude of the genre to negotiate narratives of expropriation, migration, and nostalgia (cf. 102-3).

[231] Stanfield quotes from a speech by Jack Warner, published in the *New York Times* on 15 January 1939: "We believe that anyone who is anti-semitic, anti-catholic, anti-protestant or anti-anything that has gone into building this country is also anti-American. The visual power of the screen is tremendous and we propose to use it to acquaint Americans with their heritage"

next crisis with war looming in Europe and Japan, these American issues in question were President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies, the impending threat of Fascism and Communism, and the related debate around U.S. involvement in World War II (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 279). "How far did Americans want reforms to go? What was our proper role among the world powers? To resolve the crisis, writers, historians, scenarists, and politicians of varying political and social affiliations looked to American history and mythology for precedent and direction" (ibid. 279). Also commenting on the sort of navel-gazing predisposition of the Western that Slotkin describes, Bandy and Stoehr assert that "[t]he Western could represent in a dual fashion both the new seeds of optimism in the late 1930s, given that the Great Depression was coming to a close, and the collective memory of hardship and struggle that had been experienced by the average moviegoer throughout the decade" (101).

In his comprehensive study of the 1930s Hollywood Western, Stanfield locates the Western's aptitude for addressing these subjects in the genre's predisposition for ambiguity through allegory: "The use of allegory allowed for sufficient ambiguity around a given film's meaning. Making it sufficiently obtuse, Hollywood could always deny calling too strongly for American involvement in the war in Europe – whatever the sentiments of individual filmmakers" (158).

Crucially though, as the following analysis of a selection of Western films from this period will show, the Western's investment in contemporary American discourses such as labor/capitalism or violence/war coincided, on the one hand, with a strong interest in and a palpable ideological thrust for the stabilization of heteronormativity.[232] On the other hand, these very same perpetuations of dominant ideology not rarely reveal in its meandering search for stability and coherence gender contingency and the possibility of subversion.

As Hollywood Westerns continuously revaluated America's past, pondered the ambiguities of topical socio-political concerns, and presented countless, multi-faceted iterations of comprehensive economic and military mobilization, they often did so by relying on narratives of gender (de-)stabilization between the well-established concepts of individualism and domesticity. As such, dozens of Westerns translated questions of isolation or internationalization, of domestic protectionism or foreign intervention, to images and narratives of men and women finding their heterosexual identity in an environment of perpetual change, instability, and incoherence. Not rarely, this search for identity raised more questions than it answered. Once again, Hollywood took to the ideological scope of the Western to negotiate discourses of national import through explorations of gender and sexuality.

[232] In fact, Stanfield has shown that the Western throughout the 1930s proved to be "the most amenable (and safest) platform for introducing a more forthright discussion of contemporary adult concerns in the realms of both politics and the representation of sexuality" (145).

In the following, I will delineate in DODGE CITY (1939), STAGECOACH (1939), THE WESTERNER (1940), and THE OUTLAW (1943) the development of gender representations during a time of comprehensive mobilization that was fought out in the Western specifically in gendered terms.

In my analysis of DODGE CITY, I will show how the film (as a paradigmatic example of the Westerns released between 1939 and 1943) reflects the changing societal climate after the Great Depression. DODGE CITY finds creative, new solutions for negotiating progressive images of femininity and conflicting issues of masculinity, such as the notoriously thin line between male homosociality and male homosexuality. As DODGE CITY recodifies the socio-political ramifications of the New Woman and compartmentalizes the white hero's masculinity, the film is able to negotiate and explore hitherto irreconcilable discourses of gender identity and sexuality, crucially, without abandoning the genre's formula that dictates heteronormativity and male hegemony as society's organizing principle.

In my reading of STAGECOACH, I will add some nuance to the already copious amount of research conducted on the film, arguing that while STAGECOACH articulates a devastating critique of class and gender stereotypes, this critique nonetheless relies on established patterns of heteronormativity and male hegemony. Though Ford's film evidently challenges the class and gender paradigms by which society organizes itself to the effect of replacing the egalitarian promise of the frontier utopia with corrupting power disparities, STAGECOACH cannot eschew the mechanisms it seeks to attack in the representation of its critique.

Using THE WESTERNER and THE OUTLAW as the final two examples for my analysis of the period between the Great Depression and the United States' victory in World War II, I will expand on an argument I have made elsewhere,[233] namely that the two films productively subvert most genre conventions with regards to their exploration of sexuality yet maintain a vision of gender that is still consistent with the mainstream of the time, hence with the genre's formula. I will revisit my earlier analysis of the two films, clarify some of the points I have made there, and add some thoughts as to how the films' portrayal of the confinements of compulsory heterosexuality as well as the liberating allure of male homosexuality relate to the aporia of heteronormativity.

Taken together, these four films showcase the diversity and adaptability of a genre that grows increasingly self-aware of its status within American popular culture, and self-critical of its mode of constructing American identity. Though still firmly predicated on heteronormativity as society's organizing principle, inside and outside their respective diegeses, DODGE CITY, STAGECOACH, THE WESTERNER, and THE OUTLAW point toward an America becoming more and

[233] See above (n14).

more skeptical of the self-evidence of the paradigms set by the doctrine of the separate spheres.

4.3.1. As-Good-as-New Men and Women: DODGE CITY (1939)

DODGE CITY is the first of three consecutive Western film collaborations of director Michael Curtiz and star actor Errol Flynn (the other two being VIRGINIA CITY and SANTA FE TRAIL, both 1940).[234] With its plot following the founding, then destabilization, then taming of a town, the film, as Michael Coyne has put forward, can be considered a "nation-building epic" (23-24), as the town of Dodge City functions as a metonymical stand-in for the United States. Compared to the epics of the mid 1920s, DODGE CITY is even more grounded in myth and even less in historical fact. Although the film mentions "Kansas 1866" and, minutes later, "Dodge City, Kansas 1872" as referents, the story is entirely fictitious. In fact, DODGE CITY's fixation with myth means it is possible to read the film both as a reiteration of *Manifest Destiny* and as a post-Depression parable (cf. Coyne 24; cf. Bergemann 96).

Crucially, the film conflates both narratives through sumptuous use of allegory (reconnecting with Slotkin's and Stanfield's observations about the 1939 Western) and offers one and the same moral for both layers of the story: civilization and prosperity will supplant all hardships and misery at the hands of a strong, authoritative white man. In DODGE CITY, Errol Flynn rides out as the Wyatt Earp-type sheriff to explore American national and gender identity in myth as well as social reality, in the 1870s as well as 1939, "a New Dealer on horseback," as Slotkin describes him (*Gunfighter Nation* 290).[235] As affirmative of conservative American values as DODGE CITY might appear, the film, as Charles Barr has demonstrated in his assessment of the "density of meaning" (182) that permeates DODGE CITY, offers a very intriguing perspective of the complexity of discourses of gender at this crucial point in American history.

In her reading of John Ford's STAGECOACH, Gaylyn Studlar has pointed out a recurring characteristic of Ford's Westerns: "[In later Ford Westerns] […] the hero is judged according to how he treats Native Americans," and in STAGECOACH specifically, "the hero […] is judged

---

[234] Curtiz and Flynn had also worked together in previous engagements: CAPTAIN BLOOD (1935), THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE (1936), THE PERFECT SPECIMEN (1937), THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD (1938), FOUR'S A CROWD (1938).

[235] With regards to the film's socio-political implications, Charles Barr has noted: "DODGE CITY, in its heavily coded form, surely contributes to the debate about American policy towards the crisis in Europe, its sympathies being, like Roosevelt's, anti-isolationist. We don't want to get involved, to play sheriff, but Nazi-style atrocities may force us to, even if they don't threaten our personal interests directly" (186).

as to how he treats women" ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg…'" 147).[236] As much as I concur with Studlar's subsequent assessment of the very specific shape Ford gives its heroes and heroines, in STAGECOACH as well as in many other films of the director, I contend that this narrative strategy does not pertain exclusively to Ford's films. In fact, DODGE CITY is an excellent example of the prolificacy of this pattern. Here, the heroic character of Wade Hatton (Errol Flynn) is continuously judged not only by his relation to Native Americans and women, but also how he relates to other men and matters of political and economic nature.[237] It seems, therefore, that examining the hero's relations to these characters and concepts will prove a promising approach to unravelling the gender-specific complexities contained in DODGE CITY.

Western iconography

The film opens with a race between a stagecoach and the railroad, culminating with one of the railroad passengers, Colonel Dodge (Henry O'Neill), exalting about the railroad as the nation's symbol for progress, thus explicitly earmarking the national scope of the picture: "Gentlemen, that's a symbol for America's future: Progress! Iron men and iron horses: You can't beat 'em!" (00:04:17-00:04:25). The sequence is quickly paced, visually accentuating the dynamism of the nation-building metaphor of the railroad that has been so firmly associated with the genre since THE IRON HORSE.[238] The film then fades over to a calm, pastoral image of a buffalo herd grazing on the plains (Fig. 18), reminiscent of the landscape painting *Buffalo on the Plains* by Albert Bierstadt (Fig. 19).[239]

The scene does not yet have a human focalizer directing the viewer's gaze. For a few moments, the viewer is simply invited to marvel at the tranquility of the image. Then the focalizers appear, three men on horseback striding across the plains, one jovially yodeling away. As they stop, the camera comes to a halt and cuts to a shot facing the three men, prompting the viewer to look at them looking at the buffalo herd. The shot frames them slightly below eye-level. The viewer is invited to inspect their bodies as they inspect the herd (Fig. 20).

---

[236] Similar findings have been put forward by Charles Ramírez Berg with regards to cultural identities: "Those who treat them [Native Americans; T.S.] humanely […] are Ford's heroes. Conversely, negative treatment of innocent Native Americans signifies villainy" (80).

[237] A similar general accountability of this pattern – at least with regard to the hero's relation to women – has been put forward by William Indick, who has remarked that "[t]o a certain extent, it could be said that a Western is not a Western unless there is a female character for the hero to interact with, as it is the hero's treatment of this woman, even more so than his actions in violent conflict, that define his character" (61).

[238] Incidentally, DODGE CITY, too, features a scene that depicts the connection of two railroad lines that emblematize the unification of the United States from coast to coast, encapsulated in a close-up of the driving-in of the final, golden spike that completes the line (00:08:38-00:09:13). The same historical reference also reappears in another epic of the same year: UNION PACIFIC (Cecil B. DeMille, 1939).

[239] Mitchell has noted at length on the visual kinship of the Western and the imagery of American landscape painters such as Bierstadt (57-93).

Fig. 18 (left): Source: DODGE CITY, Michael Curtiz (1939). Warner Bros. Pictures. DVD. 00:04:52.
Fig. 19 (right): Source: *Buffalo on the Plains*, Albert Bierstadt (1890). Oil on Canvas.

Fig. 20: Source: DODGE CITY, Michael Curtiz (1939). Warner Bros. Pictures. DVD. 00:05:03.

The three men exchange a few words, and as their individual speaking parts advance from left to right to center, the camera follows each character's piece of dialogue with a close-up of their faces. Eventually, it is the character on the right, whom we will later get to know as Rusty (Alan Hale), who suggests they kill a few buffalo, to which the character in the middle, whom the viewer then gets to know as Wade, replies with good-natured but firm authority: "No, we've killed our last buffalo, boys," something the three had only done in the first place as part of a job (providing food for the workers building the railroad) (00:04:56-00:05:00). As Wade is the one making the decision, centering the frame, and being given the longest close-up, viewers can identify him as the scene's main focalizer, and hence the film's hero, simply by

the way the sequence is formally arranged through camera position and editing.[240] The image thus perfectly illustrates what Martin Pumphrey has described as a particular feature of the Western,

> […] where looking is consistently marked as an act of masculine control. Whether surveying a landscape, spotting the tremor of a curtain that warns of a hidden gunman or reading tracks and signs, the hero's look affirms his power and, by camera positioning and editing, invites the spectator's identification. ("Masculinity" 182)

But there is more to the scene's elaboration of the hero than formal considerations: it is also the subject of the dialogue that implicitly determines Wade's heroism. This early sequence already illustrates what Charles Barr has described as the film's "density of meaning" (182) in his essay on DODGE CITY. In this sequence, density of meaning transpires in the use of Western iconography to suggest Wade's heroism by relating the trio to the semantics of *Native Americanness* (reconnecting to Studlar's elaborations quoted above), despite the fact that Native American characters, as Charles Barr has noted, are absent from the narrative (apart from one Native American assisting with the driving of the golden spike into the rails at the ceremonial completion of the railroad) (cf. 183). By and large, the indigenous body has been erased from both landscape and narrative. The film nonetheless manages to invoke this connection between the heroic trio and Native Americans by recalling a recognizable element of Western iconography: the buffalo.

In a juxtaposition of two sequences, first, the heroic trio revering the beauty of the animals on the plains, deciding not to shoot any more, then, second, the trio policing the exploitation of Native Americans at the hands of Jeff Surrett (Bruce Cabot) and his gang, DODGE CITY subtly places its sympathies with Wade and his sidekicks as they act as the guardians of the buffalo, and thus by proxy of nature and Native Americans.[241] The Vanishing American indeed has vanished. Only the buffalo has survived. Like a totem animal it now symbolically invokes and represents the spirit of an aboriginal, prelapsarian past. It replaces the displaced. Correspondingly, the positioning of the three white men on a hill overlooking the herd, coupled with their decision to abstain from harming the animals, is extremely suggestive of pastoral imagery, awarding the trio the qualities of shepherds watching their flock, administrating the legacy of the *noble savage*. Employing this imagery, DODGE CITY draws from the established narrative of the hero's protective restraint towards nature and its inhabitants, which is intimately tied to our perception of him as the hero (cf. Mitchell 46).

---

[240] Of course, Errol Flynn's recognizable face and star persona will control audience expectations of him being the hero even before the viewer meets the trio.

[241] Slotkin describes Wade Hatton in this scene as a "protector if Indian rights" (*Gunfighter Nation* 289).

Wade and his friends are at peace with nature: they hunted buffalo due to a professional commitment, and only for subsistence (recodifying and whitewashing genocide). They are at peace with Native Americans: they protect their interests and legally enforce them on their behalf. Their relation to Native Americans thus corresponds with audience expectations of heroic qualities: restraint, authority, cleverness, professionalism. By contrast, the second part of the sequence reveals that Jeff Surrett and his men were shooting buffalo wastefully and for personal gain, callously killing Native Americans in the process. Their disregard for the interests and lives of Native Americans, as well as their lack of professional restraint which manifests itself in their excessive use of violence disagrees sharply with audience expectations of heroic qualities, coding them as villains.

Heroism and villainy are therefore defined using discursively pre-determined attributes of Western iconography and projecting them onto bodies. Where performance (as in relating to Western iconography, i.e., the buffalo) and the expectations raised by a body appear to be most congruent (as in most commensurate with the dominant ideology), we are led to infer heroism. Where performance and the expectations raised by a body drift apart, we are led to infer a lack thereof. Incidentally, this pattern correlates with visions of intelligible and abject genders. It follows that heroism is likely to ensue where gender performance and body match a pre-determined expectation or matrix.

"It looks like you're marrying the right girl!"

In the same vein, and in analogy to the patterns of the virgin-whore-complex (Benshoff & Griffin 219; also cf. 4.1.4.), DODGE CITY uses the male characters' relations to women to negotiate their heroism. Since Wade desires Abbie Irving (Olivia de Havilland), a young Eastern woman travelling West to live with her uncle and become a professional journalist, and Surrett desires Ruby Gilman (Ann Sheridan), a dancehall girl and singer who performs in Surrett's saloon, DODGE CITY denotes idealized gender performance and gender failure through the reciprocal confirmation of gender identities through heterosexual couple formation.[242]

In his reading of the film, Charles Barr has observed the simultaneous centrality and marginality that characterizes both Abbie and Ruby. He assesses that, on the one hand, Abbie and Ruby, as characters, are irrelevant to the film in terms of plot development; however, Barr continues: "Throughout the narrative, Abbie acts both as incentive to, and as reward for, Hatton's acts of public responsibility. […] Every visual and verbal reference to women and children and homes and churches finds its specific meaning and embodiment in Abbie" (Barr 187-8). Not only do Barr's remarks identify a stark discrepancy between DODGE CITY's textual

[242] As in HELL'S HINGES and THE VIRGINIAN, the saloon suggests sin and degeneration, as do particularly its female occupants (see above; cf. Stanfield 175-6).

introduction of Abbie as a careerwoman and the film's subtextual connection of her as the epitome of domesticity and conventional white femininity, but they also point out a second discrepancy, which reconnects with Pam Cook's observation about the "dual, contradictory role of women" put forward in her study "Women and the Western" (293; also cf. 4.1.4.). Abbie, too, is central-yet-peripheral to DODGE CITY.

On one level, white femininity in DODGE CITY is dealt with as an abstract referent, another "symbolic presentation" and "sensational projection" of men's desires (Bovenschen 68; Transl. T.S.). As functionalized symbols for the negotiation of hegemonic masculinity, the female characters represent virtue (Abbie) and vice (Ruby), and qua their relations to the male characters facilitate the viewer's identification of hero and villain as they are subsequently situated within a corresponding moral spectrum.[243] As Abbie, the good woman, eventually falls in love with Wade, the viewer is affirmed in their expectations of him as the hero; as Ruby, the sinful woman, entangles with Surrett, the viewer recognizes him as the villain.

However, as Barr has suggested, there is more to the film's negotiation of white femininity than that (cf. 188), as DODGE CITY markedly links Abbie's representation of gender to topical social discourse of the late 1930s. In Abbie, the film distills and negotiates the status of 'the New Woman' within a mobilizing America. Having found her place in 'the world' as a journalist, which the film carefully and subtly characterizes as an extension of 'the home', Abbie eventually rebounds to a more deferential, conventionally domestic identity at the side of her husband, Wade. In the end, however, as national duty calls once more for the services of her husband, to tame another wild frontier in Virginia City, Abbie makes the active choice to sacrifice the domestic bliss she has formed with Wade, thus ensuring the process of domestication, of *Manifest Domesticity*, to repeat itself. This way, DODGE CITY attempts to bypass the aporia of heteronormativity and instead finds a stable heterosexual identity in cyclical, perpetual renewal, and reaffirmation. Incidentally, Abbie's representation of the 'New Woman' conspicuously resembles established, culturally dominant images of femininity, as the film recodifies women's economic and sexual independence as the independence to choose subservience to male hegemony.

To illustrate: About seventy minutes into the film, Wade and Abbie meet in a peculiar situation. Wade has reluctantly accepted to take up the sheriff's office to clean up Dodge City. So far, his actions have predominantly included enforcing a ban on wearing guns in the town's streets. Wade's latest regulatory measure, however, concerns the introduction of taxes. As he enters the newspaper's office to collect the freshly printed tax notices, he spots Abbie behind one of the desks. His conversation with the editor stops abruptly, he points at her, confused.

[243] This constitutes a structural parallel that equates the role of women in DODGE CITY with that of Native American characters. By extrapolation, this parallel illustrates – hence, reinforces – the pervasive narrative strategy and structural homology of Western film's exploring cultural and gender identity.

The film cuts to a shot of Abbie working intently on an article, then cuts back to Wade. Wade exchanges looks with the editor. We infer that they are both puzzled and taken aghast by her presence in this hitherto exclusively male domain: the professional, public sphere of labor. Wade then walks to her desk. Standing opposite her, this dialogue ensues:

Wade: Good morning.

Abbie: Did you want something?

Wade: Yes. I'd like to get my curiosity satisfied. What are you doing here?

Abbie: Well, obviously I… I am working here.

Wade: Obviously. But at what? And why?

Abbie: Because the town happens to be growing by leaps and bounds, and the paper needed somebody who would write the things that would interest its woman readers.

Wade: Oh, I see. [He sits down in a chair opposite her.] Tell me, what are the vital interests of your woman readers?

Abbie: What other women are wearing. How to make Lady Baltimore cake with two eggs. Who invited the minister to tea. And whose baby is going to be born and when.

Wade: Fascinating.

Abbie: Is there anything else you would like to know, Mr. Hatton?

Wade: Yes. What do the doctor and Mrs. Irving think about it?

Abbie: Well, they made the same stupid objections that you're making mentally now.

[Wade coughs, a little embarrassed]

Abbie: But when I decide on a thing, I usually manage to carry it through.

Wade: Yes. I had noticed that. Of course, you realize that people in general are inclined to think that a newspaper office is an odd place for a charming young lady like you to be working, don't you?

Abbie: And are you the delegation sent to tell me that?"

Wade: No, no, no. I just stopped travel around here. I didn't start it.

Abbie: But what's wrong with my working here?

Wade: Well, it's undignified. It's unladylike. More than that, you ought to be at home, doing needlework. Things like that.

Abbie: Ha! Sewing buttons on for some man, I suppose?

Wade: Well, buttons come off. Someone's got to sew 'em on.

Abbie: A fine career for an intelligent woman.

[The newspaper editor briefly interrupts their conversation; he approaches Abbie and points at a passage in an article]

Editor: […] Oh Abbie, I know this isn't in your line, but as long as you insisted on a job, will you stop calling them cows in the stockyard? They're steers! Steers!

[Wade starts laughing silently]

Abbie: Well, I don't see any difference.

[Wade and the editor look at each other; raising their eyebrows condescendingly]

Abbie [quoting from the article]: A rise is expected this season in the price of longhorn cows…
Editor [taking the article from her hands]: Never mind. I'll correct this copy myself.

Source: DODGE CITY, Michael Curtiz (1939). Warner Bros. Pictures. DVD. 01:07:42 – 01:09:15.

The sequence is another example of the film's density of meaning, as multiple discourses are dealt with insightfully and, interestingly, ambiguously. Most saliently, it picks up on the public talking point in 1939 of women having entered the formerly all-male enclave of the working sphere during the Depression, with Wade at one point during his curious interrogation noting: "you realize that people in general are inclined to think that a newspaper office is an odd place for a charming young lady like you to be working, don't you?"[244] In this sequence, the film openly explores the implications of Abbie's entering the working sphere for conceptualizations of gender. Apparently, Abbie is striving "not only […] for justice and domestic tranquility but […] for public agency and subjecthood in a masculinized landscape which seeks to deny women these things" (Wildermuth 5), which is seemingly at odds with the dominant image of white women.

The sequence shows Wade entering the office, looking confused at something as yet unknown to the viewer. As it then cuts to the object that had caused his confusion, Abbie working, viewers are invited to adopt his bewilderment. Both visually and narratively, the sequence makes clear that Abbie's working at the newspaper is a marked anomaly. It literally turns heads, and leaves Wade and the editor, Joe Clemens, (Frank McHugh) speechless and baffled. Accordingly, even Abbie herself is not fully confident about her working situation: her overly self-assured "obviously" is severely undermined by the fact that she flounders as she speaks and refuses to maintain eye-contact with Wade (captured in a medium long shot, for which the camera follows Wade and moves to a position that allows the viewer to see both characters' facial expressions, as they sit on opposite ends of a table, facing each other eye to eye).

Abbie's conduct, vacillating between a self-confident work ethos and deferential body language when confronted by Wade, reveals an element of *masquerade*, as the momentary slippage of words discloses her assuming of professional, allegedly 'unladylike' credentials as gender performance. Originally coined by Joan Riviere in 1929, the concept of *masquerade* was intended by the author to describe femininity, or womanliness, as a deliberate gender

[244] The scene's general accountability for issues relating to the social world of the 1930s is achieved by shaping the *mise en scène* as a democratic arena: a portrait of Lincoln on the wall, the context of the free press (as one of the pillars of democratic power) investigating against a totalitarian regime (Jeff Surrett's violent bullying of the townsfolk, relating to the rise of fascism in Europe); the presence of the sheriff to police the safety of the growing town (investigating America's role in a potentially impending global conflict); the public announcement of taxes (as a regulating measure to contain out-of-control capitalism à la Surrett, relating to FDR's New Deal policies).

performance of women "to hide the possession of masculinity" (Peterson, "The Competing Tunes of JOHNNY GUITAR" 11), and "to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men" (Riviere 173) in response to women's 'flaunting' of masculinity. Franziska Schößler elaborates:

> In one prominent case study, Riviere describes an intellectual woman who reverted to particularly feminine and devout conduct immediately after she had given academic presentations – as if she had wanted to apologize for the insolence of rising to speak. Psychoanalytically speaking, if the act of public speaking indicates the appropriation of the phallus (power), then her subsequent demeanor suggests she masquerades as a 'female' in order to obscure her incursion. (140; Transl. T.S.)[245]

Though the practice reproduced the power imbalance between the sexes, the concept, for one thing, captures perfectly the element of gender mobility; that is, of de-pathologizing gender performances and uncoupling them from the physical bodies that perform them. If womanliness functions like a cloak that can be put on by women to disguise their proximity to a different gender, then womanliness must be considered separately from female bodies. It follows that such gender performances conventionally labeled feminine are neither innate nor exclusive to female bodies, nor, in fact, are such that are labeld masculine.

For another thing, *masquerade* – or more specifically, the unveiling of *masquerade* – entails the exposition of gendered power dynamics. In the case of Abbie and Wade, her recourse to a more conventional gender habitus after having donned gender traits evocative of masculinity – that is, her putting on the mask of femininity and putting off the mask of masculinity – re-establishes gender coherence after her initially causing gender trouble. True to Riviere's concept, Abbie's *masquerade* attempts to conceal and mitigate gender contingency, as it momentarily realigns her female body with her gender performance. Her slippage reveals gender as performance and therefore highlights that gender is not pathologically inscribed to male and female bodies, and instead can be performed irrespective of the sex of a body.

At the same time, however, Abbie's slippage implies that her transgression of gender expectations is somewhat 'unnatural'. Though Abbie is apparently able to bend gender momentarily, DODGE CITY maintains that she is not able to consistently and coherently do so. The film may inadvertently reveal the contingency of gender, showing Abbie to transcend the boundaries of dominant images of white femininity, but it simultaneously insists that this performance goes against her 'nature', her true Self. Like a badly-rehearsed stage act, Abbie's display of a transgressive gender habitus, her *masquerade*, does not stand up to scrutiny and begins to crack upon closer examination. While her *masquerade* suggests gender mobility and

[245] For a detailed discussion of Riviere's concept of *masquerade*, its adaption by Lacan, as well as its ramifications for and applicability to critical gender theory see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (59-77). Also see the diverse contributions in *Weiblichkeit als Maskerade*, edited by Liliane Weissberg.

thus challenges the notion of one singular, stable, coherent gender identity, it also constitutes the spark that precipitates and adumbrates her future gender re-stabilization.

As such, the sequence features a prolonged back-and-forth of different standpoints on gender mobility and changing, apparently modern conceptualizations of gender. At first, the sequence adopts Wade's chauvinistic position of a clear separation of a male working/public sphere (the conflation of both spheres is particularly prominent in the example of a newspaper) and a female domestic sphere. Wade makes the explicit reference to "unladylike" conduct, thereby making gendered assumptions about the professional work in a public newspaper office. Likewise, he points out what he, in turn, considers ladylike conduct (doing needlework, sewing buttons for a man). As such, he deems her line of work unfit for a woman, and as the film draws comic effect from Abbie's ignorance about the difference between a cow and a steer, the film invites the viewer to share his perspective.

At this point, the film exchanges several face-threatening acts to accentuate and then again subvert the characters' authority on their respective positions: remarking that, all along during their conversation, Abbie had a smudge of ink across her face, blemishing her symbolic face, Wade once again patronizingly attacks Abbie's competence at her job, once more drawing a line for gender coherence and heteronormativity. However, as seconds later Wade trips over a pile of newspapers and falls to the floor, the film abruptly challenges this perspective. Inviting the viewer to join Abbie in laughing at Wade's clumsiness as she wittily taunts him for his arrogance, DODGE CITY now undermines Wade's authority. Moreover, the film subsequently addresses the issue of losing/maintaining face explicitly:

> Wade: Is this showing proper respect for the law?
>
> Abbie: I never saw the law *fall on his face* before.
>
> Wade: I didn't *fall on my face*. You know, there's an old saying in the British army: The law must always *save its face* in front of the Natives.
>
> Abbie: And what if the Natives *object to its face*?
>
> Wade [rising to his feet, speaking more agitatedly, approaching Abbie]: We just put them across our knee and spank them soundly.
>
> Abbie: You're not suggesting that I'm a Native?
>
> Wade: No, the only real Native of Kansas is the buffalo. He's got a very hard head, a very uncertain temper and a very lonely future. Apart from that, there's hardly any real comparison between you.[246]
>
> Source: DODGE CITY, Michael Curtiz (1939). Warner Bros. Pictures. DVD. 01:09:34 – 01:10:02.

[246] My emphases.

A few aspects are interesting here: First, the fact that Wade eventually must resort to threats of violence to keep his face, firmly cementing the gender assignation of masculine authority and violence. More to the point, the kind of violence he threatens Abbie with – "we just put them across our knee and spank them soundly" – is evocative of the violence employed by a parent chastising their child (cf. Cook, "Women and the Western" 296). This infantilization indicates the patronizing attitude Wade assumes towards Abbie and her career. Unlike the violence usually depicted in Western films, where power disparities result from and are perpetually (re-)established through violent competitions like gunfights, the spanking suggests a power disparity even before the fight has begun. DODGE CITY thus suggests a distinct *Otherness* of homosocial violent competition (between men) and heterosocial violent competition (between man and woman), thus pointing out an allegedly fundamental *difference* between men and women that calls for a different code of conduct.

Analogously, the film suggests the *sameness* of power disparities between a parent/child and man/woman, the difference being, that the spanking of a woman by a man carries a distinctively sexualized subtext (cf. Cook, "Women and the Western" 296).[247] It is a power disparity that Abbie's entering of the working sphere, and especially Wade's clumsy fall to the floor have eroded. Invoking his former paternal authority, Wade attempts to forcefully restore this power disparity. However, as the viewer experiences the scene filtered through Abbie's laughter, captured in a medium long shot from behind Abbie's back, Wade's jingoistic retaliation appears as outdated as the old anecdote from the British army he provides as context to his violent threat. Quite potently then, DODGE CITY in this episode illustrates both the fragility of male hegemony and the violence men a licensed and prepared to take to in order to defend its legitimacy, even if this legitimacy is legitimately called into question.

Charles Barr has suggested in his reading of the film that DODGE CITY's portrayal of Abbie retains a level of ambiguity that allow for such interpretations that see "Abbie as conventionally subservient" and such that see her "as progressive underminer of feminine stereotypes" (188). As Barr reminds that neither one reading of her role in the film is solely correct, "but that both are possible" (188), he, too, implies Abbie's meandering between a representation of gender that is commensurate with but occasionally goes beyond dominant *imagines* of white femininity. While the gender mobility that this meandering entails, indeed, corroborates a reading of Abbie as "progressive underminer of feminine stereotypes" (Barr 188), I contend that DODGE CITY, as the story moves forward, incrementally appeases most modern elements of Abbie's representation of gender and assimilates them to a conventional image of white femininity that ultimately serves to retain the status quo of male hegemony.

[247] A more explicit visualization of this paradigm will feature John Wayne spanking Maureen O'Hara in McLINTOCK! (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1963).

To illustrate: The film has Abbie explicitly state what her job at the newspaper involves: the interests of "woman readers". Correspondingly, her description of the issues pertaining to such womanly interests are fully in keeping with signifiers of domesticity and thus conventional, white femininity: clothing, bakery, gossip, childcare. We infer that, though she herself might have transcended the domestic sphere, she is nonetheless qua her writing still very much associated with it. More to the point, the film suggests that her writing about women's interests is in and of itself an act of caring, of nurturing, of attending to the needs of others. As such, the newspaper is a mere extension of the domestic sphere (cf. Wildermuth 23) and indicative of *Manifest Domesticity* above everything else.

Like Calamity Jane in THE PLAINSMAN, if decidedly more subtly, DODGE CITY implies that beneath Abbie's desire to be a professional journalist lies an even stronger desire to care. Her work domesticates by way of introducing the mundane to the frontier, and thus constitutes the outstretched arm of civilization. This way, DODGE CITY manages to reconcile the New Woman with conventional conceptualizations of white femininity, as Richard Slotkin notes: "[…] As the story develops, we see that Abbie is not the passive female icon of HELL'S HINGES, nor the morally subordinate schoolteacher of THE VIRGINIAN. She is instead a Western movie version of the 'new woman'" (291). As such, Abbie combines the best of both spheres: she is still associated with the domestic sphere (such are the subjects of her column) but also contributes to the family income as a self-confident worker in the public sphere. Thus, even if her entering the public sphere ultimately equates only with an extension of the domestic sphere, then at least, to speak with Wildermuth (and the feminist literature he cites), in Abbie's case "domesticity [is] productively constructed 'as compatible with feminism rather than its antithesis'" (Hillis & Hollows 4-5 in Wildermuth 12).

The ending of the film, too, contains an ambiguous coda. Wade eventually defeats Surrett and tames the town. Wounded in the process, he retires, marries Abbie, and is set on travelling back East to New York for their honeymoon. But then Colonel Dodge appears once more and submits another assignment: Apparently, there is another frontier town, Virginia City, even wilder and more dangerous than Dodge City, that needs to be tamed. Clearly, this extension of the adventurous frontier beyond the diegesis constitutes the same caveat of bypassing the aporia of heteronormativity introduced in HELL'S HINGES (see 4.1.4.).[248] However, Wade initially turns down the offer. Even though he is tempted to go on another adventure, he remains adamant in his faithful promise to his wife that he will settle down with her.

---

[248] In fact, in foreshadowing the next Western-collaboration of Michael Curtiz and Errol Flynn, VIRGINIA CITY, as a kind of sequel to this story, DODGE CITY introduces an element of resovling this conundrum through extra-diegetic means: that is, by way of sequential, consecutive narration not unlike the well-established structures of the B-Western.

Except that Abbie overhears the conversation through a door. As she pushes it open to enter, she stops as she hears Wade conceding that he is no longer free, now that he "has a wife to take care of" (01:37:39-01:37:46). Slightly ajar, the door symbolically reifies the now permeable but still markedly visible and palpable barrier between the masculine sphere of freedom, adventure, violence, and danger, and the feminine sphere of domesticity. As she enters the room shortly after, wearing a long, white dress and carrying a tray of freshly baked cookies and homemade lemonade, she makes the surprising, self-sacrificing decision to abandon their plans of going back East, and instead join her husband for their next adventure. Thus, in extending the frontier, DODGE CITY secures the continuation of the constitutive processes of gender naturalization – male expansionism and female domestication –, which ostensibly eschews the construction of its contradiction, as the revelation that this process must and will eventually come to an end would make visible that very construction. If what constructed Wade as naturally male and Abbie as naturally female were their aptidues for (violent) conquest and domestication respectively, clearly performing these acts to their end results would erase the tenets on which they were constructed. Followed through, the teloi of these acts are inevitably self-defeating. Thus, in order to maintain the stability those acts promise in terms of gender configurations and national identity, they must continue. In implying the perpetual reiteration of its constitutive processes, DODGE CITY can have it both ways: Wade and Abbie become one but also remain distinctly separate.

Again, Abbie performs a *masquerade*: her active intrusion of the male homosocial sphere, her determined crossing of the threshold that momentarily retains the clear-cut doctrine of the separate sphere causes trouble. Her intrusion that indicates belonging, as well as her agency to move and speak, clash with conventional images of white femininity and instead suggest a transgressive gender performance – which she instantaneously revokes by assuming an overly submissive demeanor, metonymically encapsulated in her brightly white dress that distills notions of Whiteness, femininity, virginal purity, monogamous heterosexuality consecrated in marriage, and domesticity. Correspondingly, she lowers her head and enters the room, only to declare on Wade's behalf the decision to go to Virginia City, at which point Colonel Dodge exalts: "Wade, it looks like you're marrying the right girl" (01:38:43-01:38:45).

This is crucial, as it resolves to some extent the element of gender incoherence and instead recodifies any lingering ambiguity as signifiers of a new image of femininity, as a woman who is commonly accepted, even celebrated, for her contributions to (and her place in) the public sphere – provided that she, in turn, accepts this place to be at the side of her husband and her contributions to be in the service of community and civilization. Framed in an elongated close-up that highlights her teary visage, thereby resembling the image of Dixie Lee in CIMARRON, Abbie in this sequence condenses several conflicting, ambiguous dynamics, which are, however, through the reactions of the surrounding characters, who distinctly and

vociferously identify her as "the right girl," tied together in one coherent narrative of resignification.

On the one hand, Abbie's decision to forgo their domestic plans, which cause her visible emotional pain and her husband and his male friends visible joy, cement such notions that link representations of idealized white femininity to suffering and sacrifice. She must not laugh like the men, she must cry. On the other hand, as Charles Barr implies, her consent to move to Virginia City will enable her to join the men in their adventure (cf. 188) – after all, the film's final shot includes her and Wade sitting side by side on the wagon that carries them to the next horizon. This distinctly sets her apart from, for instance, Justine Pryor's acceptance to stay at home in WELLS FARGO. Abbie's decision, her agency, are equally elements of Self-empowerment, which is received with appraisal and celebration by the men around her. Her decision to prioritize the needs of her husband – which coincide with the needs of the nation – are simultaneously an act of emancipation and subservience, of liberation and continued conformization. As such, Abbie's representation of gender is at variance with previous cultural ideals, or feminine stereotypes, and thus, in its ambiguity, emblematic of its time.[249] It is precisely this variance that makes her the perfect, modern woman of her time. DODGE CITY manages what THE PLAINSMAN could not: it reconciles the New Woman with the Western formula and thus stabilizes social order without resorting to catastrophe.

Compartmentalized Masculinity

Errol Flynn, the former hero of swashbuckling adventure films, had never featured in a Western before. In part, this was because the Tasmanian lacked a genuine American background. On the other hand, this was because studios knew it would take considerable efforts to reconcile Flynn's recently acquired flashy star persona with the Western code, hence with audience expectations of a salt-of-the-earth, taciturn, brooding Western hero, as exemplified by Gary Cooper's Virginian. Both Barr and Slotkin have described the efforts that Curtiz and Warner Bros. put into "transplanting […] the Flynn persona to the West" (Barr 185). By means of a huge promotional campaign and an even grander premiere staged on location in the streets of Dodge City, "the authenticity of the film's portrayal of western progress would be affirmed" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 288). Still, as Slotkin describes, "both Flynn and his co-star Olivia de Havilland had been thoroughly identified with 'Merrie England' and 'Victorian Empire' films" (ibid. 290). Moreover, as Barr points out, because of these previous collaborations, most of which had featured Curtiz as director (CAPTAIN BLOOD, THE CHARGE OF

[249] Estelle B. Freedman notes: "When rearmament and the war provided new jobs for women, American society had ample reason to readjust to working women; but by no means had a consensus been reached on the proper place of women in American society, for the postwar years witnessed renewed debate over women's roles" (381).

THE LIGHT BRIGADE, THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD), American audiences were used to seeing Flynn heroes that would eventually rebel "against authorities who are unjust or incompetent" (185). The crux for his persona to work in a Western, especially one as "explicitly triumphalist" (Coyne 26) as DODGE CITY,[250] would then be to combine in Flynn's character "subversive behaviour which is not ideologically threatening" but also not make him appear as "too conformist a figure" (Barr 185). Barr explains how DODGE CITY resolved the issue:

> One way in which the film negotiates this problem is by the conventional strategy of setting Hatton up as an individualist and a wanderer.[251] […] The film's additional strategy is to split him, in effect, into three, giving him two alter egos which express the nonconformist outlaw spirit more vigorously than it is safe to do through Hatton himself. (185)

Going back to my initial point of examining how the film reveals which character will be the hero, I mentioned the introducing scene with the three men overlooking the buffalo herd. Not only is the sequence of import to the film's insinuation of the hero's moral integrity, but also in terms of gender, as the scene contains the triptych that will be essential for DODGE CITY's exploration of gender: Wade centering his sidekicks – his "two alter egos," as Barr put it – Tex (Guinn 'Big Boy' Williams) and Rusty (Alan Hale).[252] For the entire duration of the film, Tex and Rusty will function as compartmentalized extensions of the hero's Self exploring issues of gender that cannot be reconciled with expectations of heroic masculinity. DODGE CITY puts its hero in continuous relation with these characters, having him permanently oscillate between them, invoking a constant homosocial sphere and providing a continuous arena for the trio to negotiate relations of power.[253] In Rusty and Tex, the film allows men to repeatedly transgress

---

[250] On a related note, Martin Weidinger has observed a general tendency towards affirmative narratives in 1930s Western films (cf. 125).

[251] In one of the early scenes, Rusty introduces Wade Hatton as "the most moving-on man you ever saw. First of, he was in the English army over in India, then he got mixed up in some hooray revolution down Cuba-way. Then he started punching cattle in Texas; that is, of course, before he enlisted in the war. So, you see, he's either the greatest traveller that's ever lived or he's the biggest liar" (00:09:43-00:10:03). In keeping with the Western formula, this praising introduction is not delivered by the hero himself but by a part of the internal audience (cf. Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys* 13) and strengthens the connection between heroic masculinity and notions of labor, violence, mobility.

[252] The centrality of this image is highlighted in a mirroring shot at the end of the film that frames the entire narrative. Charles Barr describes: "[…] Rusty and Tex at once enter the shot at his shoulders, making a culminating triangle image that echoes the way we first saw them, and they holler the wild delight that he can't express on his own account" (188).

[253] In his study *Screening Cowboys: Reading Masculinities in Westerns*, Peter Verstraten has demonstrated the narratological necessity and prolificacy of this pattern in conventional Westerns: "In conventional westerns, the man is […] the focalized object of feminized or emasculated characters. These characters 'see' the hero with their imagination, with the subjective and delusive vision that is a crucial condition of fetishism. Focalized by them, the hero is perceived as an idealized figure of masculinity" (40). Verstraten emphasizes that his discussion of this paradigm constitutes a "necessary detour" in his line of argument. He remarks: "The assumption that traditional western novels are all alike, that the western is an anti-feminine genre by definition, and that the genre conforms to a presumed binarism of sexual difference will only be provisionally entertained in this chapter" (41). Verstraten later

the boundaries of conventional masculinity to measure their violations against the norm represented by the hero.

To illustrate: In an early scene at a barbershop, DODGE CITY explores one potential violation, as it qua the sidekick character of Rusty attempts to reconcile latent male homosexuality with the dominant conceptualization of heroic white masculinity. While Wade receives a shave from the barber, Rusty takes a bath in "the only tub between Chicago and Denver", as a sign on the barbershop's wall declares (00:30:44). The film shows Rusty enjoying his bath, apparently fully naked (Fig. 21).[254] As Pumphrey has argued in his essay "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?", this is an aspect incompatible with male heroism – or idealized white masculinity, for that matter – in the Western (cf. 51). As such, the violation contained in this scene comprises not only Rusty enjoying his nakedness and how it is contrasted with Wade's pragmatism about needing a shave to appear clean, a procedure which, crucially, does not require him to take off his clothes. It is more the fact that viewers are invited to look at Rusty relishing his nakedness that breaks with Western film taboos about white masculinity, as it makes the naked Rusty the object of the eroticized gaze.

Yet while this first part of the scene still appears comic, the following bit dramatizes the situation and its gaze constructions. Surrett enters the barbershop, demanding he be allowed to take his Saturday morning bath as usual. As the barber timidly tells him that the tub is currently occupied, Surrett angrily opens the swing door that separates the bathroom from the barbershop, inspecting who is causing him this inconvenience (Fig. 22). Telling from the direction of Surrett's gaze relative to the position of the bathtub, he must be looking at the naked Rusty. The camera now assumes Surrett's gaze and invites us to look at the naked Rusty again (Fig. 23). A reverse shot back to Surrett – though without a focalizer, as Rusty is still unaware that he is being looked at – reassures the viewer that they are looking through Surrett's eyes (Fig. 24). The film then cuts back to Surrett's voyeuristic gaze and stays there for a few moments until Rusty finally realizes he is being watched (Fig. 25). Rusty protests and squirts some water in Surrett's direction until the trespasser turns around and closes the door behind him (Fig. 26).

---

challenges and in part repudiates these assumptions. His initial descriptions of how flawed masculinities are functionalized to explore the gender identity of the Western hero, however, are valid observations with regards to DODGE CITY.

[254] We do see him wearing a pair of socks as he lifts one of his legs at one point. However, as he takes off the wet sock and throws it away, one can only infer that Rusty simply forgot to take them off before he got into the tub. It merely functions to underscore his clumsiness, thus increasing comic effect, rather than to reassure audiences that Rusty was not fully naked.

Fig. 21. 00:31:38.

Fig. 22. 00:32:29.

Fig. 23. 00:32:30.

Fig. 24. 00:32:34.

Fig. 25. 00:32:37.

Fig. 26. 00:32:38.

Source: DODGE CITY, Michael Curtiz (1939). Warner Bros. Pictures. DVD.

The film very much plays out what Pumphrey has described as "looking as an act of male control" (ibid. 54).[255] With reference to Richard Dyer's essay "Don't Look Now", Pumphrey asserts that by presenting the naked male body exposed to the viewer's look (which is, following Mulvey, conventionally coded as male), the film at once locates this character closer to the feminine and exposes him to the implicitly homoerotic look of the spectator (ibid. 54-55), an aspect which is made explicit in this scene, as the spectator experiences the scene filtered through the eyes of a male character.

[255] Elsewhere, in his article "Masculinity", Pumphrey interestingly phrased the pattern "as an act of masculine control" (182; see quotation above). The author's confounding, or seemingly interchangeable use of the concepts "male" and "masculine" further corroborates the project of this study to establish a genealogy of gender.

This has three essential ramifications for the film: first, as it determines Surrett as the bearer of this look, apparently enjoying the naked Rusty (or else why would he maintain his gaze for so long?), the film reproduces the connection between villainy and homoeroticism (like Trampas in THE VIRGINIAN). Second, as it determines Rusty as the object of the eroticized look, the film challenges the conventional modes of representing the male body, as it violates a pattern described by Steve Neale, who notes "that in a heterosexual and patriarchal society the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look: that look must be motivated in some other way, its erotic component repressed" ("Masculinity as Spectacle" 281). Third, bringing together the two former points, in making Rusty, as explained above, a compartmentalized constituent of the hero's personality, the film manages to expose the hero as the object of an eroticized look without actually doing so. In externalizing character aspects and gaze constructions that are incompatible with the Western genre's expectations of the male hero, DODGE CITY circumvents the seemingly paradoxical gaze constructions involved in the Western and thus manages, to a certain extent, to reconcile the "conflicting imperatives" (Pumphrey, "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?" 55) of the Western hero's sexuality and gender identity.

Another scene applying this pattern, and incidentally the one Charles Barr bases his observations on, is the spectacular saloon fight sequence about forty minutes into the film. The film splits up the trio: Wade is sent away on an unspecified call he must take, a contrived plot element which only serves to ensure viewers that nothing of the following will defile his heroism. Tex enters the saloon determined to get drunk and into trouble. Rusty, having taken the pledge of abstinence, joins the Pure Prairie League and its exclusively female members in a meeting of their social circle. Barr analyzes the scene:

> Once again, the core antinomy of the Western couldn't be more knowingly, more diagrammatically constructed than in this famously entertaining set-piece. On one side of the wall, unrestrained all-male wildness, on the other side, the female space of refinement and civilization and settling and the question of marriage. […] [P]sychic conflicts are externalised, played out in action. While Hatton's ego is occupied somewhere offstage, Rusty, incongruously and temporarily, represents the superego, Tex the id. The forces of the id are stronger: in Flynn's physical absence, they can be cathartically indulged, and played out, as in dream, *for* him, as for the spectator. (185-6)

During the barfight sequence, the film cuts back and forth between the two spaces, exploring the spectrum of masculinities that finds its extreme ends represented in Tex's excessive, unrestrained primitivism and Rusty's neurotic, effeminate mannerisms. Both spheres and what they stand for are incompatible with Flynn's image of the Western hero. Neither can the hero be seen taking pleasure in actively looking for a fight (like Tex), nor can the hero be seen timidly eluding the company of men and potential confrontation (like Rusty).

Crucially though, the film emphasizes that one sphere is even more incompatible than the other: as Rusty happily relinquishes his self-inflicted emasculation and eventually joins the über-masculine violent competition of the saloon fight, the film maintains that excessive violence might not be the material for heroes, but at least it retains the semblance of gender coherence. More to the point, Rusty's decision to take the pledge and join the ladies' tea gathering is formulated as a *withdrawal from*, whereas Tex's escapades in the saloon are staged as an *over-indulgence in* the negotiation of masculinity. As the saloon fight insinuates, violent competition is, according to DODGE CITY, an integral, if primitive, part of masculinity. As Rusty ultimately cajoles and joins the fight, the film reunites Rusty's male body with more suitable masculine characteristics, thus pathologizing gender and re-establishing, or stabilizing, gender coherence by concealing the performative explorations of abject gender that occurred prior to the fisticuffs.

In essence, then, the film in the characters of Tex and Rusty repeatedly explores what makes a man and what does not, which characteristics are befitting for masculinities and which are not. Wade serves as their compass. He contains Tex's outbursts of primitive belligerency (he puts him in jail), and he corrects Rusty's 'unmanly' tendencies. In turn, especially Rusty functions as a safety valve, attracting the eroticized gaze onto the male body but away from the hero. Of course, in terms of the film's plot level, both characters serve mostly for comic effect. However, in terms of a gender-specific reading of the film, if we accept that both characters are extensions of the hero's Self, then we must conclude that the characteristics associated with them, too, are a part of the hero's Self.

Therefore, DODGE CITY unfolds as an exploration of gender that respects hitherto demonized elements of gender and sexuality as integral parts of white masculinity, albeit with a clearly cut boundary that signifies at once a close, intimate relation and ensures enough distance to avert an overt destabilization of heteronormativity. Similar to THE VIRGINIAN, DODGE CITY suggests that latent homosexuality and a general inclination towards excess are innate elements of white masculinity that must be repressed. But whereas, in THE VIRGINIAN, these elements were outsourced to the hero's relation to his fallible friend, whom he then had to kill in order to confirm his rise to adult white masculinity, DODGE CITY retains they are elements that continuously orbit around and influence the hero, even beyond his ascension to adult white masculinity through his consent to heterosexual romance. While THE VIRGINIAN argued that homoeroticism and excessive violence had to be choked off in order to reconcile the hero's representation of gender with dominant cultural ideals, DODGE CITY implies that these aspects will never vanish and must not be vanquished. Instead, it is the hero's task to keep them at bay, learn how to practice restraint, while simultaneously embracing them as close, intimate particles of a coherent gender identity. Put differently, whereas THE VIRGINIAN in the killing of

Steve attempts to erase transgressive elements of gender and sexuality from the plot, DODGE CITY sustains them, albeit separated from the male hero.

However, as the viewer, via cross-cutting between the scenes, is invited to traverse the spatial boundaries that the film constructs for its characters, DODGE CITY effectifely blurs those boundaries. This way, the viewer is invited to confound that which the film attempts to dissociate, to recognize as constructed that which it tries to conceal as natural.

More than anything, then, DODGE CITY entertains the notion that constructing gender and concealing its very constructedness is a perpetual, ritualized practice that manages to stabilize social order – emblematized in the formation of the heterosexual couple – only by recodifying formerly transgressive elements of modern femininity as conducive to male hegemony and by displacing formerly transgressive elements of masculinity as abject drives ultimately controlled and policed by the heroic epitome of male hegemony. Conversely, DODGE CITY equally illustrates, that abject images of gender – expelled in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, eliminated in THE VIRGINIAN, transformed in THE PLAINSMAN – are acknowledged as a constitutive part of a subject's gender identity. In order for Wade's moderate masculinity to be intelligible, the excesses of his compartmentalized counterparts must be constructed and perpetually re-negotiated, which inadvertently forecloses any notion of Wade's gender identity originating in a stable, natural sex.

4.3.2. An Inconsistent Critique II: STAGECOACH (1939)

John Ford's STAGECOACH might well be one of the most scrutinized, well-researched Western films in the history of the genre. To some studies, it provides the beginning of their discussion of the (cinematic) Western genre (Coyne; Berkenkamp). To some anthologies or compendia, it presents an integral building block in the contextualization of the oeuvre of John Ford (Gallagher; Studlar & Bernstein; Kitses, *Horizons West*), or of John Wayne (Wills, Roberts & Olson), or within the genre itself (Kiefer & Grob). To others, it constitutes a singular, multi-faceted piece of art, coming from "one of the few directors to have put his own world on film – coherently and in detail – despite the restrictions of the studio system" (Dempsey 2), that in and of itself is worth discussing at length and from similarly multi-faceted academic perspectives (Grant; Buscombe, *STAGECOACH*). As the perennial interest of scholars in STAGECOACH signifies, the film constitutes a fundamental text for a discussion of the Western genre; one which cannot be neglected here. Accordingly, as Gaylyn Studlar's insightful discussion of the film with regards to aspects of class and gender testifies ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg'…"), STAGECOACH is an equally important text for the specific discussion of representations of gender in the Western genre, which gives all the more reason why it cannot be neglected here. And although I agree with many points Studlar raises, an analysis against

the background of my theoretical framework will offer some interesting nuances hitherto untouched on in academic discussions of the film.[256]

Before I relate my observations to Studlar's study, I first want to refer to another study to approach the complex nature of the representations of gender depicted in STAGECOACH, namely Katrin Berkenkamp's discussion of the film in her monograph *Die Konstruktion und Demontage des Amerikanischen Helden: Männlichkeitsentwürfe in Westernliteratur und –film*. Building mostly on the character analyses offered by Richard Slotkin in *Gunfighter Nation*, Berkenkamp has poignantly concluded that STAGECOACH makes extensive use of practices of feminization in order to evince Ringo (John Wayne) as the central male hero in contrast to other, effeminate male characters (cf. 184-91). Giving the examples of Mr. Peacock's (Donald Meek) Freudian slip ("I think it best we go back with the bosoms… I mean, the soldiers") (186) and Buck's (Andy Devine) repeated references to his Mexican wife and family (189), Berkenkamp demonstrates that almost every male character in the film in some way or another carries a social stigma that destabilizes their gender intelligibility, which Berkenkamp mono-logically delineates as instances of feminization.[257] This, according to Berkenkamp, contrasts sharply with the authoritative nature of Ringo, whose intelligible, more coherent representation of gender (as a consistently masculine man) makes him the hero in relation to other, inferior (read: feminized) male characters (185-91).

Of course, in their own right – and bearing in mind the specificities of her theoretical framework and analytical approach[258] – Berkenkamp's observations are without question

[256] Usually, an analysis of a character-based film such as STAGECOACH would entail, in a first step, examining the peculiar character arrangements, particularly with regards to the film's central characters, Dallas (Claire Trevor) and Ringo (John Wayne). But since several excellent readings of the diverse character relations have been put forward in the past, I shall refer to such examinations for a more detailed analysis. Most notably, these include Richard Slotkin's assessment of the film in *Gunfighter Nation*, Edward Buscombe's monograph *Stagecoach* published in the BFI Classics-series, and Tag Gallagher's elucidations in *John Ford: The Man and His Films*. Especially Gallagher's reading is highly commendable, as he does justice to the complex interrelations of formal and textual aspects.

[257] Berkenkamp references (and adopts elements of) Walter Erharts reading of the film in "Männlichkeit, Mythos, Gemeinschaft: Ein Nachruf auf den Western-Helden". Erhart, exploring the intersections of STAGECOACH's diverse representations of masculinity with the diverse gender narratives of American cultural history, describes that most male characters of the film (all except Ringo and Curley) at one point or another are associated with femininity (324, 327, 329-30).

[258] Berkenkamp relies on Raewyn Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity, including modifications that have transpired in the reception of Connell's work specifically in German-speaking research. Berkenkamp describes the historiographies of American masculinities in order to identify recurring patterns, narratives and characteristics that she claims have been (and still are) essential to the construction and dismantling of 'American masculinity', among the most salient of which, according to her, is the practice of *feminization* (30-39). Berkenkamp does this to relate constructions of masculinity in Western novels and films to real-historical constructions of hegemonic masculinity as identified by the vanguards of American Historical Men's Studies, Michael Kimmel (*Manhood in America*) and Anthony Rotundo (*American Manhood*), arguing that only within the context of a time's cultural ideals of masculinity can recipients (readers/viewers) of said time identify characters as masculine or un-masculine men (300). Ultimately, she argues that formal means of film production such as montage, editing, and camera angles (52-62) work together with the visual elements and semantics denoting masculinity to correspond with, reproduce, reinforce, and perpetuate a patriarchal ideology that posits men as superior to women. She states: "The films and novels discussed here fulfill one function; in

verifiable. If anything, STAGECOACH has even more examples to offer, such as the early interaction between the banker Gatewood (Berton Churchill) and his wife, a member of the town's 'Ladies of the Law and Order League.' She bosses him around, is shown to make financial decisions for the household (at once undermining his professional status as a banker and his social status as the breadwinner for their household) and controls the public sphere with regards to herself and her husband (she invites guests for dinner, she decides who is coming, she sets the time for the occasion). Eventually, this makes Gatewood abandon her and abscond with a bag of money he steals from his own bank (and thus, by proxy, from the people of Tonto). STAGECOACH thus shows in Gatewood a man who has lost (or, perhaps, never had) authority over women. Moreover, he avoids confrontation (read: competition) with his wife. Gatewood is depicted as a deficient (read, with Berkenkamp: feminized) masculinity in relation to a woman that has approximated the symbolical male body (claimed authority over a man) and is thus shown to be gravely inferior to Ringo.

Crucially however, Berkenkamp's subsequent conclusion that because of its involvement in practices of feminization STAGECOACH would constitute a "classic Western",[259] presenting Ringo as "an affirmative hero in an affirmative film" that "confirms American ideas such as individualism, white supremacy, the *self-made-man* and *provider*" (193; Transl. T.S.), falls short of revealing many of the complexities involved in this film. For one thing, this is because Berkenkamp's emphasis on Ringo suggests he was the central character of the film, which, as Jim Kitses has shown, he arguably is not (cf. *Horizons West* 51).[260] Mainly, however, this is because Berkenkamp's affirmative reading of STAGECOACH as an affirmative film with

---

different ways they transport *the* patriarchal ideology. Texts may constitute ideals of masculinity, affirm them, and simultaneously criticize others by dismantling them, or manage – for instance, in the case of a diagnosed crisis – to call upon (male) readers or viewers" (299; Transl. T.S.; my emphasis). Berkenkamp concludes that her diachronic analysis of a selection of key Western texts gives ample evidence to suggest that the genre's configurations of masculinity have not developed linearly over time (cf. 303). In reaction to the drastic societal changes of the real world, the Western heroes' *imagines* have been forced to adapt. However, Berkenkamp discerns that what has remained unaffected is the Western's depiction of the inferiority of female characters in relation to their male counterparts (cf. 318), thus fostering and stabilizing the continuity of the *feminization*-practice as a prevalent pattern in the configuration of hegemonic masculinity. In other words, Berkenkamp argues that her reading of the Western illustrates the non-linear plurality and the historical variability of cultural ideals of masculinity, as well as the seemingly unperturbed actuality of patriarchal governance.

[259] Berkenkamp classifies STAGECOACH as a classic Western in a double sense, referring to its time of production during the classical Hollywood era on the one hand, and to its widely accepted status as one of the most formidable films of the Western genre (193). This assessment is very misleading. According to this categorization, exceptional films like THE OX-BOW INCIDENT (1943) or THE GUNFIGHTER (1950) would also qualify as classic Westerns. As Gary Wills has remarked in response to André Bazin's (equally misleading) labelling of STAGECOACH as "the classical embodiment of 'the Western,'" STAGECOACH "is not archetypal but atypical" (84). Making a similar point, Michael Coyne concludes that "STAGECOACH […] is *like no other Western by prewar standards*" (22; emphasis of the author).

[260] Kitses explains: "The notion that Ringo's revenge represents the plot's main strand and that Dallas is a secondary character – the orthodox interpretation – seems unduly masculinist. In fact, the salvation of Dallas is the narrative's most prominent focus, sustaining a largely abstract structure of threatened conflicts and promised violence that is unrealised until the final sequences" (*Horizons West* 51).

regards to representations of gender neglects the subtle but trenchant critique of gender politics it conveys,[261] which is in great part due to her debatable decision to describe occurrences of gender contingency mainly as manifestations of feminization – hence, in tacit adherences to a binary gender order. This then, will be the overall premise of this section: to collate existing assessments of the film, situate them within my own gender-specific and ideological-critical analysis of American Western films, advance an argument that respects the idiosyncrasies of the film as well as the contingency of gender, and thus carve out STAGECOACH's seminal importance as one of the most potently self-critical and self-reflective films of the genre.

A Class Dystopia

This critique of issues of gender (and class) has been studied, first and foremost, by Gaylyn Studlar in her insightful essay "'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg': Class, Gender, and Frontier Democracy in STAGECOACH". Studlar argues that

> STAGECOACH relies on established generic norms in constructing character motivation and familiar types […], as well as established Western plot devices. However, these familiar character types and narrative points are framed within a storyline and through specific textual inscriptions that call into

[261] In fact, the inherent criticism in STAGECOACH has occupied the minds of several scholars. However, as their discussions of the film range from interpreting Ford's vision of the frontier as a redemptive, transformational utopia to reading the film as a cynical comment on the corruption and dysfunctionality of American society, STAGECOACH, apparently, has scholars still left somewhat divided on the nature of that criticism. Jim Kitses, for instance, has argued that, "[s]uffering their test in the wilderness, most of the characters in their various ways achieve redemption and transformation. The promise of America perennially held out to its immigrants is reaffirmed – rebirth, regeneration, reinvention of the self, new life" (*Horizons West* 45). By contrast, Tag Gallagher remarks: "[…] [N]o other Ford western gives a more cynical verdict on the notion of the West as synthesis of nature and civilization. In LIBERTY VALANCE (1962), for contrast, Ransom Stoddard spends a lifetime to figure out what everyone in STAGECOACH already knows: that civilization is corrupting. […] Ringo, who ignores society rather than confronting it, who is less outlaw than oblivious, is a dumb god who snatches Dallas off to never-never land. Who of us resembles Ringo? What solution or reason for optimism does he offer us, who cannot escape? As always in Ford, happiness belongs only to fools and simpletons, and if we fantasize with Ringo it is only because hope is more primal than realism (161)." Expressing a similar idea, Gaylyn Studlar notes that "the American West is not offered in STAGECOACH as a utopian escape from class but as a site of class-structured problems", telling an allegorical story about Depression America in which "sending the main protagonists to a foreign land [is] the only possibility of freedom and happiness beyond an unjust law and an oppressive social system" ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg'…" 137, 134). Even more radical in its phrasing, Michael Coyne concludes that STAGECOACH's denouement – namely, sending Ringo and Dallas off to Mexico – constitutes "as anti-American a conclusion as any major Western reached before the Vietnam era […]" (22). My point here will not be to subscribe to either side of the debate. Rather, my point is that the fact that STAGECOACH allows for well-founded, plausible but essentially diverging readings, first, confirms the film's intricacy (as glossed over by Berkenkamp), second, suggests that the way Ford expresses his critique might not be exactly coherent or cohesive, let alone subversive in its content, which thus asks for further examination. In fact, Studlar repeatedly points out the film's many conflicting messages in her discussion of issues of class and gender in "'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg'…" (146-7).

question the idea of the frontier American West as a utopian space where class differences are ignored or irrelevant. (ibid. 136).

STAGECOACH thus unfolds as a morality play, primarily on issues of class (cf. ibid. 133; cf. McGee 50). Ford treats 'class' synonymously with the infamous "blessings of civilization" or the "foul disease we call social prejudice", which he has Doc Boone (Thomas Mitchell) cynically proclaim (01:31:02-01:31:07; 00:06:13-00:06:18). Consequently, those characters the Western conventionally associates with 'civilization', which translates as a character's internalized awareness of their ostensible superiority by class, in STAGECOACH appear as morally corrupt: The 'Ladies of the Law and Order League', the crooked banker Gatewood, the snobbish Southern aristocrat-turned-gambler Hatfield (John Carradine), the equally snobbish genteel Southern/Eastern lady Mrs. Lucy Mallory (Louise Platt) (cf. Berg 79). In Ford's logic, their fault is having brought the class-structured problems of the social world of the East to the innocent, classless utopia of the frontier. 'Civilization', meaning the dysfunctional impact of class on a nascent community (which Ford considers the United States to be again after the all-encompassing caesura of the Great Depression),[262] is STAGECOACH's real villain, not Geronimo. Hence, Dallas (Claire Trevor), the film's peculiar heroine, frustratedly asserts as the camera shows an image of the 'Ladies of the Law and Order League' staring haughtily and repulsively at her: "There's worse things than Apaches!" (00:12:27-00:12:30). The 'Ladies of the Law and Order League', Gatewood, Mrs. Mallory, Hatfield are constant reminders of class *difference* that results in power disparity.

By contrast, those characters that are conventionally associated in the Western with moral corruption – the escaped convict, the prostitute, the drunk – are associated with civilized, that is, morally upright behavior (cf. Coyne 19). Therefore, instead of associating his heroic characters with the credentials of institutionalized authority to evince them as heroic characters, which in and of itself are only symbolic tokens of class belonging, (like, for instance, Errol Flynn's sheriff Wade Hatton in DODGE CITY), Ford's heroic characters become heroic precisely because they lack these credentials.[263] Expressing a similar point, Slotkin has described Ringo as "a 'natural gentleman' whose instincts are in tune with the spirit of chivalry

[262] Offering a socio-political reading of the Western genre inspired by ideological criticism, Michael Coyne notes that "STAGECOACH is at its most resonant as a parable of 1939 America" (19).

[263] To illustrate, the angry mob that expels Dallas and Doc Boone from Tonto – a town marshal and the 'Ladies of the Law and Order League' – both wear badges on their chests that Ford by juxtaposition labels as the insignia of assumed bourgeois authority: the marshal's star and the Ladies' badges are tokens of society's bigotry; the people that wear them are false icons because they abuse their assumed authority for immoral actions. Incidentally, in visually connecting the marshal's star with the Ladies' badges, the film offers another striking example of confounding gender stereotypes: not only do the 'Ladies of the Law and Order League' seem to boss the marshal around, the visual association of star and badge functions to undermine his authority and thus destabilize his position in the gender order.

that underlines the mannered codes of honor," and Dallas as "a 'true woman' whose nurturing instincts are not checked by social convention" (*Gunfighter Nation* 308).[264]

Ford thus inverts the Western's conventional narrative formula of conflating moral with legal authority (cf. Coyne 24). Civilization, the introduction, establishment, and defense of which is usually the Western hero's job, in STAGECOACH transpires as a harbinger of individual and communal demise: for it inevitably entails the introduction, establishment, and defense of a class system that unjustly divides economic resources and thus facilitates power disparities.[265] However, there are logical inconsistencies inherent to Ford's variation, as Studlar asserts:

> STAGECOACH overtly rejects the eastern elites on the coach. Yet, paradoxically, in constructing a hero and heroine who both possess an 'implausible innate refinement,' the film succumbs to the inherent class distinctions embedded in the theory of social stages that posits refinement and middle-class, 'eastern' norms as the standard of value. ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg'…" 150)

As Studlar thus shows, STAGECOACH reproduces the very values it wants to attack. Dallas and Ringo might be unblemished by the corrupting influences of "the blessings of civilization"; indeed, this is what makes them heroic. Yet the qualities they 'naturally' possess are starkly evocative of precisely the qualities conventionally associated with civilization (cf. Grant 16). Ford has his idealized classless society, his heroic romantic couple, transcend 'the East' by incorporating 'the East' before the fact. Despite Ford's vibrant contempt for Eastern elites in STAGECOACH, the concept of 'the East' remains his normalizing standard for determining the moral disposition of his characters.

---

[264] At the same time, the film makes sure to humanize its heroic characters by giving them some moral flaws of their own: Ringo's egalitarianism and innocence are somewhat tarnished when we learn that he saved three bullets during the Apache attack to pursue his selfish agenda of avenging his father's death by killing the Plummers; Dallas, as Madonna-esque as Ford envisions her, is still a prostitute and thus *prima facie* associated with transgressive sexuality. But like Dixie Lee in CIMARRON, she is "a prostitute in name but not in deed" (Levitin 97). Crucially, the film equally makes sure that these flaws are forgivable, because, as Ringo and Dallas assert at the Dry Fork waystation, "things happened" (00:29:03-00:29:51); that is, Ringo was framed for a crime he had not committed, and Dallas "is sexually transgressive because of economic necessity rather than personal predilection" (Studlar, "Sacred Duties…" 53). They are, as Michael Coyne puts it, "victims of involuntary moral dislocation" (21).

[265] While narrative tropes concerning the redistribution of wealth were certainly popular in Westerns following the Great Depression (see, for instance, JESSE JAMES or VIRGINIA CITY), these films still advocated the generally benign nature of the system, which simply needed reforms. Coyne comments on a large selection of Western films released between 1939 and 1941: "[…] their ideological underpinnings reveal unabashed faith in the course of American history and affirm U.S. society's prewar *status quo*. […] In both theme and tone these films affirmed Puritan work ethic, worship of God and the centrality of capitalism and community" (24, 25; emphasis of the author). Not so in STAGECOACH: Here, the system itself is corrupt. Interestingly, Coyne suggests a thematic, ideological kinship between STAGECOACH (i.e., Gatewood as one of the central representatives of the system's corruption) and the cynic distortions of the traditional American Western in the cinema of Sam Peckinpah (specifically THE WILD BUNCH, 1969), or the 'Spaghetti Westerns' of the late 1960s (cf. 25).

In an article for *MLN*, John Belton asserts: “Civilization exists in various forms in STAGECOACH, but in all of its forms, it fails to find the proper balance between individual freedom and the need for order, between natural expression and unnatural repression, and between the opposing poles of Nature and Culture” (“Re-Imagining American Communities: Hollywood, Hawks, and Ford in 1939” 1175). This is inaccurate. Attempting to criticize the ruinous influence of culture onto nature, STAGECOACH equates nature with culture.

Same Difference

Curiously, as Studlar detects, this pattern not only has implications for a critical reading of class but is intimately tied to the film’s representation of gender. Studlar observes:

> Contrary to some readings of the film, Dallas is not a frontier whore with a ‘heart of gold’ who undergoes transformation (and thus reformation). Dallas’s lack of whorishness contrasts remarkably with, for example, Marlene Dietrich’s showy saloon singer/prostitute in DESTRY RIDES AGAIN (1939) or Ona Munson’s colorful Belle Watling in GONE WITH THE WIND (1939). This lack functions to confirm Dallas’s adherence to middle-class, eastern notions of proper femininity, as do her shame and lack of social defiance. Dallas is all along a nice girl (just as Ringo thinks she is) whose fundamental, proper feminine characteristics (maternal nurturing, altruistic selflessness) surface in a crisis situation. (“‘Be A Proud, Glorified Dreg’…” 148-9)

Ford displaces the nurturing kindness of the conventional Western heroine to the character of a whore and even suggests “that she is the best material for motherhood”, a connection, as Studlar notes, constitutes the real “divergence from the genre’s longstanding feminine stereotypes” (ibid. 149), with the likely exception of CIMARRON’s Dixie Lee. Thus, Dallas’s identification of the Ladies of the Law and Order League as “worse […] than Apaches” is as much of a reckoning with class-structured power disparities as it is with dysfunctional standards of femininity. STAGECOACH repeals the standards of the virgin-whore dichotomy (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 219; cf. Schößler 67)[266] and shows that they are detrimental to individuals as much as they are to the community in general.

In fact, in caricaturizing false icons of femininity in the ‘Ladies of the Law and Order League’ (wonderfully orchestrated with an organ-turned-spoof version of ‘Shall We Gather at the River’[267] accompanying Doc Boone and Dallas’s walk “to the guillotine” in Tonto) (cf. Kalinak 184), Ford shows an acute awareness of the dysfunctionality of the virgin/whore

[266] More to the point, STAGECOACH plays with the virgin-whore dichotomy by juxtaposing Dallas (the whore) with Mrs. Mallory (the genteel lady, i.e., ‘the virgin’).
[267] For a succinct genealogy and historical contextualization of the hymn, see Grønstad (52-54).

dichotomy *as social practice*.[268] He thus not only attacks stereotypes (like DODGE CITY), he in fact attacks the process of 'stereotypization'; in other words, the heteronormative matrix that generates such confining stereotypes.

Another example: Early in the film, upon hearing that Geronimo and the Apaches are on the warpath, Marshal Curley Wilcox (George Bancroft), who had commissioned himself to ride shotgun on the stagecoach journey, asks the passengers if they would rather get off the coach and stay in town, given the endangering circumstances of an impending Apache attack. Mr. Peacock instantly jumps but Doc Boone holds him back. Doc Boone reminds Mr. Peacock that he ought to have courage in the face of adversity and that, if anything, the ladies should exit the cabin first. Filtered through Doc Boone's phrasing, Mr. Peacock's eagerness to get off the coach is thus equated with conventionally feminine conduct, which ought to be repressed in a man, a reference Doc Boone explicitly makes:

> Curley: Well, Buck and me are taking this coach through, passengers or not. Now, whoever wants to get out can get out.
>
> Mr. Peacock [trying to assemble his luggage and exit the cabin]: Excuse…
>
> Doc Boone [interrupting Mr. Peacock; preventing him from getting off the coach]: Courage, courage, reverend. Ladies first.
>
> […]
>
> Mr. Peacock [making another effort to get out]: Uhm. My… You see, brother, I… I have a wife and five children…
>
> Doc Boone [again interrupting Mr. Peacock]: You're a man. By all the powers that be, you're a man.
>
> Source: STAGECOACH, John Ford (1939). Walter Wanger Productions. DVD. 00:12:10-00:12:46.

Doc Boone's utterance suggests an assignation of character attributes such as courage, composure, restraint and willingness to compete violently to the symbolic male body. Correspondingly, the scene suggests an assignation of attributes such as anxiety, nervousness, and withdrawal from violent competition to the symbolic female body. Put differently, in his phrasing Doc Boone constructs certain images of gender, expecting the sexed bodies that *a priori* identify with that gender to comply with the image, or at least extending the humiliating revelation that would ensue if a sexed body were to violate that expectation. Therefore, Boone opens a tenuous field that coerces bodies – in this case, Mr.

---

[268] Another instance of the comic inversion Ford uses to ridicule Victorian moral would be the conversation between stagecoach driver Buck and Mrs. Mallory: Buck awkwardly adjusts his choice of words from "stretch your legs" to "limbs" as he speaks to Mrs. Mallory getting off the coach. The silliness of Buck's correction, his cracked voice, clumsy conduct and the inappropriateness of his remark in the spatial context of a frontier town all work together to challenge the status of conventional femininity.

Peacock's – to adhere to a discursively pre-determined image of gender. Boone's perilous heterosexist threat surreptitiously holds out an image of gender, of intelligible masculinity, that Mr. Peacock subsequently feels compelled to comply with in order to save face.

Yet in order to fully grasp the implications of this sequence it is imperative to consider its context; that is, its subtext. Ford has Doc Boone voice these assignations of gender not because he is seriously concerned about a potential transgression of the heteronormative order, which Mr. Peacock's exiting the cabin would entail. Rather, Doc Boone appropriates and utilizes the knowledge about the hegemony of heteronormativity as a simple means to an end: he wants Mr. Peacock, the whiskey drummer, to stay aboard because he wants to get drunk on his 'free' samples of whiskey. Ford here seems to speak through Doc Boone to communicate a profound wisdom about the structure of society, about the arbitrariness and shallowness of the patterns that aggregate the system, and about the power these structures have on people's lives. Doc Boone knows in this sequence that he can get what he wants simply by implying a threat to Mr. Peacock's masculinity; that is, Mr. Peacock's self-conceptualization as a man. Doc Boone knows that society is structured in a way that posits the masculine as superior to the feminine, that is predicated on a congruency between the sex of a body and the gender said body is asked to perform, and that any violation of the pattern entails a severe attack on a person's social status. Doc Boone knows about the insurmountable pressure on Mr. Peacock to conform with the system.

Moreover, Doc Boone's railroading of Mr. Peacock allows for another thought, for his decision to stay aboard the stagecoach and respond to Doc Boone's threat reveals a crucial element in the film's construction of gender. Though he eventually caves in to Doc Boone's provocation, it would be possible for Mr. Peacock to step out. In fact, Marshal Curley Wilcox invites people to do so. My point being, that STAGECOACH demonstrates that there are no physical, impenetrable borders (as a closed door would imply) that prevent Mr. Peacock from abandoning the stagecoach, but there are abstract, culturally constructed ones. The possibility for Mr. Peacock to step out of this heteronormative microcosm of allegedly fixed, binary gender images is presented, but the social dogma that Doc Boone invokes is ultimately too powerful for Mr. Peacock to disregard it.

Furthermore, in having the alcoholic exploit the powers of this structure for the cheap reason to get drunk, Ford subtly and implicitly criticizes its propriety, revealing at once its power (in the effect that the insinuation of the invisible-yet-ubiquitous heteronormative matrix has on Mr. Peacock) and its vulnerability (in the susceptibility of the system's arbitrary parameters for resignification).

However, despite Ford's apparent awareness and contempt for these patterns in STAGECOACH, they remain his standard criteria for determining the moral disposition of his characters with regards to gender, rendering his critique of gender politics somewhat

inconsistent. A closer look at his treatment of Yakima (Elvira Ríos), the Apache woman the stagecoach passengers meet at Apache Wells, will clarify this point. At first, Yakima is introduced to the viewer by Mr. Peacock's horrified exclaim, "Savages!" (00:42:33-00:42:35). In the subsequent shot the viewer sees her standing in a doorway. The camera assumes Mr. Peacock's point of view, inviting the viewer to share his terror. As Peter Yacavone has described in his discussion of the depiction of Native Americans in John Ford's Westerns, Yakima, through Mr. Peacock's eyes, appears "as a mysterious, shrouded, 'alien' woman" (41), which through the camera arrangement and lighting transpires as a somewhat expressionistic manifestation of the timid white man's exoticized gaze (cf. Movshovitz 69), hence as an extension of the conventional white gaze of the viewer onto Native Americans. However, Ford turns the joke on Mr. Peacock (and hence, the viewer), as he has Chris (Chris-Pin Martin), Yakima's husband and station manager at Apache Wells, misunderstand his reaction, which is framed in a shot from an objective, unfocalized angle. Yacavone remarks: "Peacock is revealed as both paranoid and ignorant about Native Americans only because Ford has moved beyond the antagonisms of the competing perspectives that he has so carefully captured" (41). In this little vignette, Ford "confront[s] a white cinematic audience with the reality of racism and racial violence towards Native Americans" (ibid. 35).

Moments later, however, Ford uses a very similar shot to show Yakima singing a serenade in Spanish while the other characters are inside the station, occupied with the tensions of Mrs. Mallory's childbirth (Fig. 27).

Fig. 27. Source: STAGECOACH, John Ford (1939). Walter Wanger Productions. DVD. 00:44:17.

The camera again assumes an exoticized gaze onto this 'alien' woman. This time, however, the gaze is not filtered by a focalizer. Rather, it is the director's gaze onto Yakima's performance of ethnicity and gender, which is supposed to be looked at, as the gazes of the men in the background suggest.[269]

Ford thus employs the very same gaze construction he had comically subverted moments before, and even tops it off with a misogynistic joke that has Chris devastated upon learning his wife ran away, stealing his favorite horse: Chris and Curley agree that Yakima is a replaceable commodity (anticipating the recurring horse-joke of THE OUTLAW); he will find a comparably 'gifted' wife eventually. But the horse she took was one of a kind.

The sequence featuring Yakima has several implications for the film's treatment of gender. First, the sequence demonstrates that the film's reckoning with the virgin-whore complex does not pertain to women of non-white descent. Yakima is exempt from issues of conventional femininity because she is markedly different, meaning unconventional, anyway. She is a typical example for Ford's treatment of Native Americans "as enigmatic racial Others" who "primarily serve to define the ethnics at the Margin" (Berg 80). Yakima from the start exists outside the system Ringo and Dallas eventually escape from. Second, the film shows severe inconsistencies between its narrative and visual treatment of the Native American woman. Detached from the exoticizing gaze of the assumed white viewer at first, moments later Yakima is subjected to that very gaze for precisely that reason.

Even more evidently, Ford's inconsistency with his critique of gender politics shows in the configuration of Dallas. Just as Dallas transcends 'the East' by incorporating 'the East' in terms of class, Dallas transcends conventional white femininity by incorporating conventional white femininity. As such, Dallas is associated with nurturing and mothering, the domestic sphere.[270] Similar to the treatment of Abbie in DODGE CITY, Ford in STAGECOACH invents new stereotypes (a whore as a mother) to challenge conventional representations of femininity but falls into the trap of making these new stereotypes look very much like the old (the mother as ideal woman). Accordingly, Studlar asserts: "No inversion of gender-determined social

---

[269] Expressing a similar point, Howard Movshovitz has observed: "Ford has created a 'woman's time' right in the middle of STAGECOACH. It is dark, suggestive, and disturbing, somewhat like a Walpurgisnacht when all dark forces are out and around. Ford sees birth [which is happening simultaneously inside, T.S.] as an essential mystery of women, that men do not comprehend. STAGECOACH has great respect for women, but 'in their place.' Ford assigns women the 'other' side of life, not the arena where men fight out issues involving law, justice, race, and wilderness. Ford values women as fundamentally different figures outside the world of daylight and logic, and […] he assigns them a particular visual role as well" (69-70).

[270] Studlar has pointed out the importance of Dallas not entering the saloon with Doc Boone at the beginning of the film to ensure "STAGECOACH's ultimate alignment of the prostitute with moral goodness, 'family values,' and civilized refinement. To have Dallas enter the saloon would unequivocally link her to the economic exchange of her sexuality because prostitutes frequently were hired out as 'companions' in saloons. Such a social space would not necessarily have 'classed' its male customers, but it would certainly have 'classed' its female participants as sexually degraded" ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg'…" 144-5).

exchange or gender-linked social duties occurs in STAGECOACH. In the film, women function as traditional patriarchal tokens of exchange between men and as symbols of the private, the domestic, the familial, the sexual" ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg'…" 142).

Elsewhere, in her article "Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions…", Studlar has argued how Ford's Westerns "not only […] complicate many contemporary critical discussions of the flight of male protagonists from the feminine, but that some of his films also go so far as to break down gender polarities to suggest the accommodation of masculinity to feminine values (Christianity, family-centered domesticity)" (46). At the same time, reminding readers that Ford "was still a product of the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century", she concedes that "Ford's Westerns do not liberate women from their limited handful of traditional Western film roles" (ibid. 46). She thus summarizes her observations the following: "[…] [G]ender politics of Ford's Westerns may not be of the sort to be called progressive, but they resist certain key assumptions recently attributed monolithically to the Western" (ibid. 47). A similar observation has been made by Russell Meeuf in his discussion of migration and space in Ford's Cavalry Trilogy (FORT APACHE, 1948; SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, 1949; RIO GRANDE 1950). Meeuf expounds:

> While the spaces and roles offered to women are quite limited in Ford's West, women nevertheless occupy an important space in the gendered dynamics of his films, much more so than in the westerns of [Howard] Hawks, Anthony Mann, John Sturges, or others, in which the active mobility of men across the frontier dominates the imagery and narrative. (59)

Studlar eventually concludes that Ford – arguably the exception to the rule with regards to directors' treatment of the genre's formula (cf. "Sacred Duties…" 69; cf. Meeuf 59) – in his Westerns regularly ascribes conventionally masculine qualities to female characters, and conventionally feminine qualities to male characters (cf. "Sacred Duties…" 68).[271] To illustrate her point, Studlar discusses a broad selection of Ford's sound era Western films, including MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (1946), WAGON MASTER (1950), and THE SEARCHERS (1956). STAGECOACH, however, she only touches on briefly. However, it seems safe to say that her assessment can also account for the representation of gender and Ford's dealing with gender politics in STAGECOACH.

As the sequence featuring Doc Boone and Mr. Peacock illustrates, STAGECOACH conveys a profound knowledge about the way that gender – as a most ubiquitous manifestation of "the foul disease we call social prejudice" – organizes and governs the social world, to the

[271] See, for instance, Robin Wood's discussion of Lana (Claudette Colbert) in his article on Ford's DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK (1939) in *The Movie Book of the Western* (174-180). Most often, however, as Wood notes in his analysis of the film, "the overlay of 'manliness' [in Ford's female characters; T.S.] serves mainly to emphasise Lana's 'natural' femininity" ("DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK" 176).

effect of establishing and defending power disparities, of which Ford disapproves. In his portrayal of Gatewood, Mr. Peacock, and Dallas, Ford very much complicates and challenges contemporary conceptualizations of gender, as Studlar professes. However, as the examples of his treatment of Yakima and a further examination of his configuration of Dallas demonstrate, Ford in STAGECOACH is not able to formulate a coherent critique of this pattern, because he attempts to resolve his indictment of culture (i.e., gender, specifically the corrupting and reductive process of creating, perpetuating, and policing binary gender stereotypes) by constructing – better: reforming – nature-as-culture (at once liberating gender from cultural imperatives and concealing the construction of gender by invoking a pre-cultural, allegedly natural, pristine sex). STAGECOACH reveals an astonishing level of awareness about the mechanisms of heteronormativity, even though the film has not yet found a way to consistently subvert its hegemony.

4.3.3. Excursion III: THE WESTERNER (1940) and THE OUTLAW (1946)

To substantiate my analysis of the prewar Western I will now turn to THE WESTERNER (William Wyler, 1940)[272] and THE OUTLAW (Howard Hughes 1946). I will refer to an earlier publication of mine in which I have discussed both films at length following a similar, if less fleshed-out theoretical framework.[273] In the following, I will summarize the findings of my inintial analysis of THE WESTERNER and THE OUTLAW, and briefly situate my results within the context of the study at hand. I am confident that this excursion will illustrate that the patterns delineated above about the prewar Western in fact extended into wartime, by which I mean that filmmakers became increasingly aware of the discursive possibilities and limits of the genre.

Building on the longstanding tradition of Hollywood Westerns to contain negotiations of latent or repressed homoeroticism,[274] I illustrated in my earlier study that despite each film's

---

[272] Despite its critical acclaim (cf. Miller, *William Wyler* 183), Wyler's film has rarely been subject to detailed ideological-critical or queer analysis. Apart from Gabriel Miller's extensive discussion of THE WESTERNER in his book *William Wyler: The Life and Films of Hollywood's Most Celebrated Director* (165-83), the film has largely been received on superficial terms that focused on its use of standardized tropes, overlooking the film's insightful variation of those generic patterns (cf. Coyne,25; cf. Stanfield 215; cf. McGee 52-58; cf. Bandy and Stoehr 104-27; cf. McDonough 106).
[273] See above (n14).
[274] This is a well-established observation in research about the Western: See Creekmur, "Acting Like a Man," 171-5; also cf. Cohan, *Masked Men*, 216-7; cf. Verstraten, *Screening Cowboys*, 8; cf. Liebrand, "'John Wayne Wouldn't Like Gay Cowboys'", 5-42; cf. Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle" 286; cf. Needham 5, 32; cf. Wood, "RIO BRAVO & Retrospect" 191-3. My earlier discussions of THE VIRGINIAN and DODGE CITY corroborate those observations; in fact, they have demonstrated that the link between negotiations of male homosexuality and the Western dates back considerably farther than the oft-quoted examples of MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (John Ford, 1946) or RED RIVER (Howard Hawks, 1948). On a different note, it shoud be said that the patterns scholars outline about the Western's flirtations with (and eventual disavowals of) homosexuality are not exclusive to the genre. For instance, Olaf Stieglitz's study "Film, Vorbilder und männliche Sozialisation in den 1930er Jahren" contains ample evidence to

eventual rebuttal of homosexuality, both films vividly entertain the notion of male homosexuality as a contingent element of gender. Crucially, I argued that while the idea of male homosexuality as depicted – or rather: subtextually implied – in THE WESTERNER and THE OUTLAW is not at odds with the films' construction of intelligible masculinity, it is with Production Code regulations (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 314). Therefore, both films, if to very different ends, consciously reference and subsequently twist genre conventions to develop and explore what I called homosexual utopias in opposition to heterosexual dystopias, and in the process make visible both the normativizing power of compulsory heterosexuality and its artificiality.

In THE WESTERNER, the homosexual utopia develops between the laconic, mysterious drifter Cole Harden (Gary Cooper) and quirky innkeep-cum-magistrate Judge Roy Bean (Walter Brennan). Although the film ostensibly denies the men's growing affection for each other, their more than platonic feelings shine through its subtext. I illustrated in several examples and with reference to David Lusted ("Social Class and The Western as Male Melodrama" 66-69 and *The Western* 124, 127), Robert Lang (99, 112) and Nanna Verhoeff (114-5) that THE WESTERNER utilizes the stylistic conventions of melodrama to hint at the increasing intimacy between Cole and the judge. More than that, I argued with reference to Benshoff and Griffin (316) and Schnelle (102) that THE WESTERNER even implies a sexual relationship between the men in a sequence marked by fragmentary editing, which features the men waking up in bed together after a night of heavy drinking. Their drunken stupor and the morning after are markedly separated by a fade-out, a panoramic shot of the town that indicates the progression of time, and a fade-in that shows them awkwardly trying to remember and subsequently silence the proceedings of last night as they slowly regain consciousness.

Conversely, the film exemplifies a heterosexual dystopia in the image of Lily Langtry, an idolized actor and epitome of refined-yet-sexualized white femininity[275] and the superficial, one-dimensional relationship Cole Harden has with the homesteader Jane Ellen Matthews (Doris Davenport). Incidentally, the film includes several instances that dramatize the internalized and institutionalized homophobia that suffuses the West(ern),[276] which confirm the policing of homosociality and the punishment of homoerotic transgressions as ritualized

substantiate the notion of Hollywood's great investment in maintaining and defending the preeminent normative status of heterosexuality in the genre of the gangster film (cf. 241-2).

[275] Wyler's choice of Judge Roy Bean's obsession with Lily Langtry as a historical reference is more than apt: a celebrated actress, esteemed socialite, and mistress of, among others, the Prince of Wales and future King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Edward VII, Lily (or Lillie) Langtry lead a life of notoriety, renowned as much for her entrepreneurship as for her sexual affairs with members of the higher echelons of society (cf. Röhrig 234-6).

[276] In this vein, I discussed the scene in Bean's saloon/barroom, in which Bean expels a fancily dressed stranger (Lucien Littlefield) from the premises because the stranger had failed to show proper deference to Lily Langtry, i.e., disregarded the rules of compulsory heterosexuality. The stranger constitutes yet another iteration of the dandy-character trope.

performances of masculinity and as foundational elements to the functioning of heteronormativity.

I have argued with reference to Cook ("Women and the Western" 293), Roloff and Seeßlen (93), Stanfield (179), and Gabriel Miller (*William Wyler* 175) that THE WESTERNER intelligently uses pictures of Lily Langtry and a lock of Jane's hair (which Cole misconstrues as a lock of Lily Langtry's hair) to detach women's symbolic function recognizably from the female body.[277] Bringing this stylistic device to the fore, the film demonstrates an acute awareness of the discourses it is going to operate in, as it candidly reveals the central-yet-peripheral, present-yet-absent, ubiquitous-yet-insubstantial role of women in many previous Westerns. Moreover, I argued with Pumphrey ("Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?" 54) and Dyer (cf. "Don't Look Now…" 66) that THE WESTERNER introduces in Lily Langtry's image a simulacrum of white femininity to absorb but also make visible the conflicting notions of sexuality and power that the scene's arrangement of gazes entails.

Especially the lock of hair occupies the central tasks of absorbing the men's sexual desires and maintaining the semblance of heterosexuality. At the same time, however, the lock constitutes a fetishized token that manages to distill and displace, or marginalize, the men's desire for one another. The film resolves these conflicting, inexpressible emotions in distinctly separated endings, visibly marked by the closing of a curtain: One features Cole reluctantly killing Bean, who dies holding the lock of hair firmly in his hands while Cole softly stays with him as he passes away. The other features Cole and Jane looking apathetically outside the window of their new homestead as they await new caravans of settlers, thereby consciously paying lip service to the myth of heterosexuality as one keystone of American identity. Jointly, the two endings caricature heterosexuality as a tragic farce that nonetheless possesses the unparalleled power to effectively smother any alternative, no matter how compelling.[278]

In the enthralling relationship between Bean and Cole, the film consciously blurs the usually carefully demarcated discontinuity of male homosociality and homosexuality (cf. Sedgwick 5). Heterosexuality, by contrast, appears as artificial, constructed, even contrived as the lock of hair that functions to mitigate the men's conflicting feelings. It is fetish and obsession. It is the thing they must do even though they do not want to do it. At the same time, the film discloses with equal diligence that heterosexuality is undeniably and irrefutably normative, as it compels the two male protagonists to override, conceal, and ultimately discard

[277] The deliberate and self-conscious usage of portraits of women (often in explicitly sexualized poses) to mitigate the potentially sexualized male gaze in a male homosocial environment such as a saloon is a recurring feature in Western films; see, for instance, THE OX-BOW INCIDENT and YELLOW SKY (1942, 1948, both William A. Wellman).

[278] Incidentally therefore, to invoke Judith Butler's interrogation of Lacan's deliberations on *masquerade* and (feminine) homosexuality, THE WESTERNER in its two endings plays out both "homosexuality issue[d] from a disappointed heterosexuality" and "heterosexuality issue[d] from a disappointed homosexuality" (*Gender Trouble* 66-67).

their feelings for each other to retain the façade of an identity that is systematically imposed on them. Therefore, THE WESTERNER unequivocally identifies the aporia of heteronormativity because it unravels the naturalizing forces of the heteronormative matrix, which coerce both Bean and Cole into displacing and silencing the sexual desire that appears natural to them as a constraining, asphyxiating construction. In order to retain the image of an intelligible gender, they must closet and abandon their non-normative sexuality.

In THE OUTLAW, a film mostly remembered for its salacious advertising campaign (cf. "The Outlaw", *Monthly Film Bulletin* 171; cf. Pauly 358-9; cf. Thomas 80; cf. Lang 81; cf. Waters 1-2; cf. Schumach 53), the idea of a homosexual utopia is entertained by the three male characters Doc (Walter Houston), Pat (Thomas Mitchell) and Billy (Jack Beutel), as they incessantly vie for each other's favor. Buidling on previous work that has rightly identified the prominent homoerotic subtext of the film (cf. Tyler 113-4; cf. Pauly 363-4; cf. Lang 90, cf. Roloff & Seeßlen 95; cf. Wills 130-1), I have made the case that THE OUTLAW indulges the fantasy of unfettered male homosociality, a domain where men perennially best each other untrammeled by the civilizing forces conventionally associated with the white woman. I have shown that THE OUTLAW, much like THE WESTERNER, employs stylistic devices to disrupt the discontinuity between homosociality and homosexuality, especially for its heavy use of *double entendres* and suggestive character positioning, which repeatedly insinuate a romantic or even sexual relationship between the three men.[279]

This romantic triangle unfolds in total disregard of Rio (Jane Russell), supposedly the film's female love interest for Billy and Doc. She represents the heterosexual dystopia, a world where, according to THE OUTLAW, women no longer accept their roles as faithful housewives and mothers and instead rebel against the roles that men have carved out for them, prompting the question: Who in THE OUTLAW is the outlaw? In an overtly misogynistic tone and style, THE OUTLAW reframes Rio's efforts to liberate and emancipate herself from patriarchal constraint – specifically from the notion of monogamous heterosexual domesticity – as misguided acts of insurrection. THE OUTLAW allows for no room to explore the potentially exciting facets of transgressive female sexuality that had comprised much of the appeal of the sometimes very risqué productions of the 1930s (although these productions, too, had eventually concluded in images of traditional, "patriarchal, heterosexual monogamy" (Benshoff & Griffin 314)).[280] For

[279] Especially Lang's study *Masculine Interests: Homoerotics in Hollywood Films* has been highly influential to this argument.

[280] Coyne describes DUEL IN THE SUN's Pearl (Jennifer Jones) as "a caricature of wanton sexuality, too passionate to marginalize and too tempestuous to rest easy within wedded tranquillity" (41), explaining for her "climactic *Liebestod*" (ibid. 42) at the end of the film. Rio, by comparison, offers very little of this melodramatic exaltation. Furthermore, the fact that Rio is of mixed racial origin is only implied and adds nothing to her sexual allure, unlike in Pearl (DUEL IN THE SUN), Chihuahua (MY DARLING CLEMENTINE) or Ramona (RAMONA). Likewise, the notion that Rio, being 'Doc's girl', presumably has had extramarital

instance, unlike DUEL IN THE SUN (King Vidor, 1946), THE OUTLAW has little interest in showing the allure of transgressive women, let alone in giving women a voice to express their sexuality (cf. Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by DUEL IN THE SUN" 32; cf. Wood, "Duel in the Sun: The Destruction of an Ideological System" 190-4).[281] And unlike THE PLAINSMAN or WELLS FARGO, THE OUTLAW does not exactly care to show its male characters 'rectifying' or 'containing' these representations of transgressive femininity. They instead meet her non-conformity with either heinous abuse (rape, torture, humiliation) or neglect, especially the latter of which invalidates the normativizing power of heterosexuality because there is no representation of intelligible femininity to absorb the men's sexualized tomfoolery.

Only when Rio stops fighting the men's dominance can heterosexuality be confirmed. Grotesquely, through this act of surrender Rio becomes human; that is, she becomes intelligible as a woman. Her habitus finally realigns with the men's (specifically, Billy's) preconceptions about white femininity as she accepts her inferiority to men, which makes her desirable. Her gender performance, validated through sexual/romantic interest in her, confirms her sex. In other words, Rio had attracted the men's contempt not because she was a woman but because she refused to be the kind of woman the men had wanted her to be. Gender precedes sex. As Rio begins acting like a woman should, she becomes visible to the men as a woman, and is treated accordingly henceforth.

At this point, however, heterosexual romance as a concept has been pushed so far to the margins of the film, rendering its normativizing denouement highly contrived. THE OUTLAW

---

sex before she secretly marries Billy does not have the titillating elements of similar representations, such as Jean Arthur's Calamity Jane (THE PLAINSMAN) or the many promiscuous faces of Mae West.

[281] Although the film shows greater interest in exploring "the unrepressed female" and "the problems of female energy within the terms of the genre (which are roughly the terms of ideology)" (Wood, "DUEL IN THE SUN: The Destruction of an Ideological System" 193-4), in many ways, DUEL IN THE SUN represents a continuation of the sensationalism and lewdness of THE OUTLAW (cf. Coyne 43; cf. Fuller 41). However, in terms of its narrative dynamics, the film is much closer to THE PLAINSMAN or ARIZONA in that it uses the appealing element of feminine transgression to ultimately confirm "ultraconservative" values in terms of "race, class and gender" (Coyne 43). Yet for the bulk of the film, DUEL IN THE SUN centers the intricate moral and romantic quandary of its main protagonist, Pearl, who is unable to reconcile her complex identity with the restrictive gender images that men have envisioned for women. Accordingly, Mulvey has commented on the film: "Pearl is unable to settle or find a 'femininity' in which she and the male world can meet. In this sense, although the male characters personify Pearl's dilemma, it is their terms that make and finally break her" (32-33). On a related note, McGee has remarked that the men whom Pearl is at battle with, moreover, "constitute a parade of failed masculinities" (59). What sets DUEL IN THE SUN apart is its inclusion of a racist underpinning that "not only infers racial inferiority but equates this with moral laxity" (Coyne 44). Coyne concludes his reading of the film, stating: "In DUEL, the wages of sin *are* death; unbridled sexuality *is* punished; and no character who indulges in its most exotic strain herein – miscegenation – survives" (43; emphasis in original). Reaching a similar verdict, Graham Fuller asserts: "Taking licence from Jane Russell's carnal display in THE OUTLAW (1943) and drawing on the miscegenation of WUTHERING HEIGHTS's Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, Pearl and Lewt's feverish mixed-race lust was presented with cheerful hypocrisy, as a sinfulness to be morally condemned and punished by death in an ostensibly racist and pro-patriarchal western melodrama" (41).

draws its intended appeal from the phantasma of unrestraint male omnipotence and independence. Its critique against the heteronormative matrix is not inspired by feminism, but its poignant and effective variation of established generic patterns have led me to conclude that it is deliberate.[282] THE OUTLAW proposes to roll back the advancements gained by women during the war years, because they are perceived to destabilize social coherence, or rather, because they undermine the perceived prerogatives of white men. THE OUTLAW's rather juvenile, truculent and troublesome response to the societal shifts during and following World War II is to imagine a world where progressive women's voices are silenced, their quarries met with castigation and abuse, their dignity destroyed until they yield. This world is void of any incentive for men to pursue heterosexual romance, which is why they make do with each other. While this is the cause for many a jovial episode, it also profoundly disrupts the formation of community and the building of empire. THE OUTLAW, unlike most of its generic predecessors, envelops its characters in a downward spiral of perpetual threat, deception, mistrust, and destruction, all of which it blames on women's emancipation.

Yet for all this anti-feminist, overtly misogynistic spectacle, THE OUTLAW cannot but invariably corroborate a decidedly pro-feminist point: with heterosexuality's normative powers stripped from the plot, the film unhitches gender from an allegedly natural, pre-existing sex: Rio becomes a woman because the men have a precisely pre-meditated vision of what a woman ought to be. What is more, the film in its ability to nonetheless imagine gender outside a binary, complementary heterosexual frame illustrates the arbitrariness, artificiality, constructedness of the heteronormative matrix. In THE OUTLAW, the self-regulation, the containment of gender to a binary norm, succeeds the visual evidence of its contingency.

4.4. Readjustment (1947-1951)

4.4.1. Between Triumph and Trauma

The all-encompassing changes that resulted from U.S. involvement in World War II have been widely documented and thoroughly discussed across the disciplines of academia.

[282] Initially, I had argued in my earier study the film's sexualized treatment of Rio (and the actor Jane Russell) was motivated by financial interests and most likely did not constitute an attempt to issue social commentary. That is, I proposed the idea that the objectification of Rio functioned predominantly to substantiate the promises about adult content made by the film's advertising campaign in an effort to increase the film's publicity. Indeed, there were several aspects of the film that corroborated such an interpretation, the visual isolation and corresponding fetishization of certain bodyparts of Rio (her clevage, her lips) being one, observations of scholars about similar dynamics in DUEL IN THE SUN (King Vidor, 1946) were another (cf. Coyne 43). Meanwhile, I have come to the understanding that these elements of Rio's objectification and commodification – the question of whether this was intended to increase revenues or to express social critique – ought not to be thought mutually exclusive. Rather, I see them as tantamount streaks of discourse, in which THE OUTLAW appropriates Jane Russell's body and Rio's wanton sexuality to both achieve publicity and issue a counter-feminist critique.

Considering the traumatic experiences of veteran soldiers returning home from combat and taking into account the emancipatory processes that many of those who served and, likewise, many of those who stayed home had undergone in the meantime, the people of the U.S. faced an unprecedented challenge: Positions, statuses, roles, identities, relations – all had become destabilized and called into question and required revaluation among and across rearranged and reconfigured conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and race (cf. Cyone 34; cf. Benshoff & Griffin 85, 267, 319-21; cf. Kimmel 223-58).[283]

Among the many vehicles to explore such discourses, cinema – in particular the postwar Western and American *film noir* – certainly ranks as one of the most significant artforms of the period. Presenting an extensive chronicle of the historical context that inspired the emergence of American *film noir* in the 1940s, Ian Brookes describes the complex agglomeration of anxieties of returning servicemen ranging from issues of (un)employment, estrangement and alienation, criminalization, to destabilized conceptualizations of sexuality (cf. 157-175). Rather than adopting the often invoked 'crisis'-terminology,[284] Brookes subsumes these phenomena under the more neutral umbrella term of *readjustment* (cf. 158-9),[285] a term and concept that has also been employed by Benshoff and Griffin in their survey of the events and processes during and after World War II:

---

[283] On the following pages, I will limit my discussions to negotiations of gender. It should be mentioned however, that the immediate postwar period also included such films narratives that openly discussed the intersections of discourses of gender, sexuality, and race. In Anthony Mann's DEVIL'S DOORWAY (1950), for instance, discourses of veteran readjustment (see below) are dealt with in an explicitly racial-political context, as Robert Taylor – appearing in red-face as a Shoshone ex-Cavalry Major – finds himself confronted with systemic and institutionalized racism towards him, although he had previously fought side by side with Whites in the Civil War. Similarly, Delmer Daves's BROKEN ARROW (1950) features James Stewart as the white hero desperately trying to negotiate peace between white settlers and the Apache nation. In both films, Native American nations stand in for contemporary racial conflicts in the United States following the societal shifts after World War II (cf. Coyne 69-70). This surprisingly liberal approach toward racial injustice is tied in both films to unsurprisingly conservative images of sexuality, writes Coyne: "The two ground-breaking pro-Indian Westerns thus balanced racial liberalism with social conservatism and, significantly, were subject to sexual double standards. BROKEN ARROW's consummated affair involved a white man and an Apache maiden, while the ultimately impossible romance in DEVIL'S DOORWAY featured a Shoshone warrior and a white woman. Evidently, even the thought of miscegenation was, within a 1950 movie's framework, enough to sign an Indian's death warrant" (70).

[284] The practice of attributing such observations as "the real or imagined lack of social recognition of the former soldiers" or "the image of the emancipated working women who allegedly take the best jobs away from those returning" to a "post-war crisis of masculinity" (Dietze 648) has been a very prominent gender-theoretical approach to making sense of the severe societal shifts of the time. In fact, addressing the societal schisms that followed the war in terms of a diagnosed crisis of masculinity has produced a great amount of gender-specific research and writing ever since the 1950s (cf. Gilbert, "David Riesman und die 'Krise' der Männlichkeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg"). I have delineated my stance on such 'crisis'-approaches above (see 4.2.).

[285] Brookes documents the measures that were undertaken in response to these, thereby offering a telling account of the social climate in which participants of both fronts – home and combat – reconvened: "The aftermath of the Second World War witnessed military demobilization on a formidable scale and, in its wake, a vast influx of returning servicemen. The veterans' homecoming signaled a transition from military to civilian life which was often described as 'readjustment.' The term was predicated on the assumption that the servicemen's military experience had rendered them apart from mainstream society at home. The difference between military and civilian societies was often described

While wartime propaganda attempted to paint a picture of robust American manhood, the actual fighting of the war had strong effects on men and masculinity. Many strong and able-bodied men died in the war; their masculinity could not overcome mortar shells and bullets. Others suffered from injuries or horrible wartime experiences that left them permanently disabled in body or mind. Combat creates enormous mental stress, and many men returned from the war with nightmares, flashbacks, crippling anxieties, and/or depression, a constellation of psychological symptoms now known as post-traumatic stress disorder. However, having been conditioned to be stoic and suppress complaints, many American men of the era lived silently with such symptoms. Many felt that no one wanted to know what they had endured. […] Even those soldiers who did not require major medical attention experienced difficulties readjusting to regular home life, where people had not experienced the horror of war and had no comprehension of what they had been through. […] Men returning from the war faced another, often more personal complication to their sense of masculinity: stronger, independent women. For some men, it seemed as if women had taken over – in jobs, in communities, and even in the home. As if to restore proper patriarchal order, American culture attempted to deny or denigrate the stronger women that wartime conditions had created. […] [P]ostwar representations of women in film and on radio attempted to place women back in the home, refiguring them as happy wives and mothers, not workers in the public sphere. Yet most cultural historians note that many American men still felt vaguely threatened by women. […] Men and women had had very different experiences of the war, and the two often did not easily mesh. (268-9)

Here, Benshoff and Griffin, as many other scholars, indicate a direct and impactful relation of Americans' wartime and postwar experiences and filmmaking: the experiences made by soldiers, and the haunting memories and remnants of those experiences that stayed with the surviving soldiers when they returned home, reappeared as narratives and in the shape of stylistic devices on the cinema screens of the nation (also cf. Kimmel 226, 231-6).[286] Expressing a similar point, while singling out American *film noir* as perhaps the most prominent genre to incorporate these tendencies, Deborah Thomas writes:

---

as worlds apart – worlds not merely different but mutually incompatible to those at home. Even prior to demobilization, veterans were beginning to appear as strange and incomprehensible. The purpose of readjustment would be to efface this difference. Ex-servicemen would undergo a process of social reconversion that would see them reabsorbed into the social system of home. Demobilization had brought the servicemen back, but readjustment would see them brought back *in*. The issue of returning veterans precipitated an unprecedented level of government intervention leading to an extensive series of measures, including the 1944 GI Bill (of Rights), legislation that would have far-reaching implications for the postwar reconstruction of American society. The figure of the veteran loomed large in postwar discourse and became the focus of intense scrutiny and speculation. When social scientists turned their attention to postwar implications of returning servicemen, they identified two general areas of concern. First, there was broad consensus that 'veteran' meant 'the veteran problem' and that 'readjustment,' as defined by social scientists themselves, constituted the social mechanism necessary to solve it. […] Second, 'the veteran problem' was seen as an aggregate of problems arising from the experience of military society" (158-9; emphasis in original).

[286] I will expand on the nature of these narratives and stylistic devices below (see 4.4.2.).

> The war and its conclusion provided crisis points which cristallised the contradiction in America's expectations of its men by imposing sudden and extreme shifts in the norms invoked. What was normal during the war – such as close male companionship, sanctioned killing, and 'easier' and more casual sexual behaviour, all heightened by the constant possibility of one's own sudden death – became deviant in the context of postwar calm, though such elements lingered on in the *film noir* world as the focus both of longing and of dread. ("How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male" 59-60)

In fact, researchers have commented extensively on the vast influence of the developments during and after the Second World War on American filmmaking; in general (Benshoff & Griffin 37-40; Schatz, *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s* 329-93), in the context of the emergence of American *film noir* (Benshoff & Griffin 267-73; Brookes 157-71; Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* 160-1; Thomas, "How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male 59-70; Cowie 121-65), but also with regards to the Western genre (Coyne 16-47; McDonough 111-2; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 313-43).

So how exactly did World War II affect the face of the Western genre? Prior to and during the war, aiming to mobilize U.S. citizens for the war effort, Hollywood had privileged such narratives that revolved around negotiations of American national identity and unity. Although the Western had formerly proven to be very apt of exploring such aspects *before* the war (for instance in DODGE CITY, VIRGINIA CITY, SANTA FE TRAIL, NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE (Cecil B. DeMille, 1940), or THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON (Raoul Walsh, 1941)), a great number of aspects made the genre unsuitable to accommodate such content *during* the war,[287] causing Western productions to yield temporarily to the now more popular combat film (cf. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*… 226). When the Western eventually returned to the cinema screens in 1946, with such great and acclaimed successes as DUEL IN THE SUN, MY DARLING CLEMENTINE or CANYON PASSAGE (Jacques Tourneur, 1946), the genre had adapted to the societal changes, most notably in that it had become significantly more mature and psychologically more substantial (cf. Lenihan 90).[288] In the teaser to his article "The

[287] For instance, audience expectations had swayed to a favoring of more realistic (rather than explicitly mythic) depictions of violence and conquest. Furthermore, outdoor location shooting became increasingly difficult after Pearl Harbor (cf. Schatz, *Boom and Bust*… 226). Benshoff and Griffin offer an additional perspective with regards to conceptualizations of masculinity: "Many war films told stories of new recruits having to learn how to function in the armed services as part of a team and not as individuals. Consequently, these films (and the military itself) did renegotiate certain aspects of masculinity: men were no longer expected to be strong loners (as in the Western) but were instead expected to become effective members of a unit. For example, James Cagney in THE FIGHTING 69th (1940) and John Garfield in AIR FORCE (1943) start each film playing within their star personas as cocky, streetwise, and aggressive individuals. The story of each film, however, goes on to show that success in wartime requires working together as a group, suppressing masculine individuality under a chain of male command" (267-8). Another factor which can certainly not be dismissed is the fact that most Western star actors left their jobs at the studios to join the services abroad (Wills 107).

[288] Lenihan writes: "The relevance of so many Westerns to the problem of racial equality and the Cold War suggests that popular culture after World War II cannot be easily dismissed as escapist pap or as a reflection of public complacency. […] Rather, it [the Western, T.S.] encompassed much of the social

Psychological Western" in *Sight & Sound*, Graham Fuller briefly sketches out how these societal changes subsequently affected representations of gender in the Westerns produced between World War II and the Cold War era:

> In the troubled aftermath of World War II a new breed of western emerged, borrowing elements of *film noir* to present a very different kind of hero to the one who had ridden West in search of land, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the triumphant expansionist dramas of the late 1920s and 30s. Obsessive, violent and often masochistic, these angry, alienated protagonists lent the films psychological depth and moral complexity, helping to reinvigorate the genre and better enable it to grapple with the socio-political concerns of the Cold War era. (38)

Thus, following Brookes's survey of the postwar social climate and Graham's outline of the postwar Western film, this period of social readjustment resulted in a new imagery and a new language of conceptualizing gender in the Western genre. But how was the nature of this new language? Focusing on representations of national identity, Michael Coyne offers another perspective on the developments the Western underwent during this transitional period, which helps to approximate an answer:

> The madcap comedies so beloved in the 1930s, for example, never regained their prewar favour; the frivolity of zany heiresses and playboy suitors was archaic in a world which could produce concentration camps and atom bombs – incontrovertible proof that love did not, as in the movies, conquer all. […] A nation confronted with new complexities at all levels of postwar society could not find easy reassurance in celebratory narratives of the prewar type. After World War II, the Western could conceivably have become – like the screwball comedy – a relic of a simpler, more innocent past. Instead, it became a vital medium for reflecting and articulating crucial issues of modern American society. […] The genre functioned as both a contained indictment and a reaffirmation of America, past and present. In short, the Western was a safe vessel, its red-blooded Americanism beyond question. (33)

It is what Coyne describes as "beyond question" what is most interesting here: in a time of uncertainty about the nature of America's national identity and of uncertainty about how the Western should reflect the conflicting standpoints on the subject, there still was unequivocal certainty that the Western could negotiate them because the genre itself suggested conformity with an essential – read: mythic – American Self. The cultural ideals of national identity,

---

criticism usually considered peculiar to the country's intelligentsia. During the late forties and the fifties, western filmmakers revealed a preoccupation with anxiety, alienation, disillusionment, and the search for individual dignity and meaning in a confused hostile world. The western formula, by virtue of its traditional emphasis on individual-societal relationships, proved especially usable in exploring the problem of reconciling personal dignity with communal welfare that concerned postwar intellectuals. Although motion pictures, including the Western, were primarily designed as mass entertainment and usually provided comforting last-minute resolutions, the subject matter was often as troubling in its implications as the most discriminating of intellectual or artistic social observations" (90-91).

following Coyne's argument, were facing transformations; however, apparently self-evidently, the Western provided the field wherein to look for new ones. Since the Western in and of itself was predicated on the myth of the foundational American experience – and has thus by definition always been heavily involved in shaping and streamlining an American collective identity – these new cultural ideals of national identity were far from revolutionary. Once again, the Western resorted to conservativism as a response to crisis.

This section, further developing the hypothesis of this study, will examine whether the same dynamics apply for representations of gender; that is to ask: will the postwar period, as a period of severe societal shifts and unprecedented changes, produce new cultural ideals of gender while retaining a structural constant that is still predicated on heteronormativity and thus stabilizes male hegemony at large?

As such, this part of my analysis will address, amongst other aspects, the following questions: Did the Western manage to transpose the myriad of experiences American citizens had made during the war both at the home front and at war, and if so, how? Did the Western manage to adapt the sociological and popular discourse of 'readjustment', and if so, how? How did it manage to represent a people forced to reconcile the aspect of America's victory and the nation's emergence from war as the world's pre-eminent national power with the great individual losses that so many had suffered in its wake (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 334; cf. Coyne 31)? And, if what Fuller identifies as emerging representations of "a very different kind of hero" holds true, how does this oscillation between triumph and trauma affect the general setup of the Western's conceptualization of gender?

The output of Western films surged in the late 1940s and early 1950s (cf. Schatz, *Boom and Bust* 371; cf. Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western* 426-7) that it is impossible to give a full, comprehensive account of the Western and its representations of gender and still do justice to the nuanced and variegated nature of the genre. The period saw the rise and fall of the very prolific *noir*-Western approach of, for instance, PURSUED (1947), RAMROD (André De Toth, 1947), BLOOD ON THE MOON (Robert Wise, 1948), FURY AT FURNACE CREEK (Bruce Humberstone, 1948), YELLOW SKY (William A. Wellman, 1948), STATION WEST (Sidney Lanfield, 1948), LUST FOR GOLD (S. Sylvan Simon, 1949), THE FURIES (Anthony Mann, 1950), APACHE DRUMS (Hugo Fregonese 1951), RAWHIDE (Henry Hathaway 1951), or DAY OF THE OUTLAW (André De Toth, 1959) to name a few examples.

No less significant, the postwar period witnessed the completion of John Wayne's ascendancy to stardom, featuring in John Ford's Cavalry-Trilogy, consisting of FORT APACHE (1948), SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949), and RIO GRANDE (1950), as well as in other acclaimed and successful pictures like RED RIVER (Howard Hawks, 1948), THREE GODFATHERS (John Ford, 1948), or SANDS OF IWO JIMA (Allan Dwan, 1949).

Similarly, though largely limited to the realm of the B-Western, the period produced another icon of the genre in Randolph Scott, who featured in an astonishing number of productions, such as SILVER CITY, CORONER CREEK, RETURN OF THE BAD MEN (all Ray Enright, 1948), THE WALKING HILLS (John Sturges, 1949), CANADIAN PACIFIC, FIGHTING MAN OF THE PLAINS (both Edward L. Marin, 1949), or THE CARIBOO TRAIL (Edwin L. Marin, 1950).

Considering the incredible quantity of postwar Western productions alone, then, it seems very difficult to choose a necessarily limited number of pictures and still reach a representative verdict about the genre's representation of gender. This comes as no surprise bearing in mind the complex shifts in the postwar social world and their impact on conceptualizations of gender (as described above). Conflating both fields, a deliberation by Deborah Thomas provides a helpful vantage point to structure this analysis. In her article "How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male" Thomas states:

> But there is difficulty in determining exactly what 'normal' masculinity entails, particularly in the postwar context of the 1940s and 1950s. Is it best exemplified by the rather pallid figure of the good husband and father in the all-American family? Or is it embodied in the man's man (the adventurer or soldier, say), to whom domestication is a threat? The latter view of masculinity, pushed to an extreme, becomes incompatible with the former, the returning soldier out of place in the family he left behind. I would argue that much of Hollywood cinema has grappled more or less explicitly with a kind of male schizophrenia which both puts enormous pressure on men to be 'normal' and yet represents such normality in contradictory terms. (59)

What Thomas terms "male schizophrenia" and the conflicting dynamics she describes to result from it, I interpret (and adapt to my following analysis) as a kind of continuum – a continuum of narratives seeking to explore gender in the postwar period –, at the center of which stands the Western's reflection of how to readjust after the World War II experience in terms of conceptualizing gender; and at the ends of which stand negotiations of gender either in terms of triumph (the pressure to be normal, cf. ibid. 59) or trauma (the contradictory nature of normality, cf. ibid. 59).

In the following analysis, then, I will discuss SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON and PURSUED, as I consider them to reflect well both sides of the continuum. This is not to say that these approaches are necessarily antithetical toward each other; rather, I intend this to be understood as a continuum, not a dichotomy. Nor is it to say that between them these films encompass all major characteristics of the postwar Western. I am confident, however, that a discussion of these films will nonetheless illuminate the duality of gender configurations in the postwar period.

4.4.2. *Film Noir*, the Western, and the *Noir*-Western

PURSUED will function in this section of the analysis as an example of the brief period between the end of World War II and the early 1950s, in which the emerging *film noir* had recognizable influence on the Western genre, constituting the hybrid genre commonly referred to as the *noir*-Western (cf. Monticone 337; cf. Weidinger 131n51).[289] As has been outlined above with reference to Brookes, Thomas, Fuller and Coyne, *film noir* and the *noir*-Western reflected the all-encompassing changes in the social world of Americans after World War II in finding a new, unique cinematic language and visual style, which ultimately generated extremely idiosyncratic explorations of gender. However, before I move on to connect the idiosyncrasies of PURSUED's representation of gender to the discourses of postwar America, it seems necessary to briefly demarcate the idiosyncrasies of the subgenre and contextualize its origins.[290]

Like *film noir*, the *noir*-Western stands out from traditional Hollywood filmmaking for its markedly different visual style. One characterization of the *noir*-Western's visual style has been put forward by James Ursini as part of an entry in the *Film Noir Reader* series. According to Ursini, the *noir*-Western typically features

> […] low-key lighting, night (or day for night) exteriors, storms, faces in shadow, low camera angles, canted angles. All of these techniques help create an ominous, oppressive world where so much is hidden – psychologically, emotionally, physically – that the protagonists are often at a loss to know what is real or not, what is true or not. (256-7)

However, as a comparison with a description of the visual style of *film noir* by Elizabeth Cowie will show, this would mean there was little to no difference between the *noir*-side of the parent genres and their hybrid offspring. According to Cowie, *film noir*'s style is characterized by

---

[289] As several writers have indicated, demarcating *film noir* as a genre in and of itself is difficult and problematic (cf. Jacobowitz 15-29; cf. Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* 151-4, 173-5). Considering the objective of this study (which is not to debate the nature and limits of genre), I will refer the reader to these authors for further consideration. For the intends and purposes of this section, it will suffice to say that the American cinema of the 1940s and early 1950s generated a set of phenomena, narrative themes and stylistic devices which have commonly been associated with the term *noir*, which in many ways managed to significantly alter the face of the Western.

[290] Considering that the *noir*-Western's parent genres arguably constitute two of the most iconic and authentically American film genres, surprisingly few studies are available about it. Apart from the ones cited in the following, these include Sue Matheson's attempt to link elements of *film noir* to John Wayne's portrayals of "hardboiled" masculinity in a selection of his Western films ("The West – Hardboiled: Adaptions of Film Noir Elements, Existentialism, and Ethics in John Wayne's Westerns"), Hugh S. Mason's reading of RAWHIDE in a genre-theoretical context ("Henry Hathaway's RAWHIDE and the Hermetic Frontiers of *Film Noir*"), as well as Alain Pailler's discussion of the subgenre in *Jeune Cinéma* ("Sur le 'noir western'"). To give a workable survey of its characteristics, then, I will also consult literature dealing with *film noir* without a designated Western angle.

> […] low-key lighting; the use of chiaroscuro effects; strongly marked camera angles, either low or high; jarring and off-balance shot composition; tight framing and close-ups that produce a claustrophobic sense of containment. The films are predominantly urban, the action taking place at night and filmed night-for-night on location, to produce a strong contrast between the enveloping dark and intermittent pools of light. (126-7)

What is missing in Ursini's description, then, is the specific Western element of these *noir*-Western visuals: while it is certainly true that many of the *noir*-Westerns are set in urban-esque locales that create the impression of an "oppressive world" (for instance, STATION WEST or RAWHIDE, DAY OF THE OUTLAW), or, as Lusted puts it, a "sense of the West as a space limited not just by geography, but also by sensibility" (*The Western* 178), most *noir*-Westerns combine such claustrophobic settings with outdoor shots that clearly draw from conventional Western iconography. At the same time, using, for instance, unconventional *noir*-ish camera angles, they markedly obfuscate the traditional Western habitat.[291] Accordingly, Britton comments on the complex meaning of the outdoor visuals in PURSUED: "The mountains suggest […] the inescapable repressiveness of which the characters are simultaneously embodiments and victims" (196).[292] Citing reviews by critics of the *Hollywood Reporter* and the *Los Angeles Times*, Paul Monticone reaches a similar verdict in his study of the subgenre:

> […] reviewers frequently observed that the western setting and narratives were presented in "a less romantic light than usual." In part, this shift in tone is accomplished stylistically, by cinematography that "persistently cultivates an overcast atmosphere," creating a western backdrop that is "essentially ugly" and by set design that emphasizes claustrophobic interiors. (340)

[291] See for instance, a sequence from APACHE DRUMS: Sam Leeds (Stephen McNally), the lone hero, rides out into the desert Western landscape blissfully unaware of any danger that might lurk behind the monumental rock formations – until he encounters the aftermath of an Apache attack on a group of civilians. Through low camera angles that seem to follow the hero's now frantic gaze as he scans the surrounding mountains for hiding Apaches, juxtaposed with high camera angles that seem to adopt the point of view of the mountains – or of the Apaches –, the same landscape that had offered the hero freedom to roam now seems closing in on him (00:14:10-00:16:31).

[292] On a similar note, arguing how apt a vehicle the Western was to explore "human instincts, emotions, and desires," Bandy and Stoehr remark: "The westerner slowly came to recognize that his own psyche might be as chaotic and labyrinthine as the wilderness surrounding him" (166). The authors continue: "It is not surprising to find an intermingling of film noir and the Western […] in more than a few films of the post-World War II period, particularly because earlier Westerns had often practiced an implicit form of expressionism when evoking the implicit bond between characters' rugged, hard-edged, often dangerous personalities and their rugged, hard-edged, often dangerous physical surroundings. And many pervious Westerns, while shying away from overt psychologizing, had nonetheless centered on lone, alienated westerners who were not afraid to stand apart from the nearest community, at least for a time, and who migrated between acts of heroic chivalry and cold-blooded killing in a brutal land where a sense of jaded pessimism was easily bred" (ibid. 170).

Interestingly, as Monticone's sources show that these modifications of the conventional Western cinematography and iconography did not go unnoticed by the contemporary press, they incidentally testify that these stylistic choices were made fully intentionally, thus engaging in discourses of the social world.[293] Monticone's subsequent elaborations about the narrative ramifications of YELLOW SKY and PURSUED, which were equally registered by contemporary critics, further supports this point; he writes:

> The attachment of postwar psychological and social problems to these characters was also noted as a recent development; Gregory Peck and his YELLOW SKY companions "are at loose ends and suffering from postwar disgruntlement." And in PURSUED, critics observed the hero's psychological complexity verging onto full-blown neuroses. (340)[294]

Of course, what Monticone refers to as "postwar psychological and social problems," "verging onto full-blown neuroses," connects directly with Brookes's, and Benshoff and Griffin's explications of the readjustment period, which always already implied a link to discourses of gender (see above). In fact, Brookes labels gender (and sexuality) "as *the* defining elements in film noir, underpinning its narrative concerns and characterizations" (57; emphasis in original). Brookes continues his argument by referencing Steve Neale's discussion of *film noir*, stating that "the principal hallmarks of *noir* include a distinctive treatment of sexual desire and sexual relationships, a distinctive array of male and female character types, and a distinctive repertoire of masculine and feminine traits, ideals, characteristics and forms of behaviour" (Brookes 57; quoting from Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* 160). But what exactly were these distinctive *noir* male and female character types, and how did they transpose into the *noir*-Western?

In terms of male character types, commentators largely agree on the *noir*-Western's tendency to overindulge in a full-on masculinist fantasy (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 270-1, 273; cf. Schatz, Boom and Bust 371; cf. Monticone 338; Brookes 58), a narrative strategy that appears to be equally present in *film noir* (cf. Thomas, "How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male" 59; cf. Krutnik 63; cf. Dancyger & Rush 84). Crucially, like in *film noir*, this does not necessarily always result in representations of masculinity that appear above and beyond self-confident

[293] Supporting this point, Elizabeth Cowie writes (admittedly, about the *noir* style in general): "This style was clearly recognized within the industry and was deliberately used and developed, especially by the small independent production companies – for whom the style offered spectacular and distinct effects for little cost while producing a style associated with 'quality' – but also by the major studios, for projects not necessarily determined by low budgets" (Cowie 127). David Lusted's remarks on the *noir*-Western can add nuance to this: "Noir Westerns tend to be B Westerns, made in the constrained conditions of production only slightly better resourced than series Westerns. Equivalents of their troubled heroes develop in A Westerns during the 1950s, where greater resources enable expression of a noir sensibility in full colour rather than in a monochrome high contrast lighting style" (*The Western* 181).
[294] This time, Monticone cites reviews from *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Film Daily*.

and authoritarian (cf. Mellen 139), or even equipped with a great deal of agency (cf. Jacobowitz 153). In fact, quite the contrary seems the case, as James Ursini describes:

> Although the classic western hero is often a loner, he is usually a loner out of choice, the rugged individual who has consciously decided [to] [sic] live his life in the sparsely populated landscape of the West. For the noir protagonist there is often no choice. He is haunted, pursued, guilty, usually for a variety of reasons but with the same effect – alienation and anxiety. (253)[295]

Yet no matter how driven, disoriented, or disempowered the *noir*-Western hero might be in the beginning of the story, narratives always seem to resolve these issues by ultimately reasserting male hegemony (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 273) – in relation to other men, but mostly in relation to a strong, independent, and often transgressive woman.

Although (seemingly) transgressive female characters have appeared frequently in the Western before (see ANNIE OAKLEY, THE PLAINSMAN, UNION PACIFIC), the female character type of the *noir*-Western adds another layer directly inspired by *film noir*'s most significant novelty: the *femme fatale*. In their introduction to American postwar cinema, Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon describe *femmes fatales* as "seductive figures whose desire for men or for money often threatens the very stability of male identity and agency" (389). To illustrate this definition, Grundmann subsequently discusses THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS (Lewis Milestone, 1946), adding that often "[t]he femme noir is a victimizer who only pretends to be a victim" ("Taking Stock at War's End: Gender, Genre, and Hollywood Labor in THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS" 408).[296] A more widespread characterization is offered by Benshoff and Griffin:

> One constant method for performing masculinity in these films was (in an accurate use of the word) the manhandling of women. Film noir protagonists treat women roughly – through either dismissive one-liners or actual physical abuse. Such aggression toward women was central to film noir because the key to the intrigue and mystery usually involved a woman. The film noir femme fatale encapsulated the threat that women in postwar society seemed to represent to men. In these films, women know secrets that men do not. Women tend to act helpless and needy at the beginning of these films, but they are in fact only performing that pose to hide their ruthless ambitions. They lure humble working men into crime and murder by promising sex, happiness, and escape. And although other men

[295] See, for instance, BLOOD ON THE MOON.

[296] The authors subsequently provide a historical contextualization of the character type, arguing the *femme fatale* to reflect and register "anxiety not only about the growing independence of women in the postwar era, but also about difficulties faced by returning veterans negotiating an uneasy reintegration into family and the workforce" (Lucia, Grundmann, and Simon 389).

may endanger the hero during the course the film [sic], it is the femme fatale who sits at the center of the web: she is the ultimate threat. (271-2)[297]

In an attempt to adapt the *femme fatale* character type to the *noir*-Western, Ursini concludes:

Western 'bad girls' were generally just misunderstood females yearning to be supportive 'good girls' who could be transformed by a little love and kindness […]. This is not the case for noir femme fatales. They are truly subversive characters, intent on turning the patriarchal paradigm on its head. (250)

Whether this comparison holds true will be subject of my analysis of PURSUED, especially in light of the variety of opinions that have been voiced about the nature of women in *film noir*, in general, and the *femme fatale* character type, specifically (cf. Kaplan, "Introduction to 1978 Edition" 15-19). For the intents and purposes of this study, however, it should suffice to state that the popularity of *film noir* after World War II had considerable effects on the Western genre, as the genre hybrid of the *noir*-Western evinces a visual language and a set of male and female character types that are clearly inspired by *film noir*. Accordingly, in his retelling of the history and development of the Western genre, Joseph Maddrey observes a significant change in the look and mannerisms of Western heroes before and after World War II, specifically with reference to Robert Mitchum and his appearances in PURSUED and BLOOD ON THE MOON compared to the more conventional prewar depictions of Gary Cooper and John Wayne. Maddrey notes: "Whereas Cooper was simple and straightforward, Mitchum was cynical and suspect. Whereas Wayne was outspoken and dogmatic, Mitchum was cool and seemingly indifferent. He was a new type of hero for the postwar era" (34).

It will be the main concern of the following part of my analysis to investigate what in his performance exactly qualifies as "a new type of hero," and whether this necessarily corresponds with a revaluation of gender representations. Making a similar observation the starting point for his reading of late 1940s Westerns (including PURSUED), Stanley Corkin inquires: "Does this shift of emphasis necessarily engage these texts in a kind of self-critical act? Or do these films simply access new themes in order to subordinate them to the dominant ideological thrust of the genre?" (59). I intend to follow Corkin's lead: In the following analysis, it will predominantly be of interest to find out whether the *noir*-Western contains and conveys a different ideological mindset than the traditional Hollywood Western: will the influences of *film noir* affect or influence the genre's advocacy of patriarchal hegemony? Or will these films invent new themes to continue and stabilize the old patriarchal thrust?

[297] For fitting implementations of such a *femme fatale*, see: STATION WEST or RAMROD.

4.4.3. Searching the Ruins: PURSUED (1947)

Raoul Walsh's postwar return to the Western genre in 1947 stars Teresa Wright (Walsh's wife at the time) and Robert Mitchum in what was probably the latter's breakthrough role. Stanley Corkin classifies the film as "a more modest production with a far less impressive economic and critical performance [than some of its contemporaries, namely DUEL IN THE SUN and FORT APACHE; T.S.];" however, he continues, "it [still] stands as a landmark film" (54).

PURSUED is the story of a family feud with a borderline incestuous romance at its center, referred to as overtly psychoanalytical in its plot resolution by some (cf. Fuller 41), labelled Freudian or pseudo-Freudian by others (cf. Indick 89; cf. Bandy & Stoehr 166; cf. Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western* 44; cf. Corkin 54, 67; cf. Lenihan 108; cf. Parker 24; cf. Weidinger 131).[298] Perhaps the most fitting tagline attached to PURSUED comes from Joseph Maddrey, who refers to Robert Mitchum as "Hollywood's Byronic hero" (35), a description that seems especially apt for the star's performance in PURSUED considering the moody, existential, and disoriented charm he brings to the role of Jeb Rand. While it is tempting to interpret PURSUED as a paradigmatic tale of traumatized masculinity after World War II, focusing on the *noir*-ish spectacle of Jeb's seemingly inescapable entrapment, I will read the film as a story of male self-authorization, shifting my attention to the film's melodramatic denouement, at the end of which Jeb emerges as an empowered figure who has finally learned to make his own decisions, thereby (literally!) taking control of his story. I will argue that PURSUED uses the narrative of self-authorization, which transpires as a practice of naturalization, to confirm heteronormativity and therefore stabilizes the gender regime it purports to challenge.

In this story, Jeb Rand lives a life of violence and alienation. Orphaned and traumatized at a young age, then berated by his adoptive-brother Adam (John Rodney) as an outcast in his new foster family, young Jeb grows to become a man driven by fate and circumstance more than by his own making. Wounded in war, later abandoned by his foster mother (Judith

[298] Approached from this psychological/psychoanalytical angle, synopses of the film often read like this one by William Indick: "In the film, Jeb Rand's family is killed in front of his eyes when he is just a little boy. He is rescued by Ma Callum (Judith Anderson), who takes him home and raises him as her adoptive son. He grows up living with his adoptive sister Thorley (Teresa Wright) and adoptive brother Adam (John Rodney). His memories of the horrific night of violence become almost completely repressed, existing only as nightmares and sudden flashbacks. Conflict arises between Jeb (Robert Mitchum) and Adam, who considers Jeb an 'outsider' and begrudges him his equal share in the family's property, as well as Jeb's equal share in the affections of both Ma and Thor. As the children grow into adulthood, the fondness between Jeb and Thor goes beyond sister and brotherly love, which causes Adam to become even more resentful. […] The mythical plot, involving two generations of families torn apart by forbidden love, sibling rivalry, family feuding, and unforgiven vendettas, is complemented by the psychological structure, in which repressed memories and recurring dreams symbolize illicit desire, latent aggression, and long festering hostilities" (89-90). Other synopses adopting a similar tone include Lusted (*The Western*, 179-80). Though each valid in their own right, such readings are not necessarily helpful for the ideological-critical approach I pursue in this study, as they are generally more informed by the myths of Ancient Greece (and their Freudian interpretations) than by contemporary socio-political discourse.

Anderson) for killing his stepbrother, and eventually shunned by civil society through no fault of his own, Jeb experiences seemingly insurmountable difficulties to conform with social norms. The film chronicles his desperate struggle to regain the respect of society, win back the affection of Thorley (Teresa Wright), his adoptive sister/lover/eventual wife, and, more generally, retake agency and control over his life. This struggle is embedded in a flashback-narration of the main protagonist, coding his childhood trauma as repressed memories, the remembering of which signifies the character's assertion of hegemonic masculinity in relation to the cultural ideal of the preceding generation, embodied by the villainous Grant Callum (Dean Jagger).

This analysis will show that PURSUED makes extensive use of the *noir*-style to distort, challenge and corrupt the values the Western of the prewar years had constructed with much fervor (cf. Lusted, *The Western* 180), specifically the rule of the seemingly omnipotent father figure in the nuclear family. The film confronts the rigidity and restraint of prewar sexual moral. However, this story of emancipation from 'old' cultural ideals of gender eventually produces 'new' cultural ideals of gender that retain the structures of heteronormativity within which the allegedly old ones had been produced. PURSUED weaves its male protagonist into a story wherein he must indict white male hegemony only to eventually claim it for himself. Likewise, it involves the struggle of a white woman who momentarily seems to refuse male hegemony only to eventually surrender herself willingly to it. In both cases, the film entertains gender contingency but consistently camouflages its gender constructions under the guise of naturalization, thus avoiding a radical destabilization of the heteronormative matrix.

Following Coyne's observations about the Western's development after World War II that "the genre functioned as both a contained indictment and a reaffirmation of America, past and present" (33), this makes PURSUED a paradigmatic text of the postwar Western. The film reflects the war experiences of American soldiers and transposes them into a narrative of readjustment, wherein the inner discomfiture of its protagonist, caused primarily between the grave discrepancy of the expectations raised by prewar mobilization, traumatic war experiences and the bleak postwar reality, allegorically stands for the general disarray of society. As the veteran overcomes his inner conflicts and re-establishes 'inner' order – that is, becomes a psychologically sound, hence intelligibly gendered person again – society, likewise, recovers to a sound and stable order. Though the film's primary interest lies certainly in visualizing and empathizing with veterans' psychology, the following analysis will reveal that these interests profoundly correlate with discourses of stabilizing white male hegemony, because the sound and stable order to which society ultimately recovers bears the same "dominant ideological thrust" (Corkin 59) as before.

PURSUED identifies a presently unstable society. Like Thorley, the film as a reflection of American society asks itself: "What happened to us? Why did everything go wrong?"

(00:02:36-00:02:40). In an attempt to provide an answer, the film reorganizes society according to what had always applied in the past: heteronormativity and male hegemony. Like Jeb Rand, the film is not "imagining" but "remembering" (00:03:10-00:03:16); it is not constructing, but reconstructing; it is not owning up to contingency, but creating a new natural, masquerading as dissent.

New Idols

About twenty-five minutes into the film, PURSUED, like so many films of postwar American cinema, such as THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIFE (William Wyler, 1946) or THE MEN (Fred Zinnemann, 1950), features a war experience that constitutes a notable caesura in the main characters' lives and that directly alludes to the paradigm-shifting experiences undergone by soldiers in World War II.[299] Considering the centrality of this event in both lived realities and PURSUED's narrative, it may seem surprising how little screen time is devoted to the film's visualization of the Spanish-American War of 1898: combat is dealt with very briefly in a short montage in which we see Jeb being wounded by a gunshot.

Rather, it is the film's main concern what preceded this war experience, and what came after it. After Jeb's service, the story resumes with him waking up feverishly in a military hospital, from where he is sent home and, with the war won, is awarded the Medal of Honor. In the following, the film confronts Jeb with the changes that have taken place while he was away – thus reconnecting with the prominent discourse of diverging conceptualizations of *home* and *peace* (cf. Brookes 169; cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 329; my emphasis).[300]

---

[299] Jeb as the first-person narrator informs the viewer indirectly in a conversation he has with Thorley: "You know how it was after that. Ma's idea worked like she wanted pretty neat. Anyhow we seemed more like a family. We were close, the four of us. That lasted for a long time. It lasted until the day I rode into town [where he encounters the war recruitment officer; T.S.]" (00:16:10-00:16:25).

[300] It seems worthy to mention that in PURSUED the idea of 'coming home' transpires as Jeb's visiting the ruins of his childhood home, thus, literally, a broken home. In fact, the image of a home in ruins, or decrepit, dilapidated buildings is a pervasive one with regards of the postwar Western. Ruins of some kind – also with this metaphoric meaning – feature prominently in, for instance, FURY AT FURNACE CREEK, YELLOW SKY, and SOUTH OF ST. LOUIS (Ray Enright, 1949). A staple of *noir*-cinema, PURSUED's usage of the broken home is profoundly symbolic, and visualized in the typically stylized *noir*-fashion: Thirty-five minutes into the film, Jeb Rand (Robert Mitchum) returns to his home, not because he has any business there, but because an inner urge compels him to go there. He arrives there as if attracted by gravity, navigated by a force stronger than himself, "just as if I'd known the way" (00:35:54-00:35:55), comments the first-person narrator in the voice-over. The desolated place consists of several dilapidated houses, burnt down ruins amidst a barren, hostile land. Jeb dismounts his house and enters one of the ruins. He inspects his surroundings, searching restlessly for answers although he does not even know the right questions yet. Suddenly the camera switches from its observatory long shots to a medium close-up shot of Jeb's face. Framed from a very low angle in a contre-jour shot, the background of overhanging pieces of wood seem to form a spider's web. It's a paradigmatic example of *film noir*'s influence on the Western: the claustrophobic ambience and constringent organization of space reflect the protagonist's trauma in an almost expressionist manner. Restlessly wandering amidst the ruins of his childhood home, Jeb has an epiphany that links the condition of the place to his inner state, as the voice-over narrator announces: "There was something in my life as ruined as that house. That house was my Self" (00:35:08-00:35:13).

However, while the film does thereby engage with the gaping discrepancy of prewar expectations and postwar realities, this does not seem to be the cause for Jeb's trauma, which manifests primarily in spells of amnesia. In this sense, Jeb is not a typical "vet noir" (Osteen 77);[301] and yet the film via Jeb's amnesia and nightmares clearly references the socio-cultural discourse of trauma, alienation, and veteran readjustment in postwar America. Rather, his trauma seems to be rooted much earlier, originating in the harrowing events that Jeb suffered in his early childhood, and which, in the logic of the film, decided his fate.

These events comprise young Jeb's witnessing of the killing of his own father at the hands of Grant Callum, the film's undisputed and rather one-dimensional villain (cf. Britton 199).[302] This unfortunate circumstance deprives young Jeb of the security of home and family, displacing him to a surrogate family that ultimately cannot compensate for the stability that was taken away from him. The disillusionment he suffers and the instability he endures are subsequently reflected in the film's *noir*-ish visuals and the non-linear style of narration, which features several flashback episodes, in which Jeb gradually fills in the blanks as the ostensible first-person narrator. These flashback episodes are interspersed with recourses to the frame story, in which Jeb is shown recounting these past events to Thorley. As Jeb remembers, reconstructs, and thereby comes to terms with his past, the flashbacks eventually merge with the frame story and add up to a plausible, causal, coherent fabula.

In the following, I will propose a reading in which this culmination in a coherent fabula equates with the (re-)construction of a coherent gendered identity; that is, in which the process of "remembering" symbolizes the act of self-authorization, of camouflaging the process of reconstruction as the rediscovery of an allegedly natural, coherent identity in order to stabilize male hegemony. Jeb's representation of gender is consistently portrayed as different to the preceding generation (in other words, a prewar ideal of hegemonic masculinity), a distinction that alienates him from society because his conduct seems unnatural. However, as Jeb unravels the locus of his *difference* and decides to take action to overcome it, he successfully

---

PURSUED, like the other films, thereby reconnects directly with social discourse of the time. Accordingly, Brookes describes: "In the wartime discourse of national unity, an affirmative discourse of 'home' was constructed as a focal point of collective national purpose. It was axiomatic that for servicemen abroad, home was what they were fighting for and where they wanted to be" (169). When this image of home, however, turned out to have changed after all, veterans often found themselves in great unrest; writes Brookes: "Homecoming […] didn't necessarily mean a nostalgic conception of 'home-sweet-home.' In fact, home could begin to look jaded and take in a prospect of disenchantment. […] Home, then, could become the object of resentment and disillusionment" (168-9).

[301] "In the amnesiac vet noirs, however, this quest for selfhood becomes literal, for these returning soldiers truly don't remember who they are. These characters lend sociopolitical weight to the noir theme of alienation and isolation by acting as synecdoches for a whole generation of displaced men and for American society in its postwar transitional phase" (Osteen 77-78).

[302] The killing was motivated by Grant's obsession with avenging his brother, who had been cheated on by Ma Callum with Jeb's father. Grant's way of restoring the family name is to try and kill every last member of the Rand family, whereas Ma Callum seeks atonement in adopting the lone survivor, Jeb, raising him as her own.

recodifies that what made him seem unnatural as the new natural. Conversely, this conclusion debases old configurations of gender, retroactively impugning their naturality. Consequently, what transpires in PURSUED at first as evidence for the contingency of gender is then supplanted by a narrative of naturalization. Accordingly, this narrative entails the confirmation of heteronormativity in the reciprocal recognition of white man and white woman as such, and the ensuing realization of the heterosexual romantic couple.

In this reading, Grant Callum represents the image of prewar masculinity: that symbolic male body that comprised the idealized images of American national and gender identity, that larger-than-life image of prowess, virility and 'tidy' sexuality so often embodied by male Hollywood Western stars between 1939 and 1942, that defender of "the great, clean American family" (Britton 199), the "murderous father" (Walker 234). Among other things, these were the images that mobilized American men and led them into the battles of World War II. The traumatizing battle experiences, the acts of violence to which many soldiers bore witness, echo in the tormenting images of young Jeb hiding underneath the trap door while Grant Callum kills his father.[303] With the death of his father and the marked absence of his mother, everything Jeb believed in and relied on is taken away in an instant (cf. Corkin 66, 71). He has no home, and instead is raised in a simulacrum of a home, one that is not his. The promise of domestic conformity – of 'the home' as an anchor to stabilize gender[304] – held out by so many prewar Westerns, such as DODGE CITY, remains unfulfilled in PURSUED (at least for the time being). PURSUED originates the insecurities suffered by veterans returning home through the prism of Jeb's trauma in a chain of association: Grant Callum, World War II, prewar configurations of hegemonic white masculinity. Accordingly, Andrew Britton observes:

> It is one of the film's main strategies to imply that the parent, whether protective or aggressive, generates anxiety in the children, the anxiety being traced back to its roots in ideology – here the relation between war and 'manhood': impotent father-figure tries to send youth off to war; protective father keeps son away from war, thus creating fear of impotence. (205)

---

[303] Reading PURSUED as an Oedipal tale of rivalry "between the boy Jeb and his own father" (230), Janet Walker has phrased a convincing argument about this point. She believes that "the Callum character functions precisely to embody the most potent of threats posed by fathers against sons: to come killing (sexual pun intended)" (234), suggesting that after the killing of Jeb's father, Grant Callum replaces that position in Jeb's memory/fantasy. She writes: "The killer's image is followed by the first rendition of the gun battle scene in which Jeb's actual father is absent, never to be seen. Jeb usurps the place of his real/dead father with Ma, which makes him vulnerable to the father's wrath, here embodied by Grant, the man who 'keeps coming.' In this way a substitution is made: bad man for good; effectual man for ineffectual; killer for father" (ibid. 234). Conceived of in this logic, Walker's psychoanalytical interpretation of Grant Callum-as-violent father supports my reading of his incorporating and representing an image of hegemonic white masculinity that Jeb and the film seem desperate to disavow.

[304] In this case, 'the home' is initially equated with a kind of safe haven for a stable, intelligible identity, and not as the reification of heterosexual desire, necessarily.

The result of the traumatic experience is a radically different image of gender. Jeb's haunting flashbacks are symptomatic of the unsettling, disorienting, and scarring events of his childhood. Accordingly, and unlike men of the prewar generation instilled with self-confidence or authority, if not both,[305] Jeb shows a great lack thereof, which in the beginning of the film transpires, first and foremost, in his reluctance to be a hero – that is, his reluctance to naturally engage with discursively pre-established epistemes of hegemonic masculinity.

For instance, the film depicts Jeb's reluctance in the sequence preceding his enlistment as a recruit for the Spanish-American War. Here, the film explores Jeb's (and Adam's) representation of gender in relation to what it considers the prewar ideal of white masculinity, or, more generally speaking, the gendered expectations the two young men face and are compelled to relate to. As a direct reference to the propagandist sentiments of prewar American society, PURSUED shows an Uncle Sam-like figure rallying for recruits in front of the saloon, promising Jeb it is going to be "a real shootin' war" (00:17:06-00:17:07; Fig. 28). The Uncle Sam-like character, who is never named or seen again, functions to evoke an *image*, hence allude to the concept of prewar white masculinity. As such, PURSUED, filtered through Jeb's reconstruction of the episode, distorts this iconic figure of American prewar mobilization (Fig. 29), and reduces it to a warmongering relic, thereby, most of all, creating a gendered *difference* between Jeb and a discursively established image of masculinity.

Fig. 28 (left). Source: PURSUED, Raoul Walsh (1947). Warner Bros.. DVD. 00:17:05.

Fig. 29 (right). Source: *Uncle Sam*, half-length portrait by James Montgomery Flagg. Source: *Wikipedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncle_Sam#/media/File:Unclesamwantyou.jpg>. 30 Jun 2021.

People in the saloon – functioning as an impromptu war recruitment office – are either excited to join the army, or, conversely, disappointed if they cannot (Prentice (Harry Carey Jr.),

[305] See, for instance, DESTRY RIDES AGAIN, DODGE CITY, UNION PACIFIC.

for instance). Introducing Grant Callum in this scene as a recruitment officer looking for volunteers,[306] PURSUED references and draws from the prewar image of war as the crucible for American men to test their bravery, or, in more general terms, the expectations of national and gender identity that had been built up in the early 1940s (cf. Mellen 139). The notion of war and men's general excitement to partake in it evoke the image of prewar masculinity as social norm and cultural ideal – a normative ideal from which Jeb, crucially, differs, because he insists on discussing the matter with his family, first.

In Jeb's hesitation and reluctance to embrace the white masculine ideal the film clearly dissociates him from the prewar cultural ideal. And while his reluctance is initially contested by the men in the recruitment office, Jeb's position is subsequently validated by his family, who confirm that the impending war poses much more complex an issue than the caricatured Uncle-Sam's monological belligerence would have people believe.[307] Indeed, the viewer is invited to acknowledge Jeb and his surrogate family's choice not to engage precipitately with war as a sensible decision: the *noir*-ish visuals support the cautionary narrative in creating an atmosphere of unease, of entrapment, of portending death. In this respect, PURSUED, with the advantage of hindsight to World War II, meets war mobilization, war experience and the ramifications for the mental health of soldiers and of those at the home front on much more serious and somber terms than prewar Western war-parables like, for instance, NORTHWEST PASSAGE (King Vidor, 1940) or NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE. Those were films that always found comfort for their characters in the simplistic, Technicolor promise of death or glory. The Callum family in PURSUED, by contrast, carefully meditates the family's commitment to the war effort. In attributing so much credence to the tensions preceding the war, PURSUED at once authorizes the issues of veteran readjustment and introduces the unmistakably gendered conflict of the film: that Jeb does not correspond or comply with the expectations towards men raised by the current bearers of male hegemony. He is not the kind of man Grant Callum and Uncle Sam want him to be.

Jeb's reluctance – that is, his *difference* from the hitherto hegemonic gender norm – is developed further in the ensuing discussion of the family on who of the two men is to enlist. The sequence is particularly interesting because it reveals the conflicting narrative dynamics of constructing 'new' ideals of gender while simultaneously insisting that they naturally originate in the bodies that perform them.

[306] Supporting my reading of Grant Callum as the personification of prewar hegemonic masculinity is the fact that he reappears throughout the film representing different concepts or carrying out tasks that are always associated with images of institutionalized male authority (cf. Britton 199).
[307] Among Jeb, Adam, Thor, and Ma the war and its implications constitute a severe watershed for their affairs: economically, Jeb's presence will be missed as a farmworker; emotionally, Jeb's going to war tests the welfare of everybody involved, especially Thor's. The film explicitly articulates these concerns.

To elaborate: Despite their consensus about the imperativeness and legitimacy of war, neither Adam nor Jeb seem particularly excited to enlist. Since none of them volunteers, they think of other ways to decide the matter, eventually settling for a coin toss. They face each other like rivals for a duel while Thor flips the coin (see Fig. 30): Jeb must go, Adam will stay.

Fig. 30. Source: PURSUED, Raoul Walsh (1947). Warner Bros.. DVD. 00:21:25.

First, the sequence makes perfectly clear that Jeb and Adam acknowledge war as a testing ground for hegemonic white masculinity, even though they are reluctant to enter. Rather than competing over who might win the honor of going to war (which one might have expected from a prewar scenario), they are competing over who gets to duck out. More than that, they displace the momentous outcome onto Thorley, staying clear of the responsibility to be authors of their own fates. While this configuration deviates significantly from prewar gender expectations,[308] they do accept the terms and conditions of the system they are supposedly trying to eschew, as Adam fatalistically concedes: "them Spaniards has to be beat" (00:20:34-00:20:36). Correspondingly, their face-off is about maintaining face, about male pride, about their reluctant-yet-seemingly-inevitable relation to war as the symbolic male body (cf. Britton 205): none of them wants to go, but actively dropping out to make the other one go would signify their submission to the other. That they would feel compelled to comply with and relate

[308] Expressing a similar point, albeit in binary terms, Corkin notes that PURSUED features a man "who redefine[s] [himself] in ways that are culturally construed as feminine. […] In PURSUED […] Jeb Rand […] exudes a certain confusion that, in conventional terms, feminizes him" (55).

each other to an image they secretly dread at once indicates the power of the concept of hegemonic masculinity as social norm and underscores their *difference* from that norm.[309]

Second, the film subtly introduces heteronormativity – as in: normative practices of heterosexuality – as the tiebreaker in Jeb and Adam's gendered stalemate. After Thor has flipped the coin, the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of her hands revealing the side of the coin (which, crucially, she keeps from view to everybody else, including the viewer) (Fig. 31). As Thor pronounces the result of the toss (the camera pans up from her hands to a close-up of her face), the following shot contains the standardized visual trope of the romantic triangle between two male suitors and their mutual love interest (Fig. 32).[310] That this shot does, in fact, intend to communicate a triangular, potentially incestuous romance (and not harmlessly innocent brotherly/sisterly love) between the three is subsequently supported by an unambiguously sexualized gaze Adam directs at Thor and an (admittedly, almost imperceptible) grin on his face, further suggesting the nature of his illicit sexual desire (Fig. 33). The unconventional camera angle, with Adam's face so close to the camera it fills half the screen, at the same time visually underscores the disconcerting, distorting facet of Adam's incestuous sexual desire.[311]

By contrast, the narrative revelation of the feelings Thor and Jeb have for each other is expressed on more conventional terms with regards to the scene's cinematography and score. As Thor addresses Jeb on the porch, the music stops its eerie, atonal staccato, Jeb takes Thor's hand, responding with "You felt the same way, too, same way I felt?" (00:24:06-00:24:08), as the violins introduce a classical romantic theme and the camera cuts to a traditional back-shoulder shot facing Thor from above eye-level (Fig. 34). Therefore, the different visual and musical treatment of Jeb and Thor versus Adam and Thor formally validate which romance is socially acceptable, and in that heteronormative validation foreshadow the film's stabilization of gender.

---

309 David Lusted has similarly observed this narrative device of the film. Lusted identifies the character's compulsion to comply with social norms as a recurring narrative theme of *film noir* and the *noir*-Western, for that matter, linking the genres' tendencies to envision male characters entrapped in emotional and psychological dilemmas beyond their control to melodrama. He writes: "Noir Westerns are melodramas. True to the melodrama aesthetic, central protagonists in film noir face situations and experience emotions more familiar to the female protagonists of melodrama. In noir Westerns, the psychological pressure on the male hero to act in accord with social rather than individual need, or to live within unchosen moral contradictions, leads to the trauma of a MAN FROM COLORADO or a Jeb in PURSUED. Such troubled heroes abound in 1950s melodramas" (*The Western* 181). Other writes have also noted this parallel between the genres (cf. Monticone 344-5; cf. Staiger 72; cf. Corkin 52-93).

310 Correspondingly, Thor on several occasions functions as the *copula*-character type encountered in so many Westerns before, standing in as a token of masculinity in quarrels between men. As such, she is given the corresponding visual treatment on more than one occasion (see, for instance, 00:41:41).

311 A later shot supplements this notion: As Jeb mounts his horse to ride off to war, Adam takes a long, lusty look at his sister, the inappropriately sexual nature of which is signalled to the viewer by Thor's uncomfortable facial expressions as she takes notice of his gaze.

Fig. 31: 00:21:28.

Fig. 32: 00:21:44.

Fig. 33: 00:21:58.

Fig. 34: 00:24:00

Source: PURSUED, Raoul Walsh (1947). Warner Bros.. DVD.

Interestingly, in the coin toss-sequence and, in fact, in every instance of the film preceding Jeb's killing of Adam in self-defense, Thorley is presented in accordance with a very conventional image of inviolable white femininity.[312] Especially after Jeb's confession of his love to her, Thorley occupies the conventional function of focal white woman, constituting both catalyst and goal for the male protagonist's actions.[313] Only after the fateful incident, Adam's death at the hands of Jeb, which she blames entirely on Jeb, does she display some of the characteristics so closely associated with the *noir*-Western's *femme fatale*, such as Jane Greer's Charlie in STATION WEST or Veronica Lake's Connie Dickason in RAMROD.[314] However, the callous murder plan she concocts together with her mother ultimately transpires as a kind of unwitting *masquerade*, a transgressive gendered habitus she assumes in response to the

[312] For instance, in the scene preceding the death of Prentice, Grant associates Thor with the image of virginal purity to instigate a gunfight between Prentice and Jeb, invoking an image of pure, sacrosanct femininity that must be defended and protected by men (01:02:36-01:03:30).

[313] On a related note, Stanley Corkin has illustrated that in PURSUED, the "focal women characters" specifically act "as catalysts for violence" (54).

[314] Though to some extent, Thor fits the description of the *femme fatale* I quoted earlier from Benshoff and Griffin, stating that "[w]omen [in *film noir*; T.S.] tend to act helpless and needy at the beginning of these films, but they are in fact only performing that pose to hide their ruthless ambitions." Then again, Thor definitely does not befit the authors' subsequent remarks, stating that "they lure humble working men into crime and murder by promising sex, happiness, and escape. And although other men may endanger the hero during the course the film [sic], it is the femme fatale who sits at the center of the web: she is the ultimate threat" (271-2).

heinous crime she believes Jeb to be guilty of, and that she drops once her seemingly innate womanly desires convince her otherwise.

To illustrate: After Jeb's trial for having killed Adam in self-defense, during which he is officially acquitted of all charges, Ma Callum and Thor banish him from the family. Things change for the worse when in another unfortunate incident, Jeb shoots Thor's new suitor, Prentice, also in self-defense.[315] When Jeb in spite of it all still 'wants' the hurting Thor and arrives at the Callum ranch to court her, she invites him in and puts on her best act until he proposes to marry her; but she has hatched a secret plan. She explains her *masquerade* of white femininity, an image that she will assume and try use against him, to her mother:

> Thor: I have only one thought every minute of my life: how much I hate him. […] If I were a man, I would have killed him long ago. After Adam's death. Then he killed Prentice and came courting me. All of a sudden killing wasn't enough. I had to have more. Much more to use up all the hate I have in me.
>
> […]
>
> Ma Callum: No woman ever lived who could go through with what you're planning.
>
> Thor: No woman but me. 'Cause it's taken all my life to teach me what he is. He put shame and grief on us. And now he likes to squeeze out the last drop of us by having me. He wants me, and I'll marry him. That moment when he thinks he has me he'll lose everything. Because that's when I'm going to kill him.
>
> Source: PURSUED, Raoul Walsh (1947). Warner Bros.. DVD. 01:15:08-01:01:16:18.

Eventually, the two do marry; but when Thor sets about putting her plans of killing Jeb into action, she realizes that she cannot go through with it, because she loves him after all. This is all too peculiar with regards to the film's exploration of gender: In her speech, in which she associates Jeb with conventional, prewar white masculinity (killing, courting, and 'having' the woman as tokens of phallic power), she makes clear that this is a development in Jeb's character that she strongly disapproves of. So much so that her only desire is to kill him, which would entail her own appropriation of phallic power, thus complicating her gender representation as the desirable white woman.

Circumstances, PURSUED dramatizes, have turned women and men against each other. Thor hates (the image of) the man she thinks Jeb has become. He has become unintelligible for her, a conviction that encourages her to twist her gender identity to assume that of a *noir*-ish monstrosity, which momentarily seems to preclude closure in the formation of the

[315] The romantic complications are indicative of the film's continued efforts to portray a dishevelled society, in which the pursuit of a coherent, intelligible sexuality and gender identity poses an existential threat.

heterosexual couple. Crucially though, the raging hatred she feels ultimately dissolves into an even greater love for him precisely at that moment when Jeb most definitely presents himself as a new, different cultural ideal of gender, upon which she relinquishes her *masquerade* and reassumes her supposedly natural gender.

Jeb reveals he has known all along that Thor was plotting to kill him, which is why he hands Thor a gun to kill him literally on a silver platter. This knowledge, he explains, comes from his great sensibility and empathy, which PURSUED presents in this sequence as a key asset.

> Thor [reaching for the gun]: So you know.
>
> Jeb: You and I have been much alike. There are times when I can read your thoughts. That's why I was asking myself what I'd do if I were in your place. I know that's an irritating quality in a husband, but it will make things easier for you.
>
> […]
>
> [Jeb steps forwards, encourages Thor to shoot him, and when she misses, he speaks assertively].
>
> Jeb: Your hands shook not because you hate me. Put the gun down, Thor!
>
> [Thor looks at him, tears fill her eyes. She drops the gun, falls into his arms, and exclaims]
>
> Thor: Oh, Jeb! Hold me! Hold me!
>
> Source: PURSUED, Raoul Walsh (1947). Warner Bros.. DVD. 01:21:41-01:22:47.

The semblance that Jeb diagnoses between himself and Thor, on an abstract level, explicitly verbalizes what the film had always implied: Jeb's sensitivity, his inclination to be guided by *emotio* rather than *ratio*, contrast sharply with the sexual naivety and compulsive restraint of, for instance, THE VIRGINIAN. If one recalls the clumsy efforts of courtship displayed by Gary Cooper's Virginian toward Molly Wood, or the awkward 'lesson' on incalculability of women Cooper's Wild Bill Hickok tells the boy at the riverside port in THE PLAINSMAN, Mitchum's Jeb is decidedly different because in this scene, most prominently, he reveals that he knows and understands women. Thorley's reaction is predictable, because they "are very much alike;" that is, because he has openly embraced, even incorporated elements of femininity.[316] And yet, it seems, he has managed to form a coherent, intelligible masculine identity.

In her insightful study "The Romance of Competence: Rethinking Masculinity in the Western," Wendy Chapman Peek notes: "The hero of the postwar Western is thus redefining ideal masculinity as he transgresses the limitations of ideal, phallic masculinity to create, *per*

[316] In fact, this realization is foreshadowed in the frame narrative at the very beginning of the film, with Thorley declaring: "You've always been like that: capable to think with my thoughts and feel with my feelings" (00:02:36-00:02:40).

accidens, a new model of ideal masculinity that incorporates all manner of behaviors, provided they lead to male success" (211, emphasis in original). What Chapman Peek alludes to, then, and what certainly echoes throughout PURSUED, is the notion that gender ideals may supersede one another from time to time, and that they are contingent to the extent that they result in the continuation of the defense and stabilization of male hegemony.[317]

My point being here, that PURSUED is characterized by antithetical dynamics. On the one hand, PURSUED's construction of a new gender ideal entails the potentially radical recognition that these ideals be arbitrarily constructed. Jeb's *difference* powerfully illustrates the historical mobility and variability of cultural ideals of gender, as PURSUED explicitly addresses a shift from the societal normativity of prewar to postwar masculinities.

On the other hand, PURSUED attempts to contain this potentially radical, subversive recognition by showing that this new gender ideal is precisely not arbitrarily constructed, but the consequence of a natural process. PURSUED retains a structural constant, in that it originates the ciphered acknowledgment of the dynamism of gender in the validation of gender on the basis of dimorphously sexed bodies, which anchor the reformed vision of gender according to heteronormative presuppositions. Jeb's representation of postwar masculinity is gratified as such because it is predicated on the reciprocal recognition of man and woman through practices of heterosexuality. In other words, Jeb's sensitivity is acceptable because it still 'gets him the girl', as opposed to skilled violence, which would have chased Thorley away. As they recognize each other as a desirebale white woman and a desireable white man, their representations of gender become intelligible. Therefore, in retaining the primacy of the heteronormative matrix as the organizing principle that determines intelligible genders, the film jettisons to some extent its radical, subversive potential. PURSUED constructs a new cultural ideal and simultaneously disguises it as a new natural.

This will become clearer if one considers the peculiar narratological arrangement of the film, which has Jeb, for the bulk of the film, recount and chronicle the events of his past that seemingly inevitably led to the final confrontation with Grant Callum from his point of view. Using the narratological device of a necessarily fragmentary first-person, flashback narration, PURSUED weaves the conflicting dynamics of gender contingency and normativization, of construction and predetermination, of imagining and remembering, into the structural fabric of the film.

The film is constructed in a way that posits Jeb as first-person narrator trying to remember his story as he goes along, telling it to Thorley.[318] His childhood trauma represents

[317] Peek uses the term/concept *success* to describe this pattern in a similar fashion (cf. 210-1).

[318] In a way, his reconstruction and telling as opposed to her listening to and comprehending the story reflects the discursively established, normative active/passive binary gender paradigm (cf. Bourdieu, *Die Männliche Herrschaft* 24; 35-36).

that which he does not know, that which he has repressed. This void determines why he is different. His non-normative realization of gender originates here. His recounting the story, then, signifies his attempt to explain why he is different.

Janet Walker quotes an article by Paul Willemen from 1974, extending his argument that "the most remarkable element of the flashback sequences in PURSUED is the 'doubt, or rather […] ambivalence' that 'is created regarding Jeb's memories: the distinction between memories and imagination has been blurred' and 'the reality status of that memory is thereby evacuated'" (Walker 231, with reference to Willemen, Paul. "The Fugitive Subject" 68). However, piece by piece, as he remembers the root of his *difference*, Jeb eliminates this ambivalence. Jeb step by step arranges the contingency contained in his flashbacks within a causal, coherent narrative that ultimately authorizes and recodifies said *difference* as normative. Correspondingly, his initial assertion – that he is "remembering", i.e., reconstructing something that already exists, as opposed to "imagining", i.e., constructing something unprecedented and new, is crucial, as it illustrates that the objective of his tale is not to revolutionize social order by introducing a radically new identity, but to reorganize it according to pre-existing principles which have temporarily been suspended due to unforeseen events.

As such, being the author of his narrative, he maintains interpretational sovereignty over the discourses he engenders. Incidentally, the narrative includes such sequences that exceed the first-person narrator's knowledge,[319] thus implying an ulterior omniscient entity which qua the narrative is fused with the first-person narrator. Jeb as the first-person narrator, in other words, appropriates authority over the story, including the parts he theoretically cannot know, thereby making it his own. A story that has largely been told *about* him in popular discourse (Jeb as vulnerable, disillusioned World War II veteran) is thus appropriated by him to actively tell it himself and set the record straight. This, of course, only works because PURSUED charts 'remembering' as an active, self-regulated practice.

My point being, that in PURSUED the troubled, changed, new man takes back agency over his story (and, incidentally, history, as an extension of social discourse) and recodifies his vulnerability as strength, his unsettling emotionality as the element of his identity that ultimately allows him to settle down and resume a coherent, intelligible gender identity. He becomes the normativizing authority – technically, he is precisely that from the start. The narratological structure of the film emulates the narrative: PURSUED, on all levels, unfolds as a story of masculine self-authorization and re-appropriation of male hegemony, of an insecure, troubled man (the veteran) – the gender destabilizing facets of which manifest themselves most clearly

[319] For instance, the film includes a scene between Adam and Grant Callum talking in a bar, while Jeb, the implied first-person narrator is outside being celebrated as a war hero. Incidentally, it is in this scene that Grant Callum fuels the rivalry between Adam and Jeb by invoking heterosexual desire, as he states: "The ladies deprecate killing, but my, how they mire a war hero" (00:28:13-00:28:19).

in his momentary separation from the white woman – exploring the roots of his instability only to find them, identify them, and face them.

This is an essentially cyclical movement that confirms only what was already pre-determined. Indeed, predetermination and fate are recurring themes of the film.[320] Incidentally, this parallels the tautological dynamics of gender – constituting that what is portrayed to be its result (cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 34) – which coincides with the re-stabilization of a heteronormative gender order.[321] Jeb's new-found masculine authority – the courage he retrieves from his reconstruction of the past and that he requires to take on Grant Callum – was always already present inside his male body: gender was always already linked to sex; just as Thorley, the white woman, was destined to end up at his side, listening to his account of the past, despite of the fluctuations of her (gender) identity that he imagines on her behalf throughout his reconstruction. Traumatized male identity is restored as Jeb recycles his origins and finds validation by the white woman. Consequently, when Thorley embraces his hug, signaling, as Britton has observed, "that she has loved the potent male all the time" (205), it is not she who willingly surrenders to his male authority, but it is he who constructs a narrative in which she naturally and inevitably succumbs to his charm, and thereby normativizes and naturalizes his gender performance, and re-affirms the heteronormative gender order.

This aspect, Stanley Corkin has shown, follows a discernible gender-political agenda, as he relates the film's representation of gender to the events preceding the Cold War: Corkin argues that the absence of Jeb's mother mirrors the patriarchal thrust of U.S. postwar society, namely of attempting to push women back into traditional, prewar gender roles (66). He cites Eugenia Kalendin's study *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s*, stating: "The family, women were told over and over, was the core of a free society. The ambivalence that most new mothers felt about going to work was steadily reinforced by a society that did not want them competing with returning veterans for the best full-time jobs" (i, cited from Corkin 66-67). Adding to this, I contend that Jeb's trauma unfolds as a narrative device intended to

---

[320] For instance, in the the inevitability and inescapability of war that resonates in Adam's words ("Them Spaniards has to be beat!") or in the motif of sexual and criminal pathology that the film repeatedly invokes: Just like Grant Callum maniacally tries to exterminate all members of the Rand family for fearing they carry an innate desire to kill, Adam's desire for his sister ultimately unfolds as a story of sexual pathology, with him repeating Grant Callum's unhealthy relationship to his sister. Scholars have shown that these themes – fate, pre-determination, pathology – are, indeed, staples of *noir*-cinema, and therefore unsurprisingly reverberate in the *noir*-Western, as well (cf. Ursini 249; cf. Pailler 34-35).

[321] Engendering this narrative of self-authorization, the film also connects with discourses of veteran readjustment, as Brookes expounds: "The serviceman's 'readjustment' […] was designed to facilitate his return to civilian life. Readjustment has often been seen as a process of homogenization, bringing the veterans back into line with civilian society. Here, however, readjustment wasn't intended to reproduce conformity but to counteract it, to provide the means for the reconversion of the 'conformist' ex-serviceman into the independent, autonomous citizen necessary for the functioning of a democratic society. The role of the nonconformist individual would become indispensable in the formation of postwar Americanism, especially in the construction of a national identity, which was being defensively positioned against foreign totalitarianism" (203).

dramatize the insecurity of men (as a synecdoche for the instability of society) that followed women's outbreak from culturally dominant gender roles during the war. The dramatic effects of the destabilization of the doctrine of the separate spheres as presented in PURSUED thereby put into perspective – if not directly undermine – the film's alleged critique of the confinement of the traditional American family (or old gender ideals, as represented by Grant Callum). Corkin continues:

> […] the cautionary aspects of these films perform the complementary acts of showing, first, the necessity of traditional gender roles and, second, how eschewing these roles results in social chaos as a result of the psychic torments of individuals. By dwelling on the ruinous effects of unconventional behavior, these films show their audiences the necessities of a rational order – including a rational world order. (67)[322]

Jeb enters the ruins of his broken home, reconstructing the past to make sense of the present – an exercise the Western has always proven to be a formidable vehicle for. Confronted with the demons of his past, and enclosed at the site of his trauma, he emerges from the process stronger than ever: having made it his story, having actively claimed authorship of the discourse, having confirmed himself as a new cultural ideal of white masculinity (confirmed by the white woman who commits to him willingly), he is finally prepared to face the relics of the past: prewar expectations of white masculinity. He steps outside the ruins and faces Grant Callum – and certain death. His life is spared though, as Ma Callum kills Grant. Jeb and Thorley escape, riding their horses towards new horizons. The old generation makes way for the new, acknowledging their claim to power.[323] Crucially though, as this section

---

[322] Corkin then links these narrative tendencies to U.S. imperialist logic at the advent of the Cold War: "That such events should take place in a West that is relatively uncivilized increases their impact and further reveals the necessity of U.S. stewardship over 'uncivilized' places" (67).

[323] In his brief narratological assessment of PURSUED, Peter Verstraten has offered a different reading. Predicating his argument on the observation that, narratologically, Westerns are structured by "two-way traffic," in which audience expectations and the male protagonist's action are seemingly contractually obliged to confirm each other, Verstraten proposes that therefore, "a flashback narrated by the cowboy" was "a structural impossibility" (*Film Narratology* 182). He writes: "Cowboy Jeb Rand is plagued by images from the past about bright flashes of light and spurred boots. As he is hiding from the gang led by Grant Callum, he tells the story of his life to his stepsister, who has become his wife. The images play a central part, but they are initially narratively incoherent. Only after his narration, when the gang has already surrounded him, can Jeb place the flashes and the spurs. Suddenly, it comes to him that he witnessed the assassination of his father. This realization has such paralysing effect that he unexpectedly surrenders to Grant's gang. Now he has provided his childhood memories with a narrative frame, Jeb can no longer undertake any action himself. He is saved only by the intervention of his adoptive mother, who used to be in love with his father. PURSUED is consistent where genre conventions are concerned. As long as the flashbacks in Walsh's film remain enigmatic and fragmentary, they are no more than a nuisance. They hinder Jeb but they do not hamper his capacity for action in any critical way. Only when the fragments are made to occupy their place in a larger whole does he become mentally incapable of doing anything. In terms of the genre, the significance of the flashback makes him so passive that he becomes an anti-hero" (*Film Narratology* 183-4). While I think Verstraten makes a perfectly convincing argument with his general assessment of recurring narratological patterns and

has shown, PURSUED ultimately demonstrates that the new ideals might look different to the old, but they have been produced within the same, established framework. As a result, they maintain a clear-cut heteronormative gender order and male hegemony. Rather than iconoclastic, as it first may seem, PURSUED shows itself to be conservative at its heart, finding solace and stability in the re-implementation – or rather, the continuation – of heteronormativity and male hegemony, not in its transcendence. Aptly, the film ends with Ma Callum consecrating their union as new champions of an old construct, as she speaks: “Take your wife home, Jeb” (01:35:36-01:35:38).

However, PURSUED also lays bare the processes by which this continuation of heteronormativity comes to pass. The film imagines a system centered around and presented from the perspective of a white man, wherein he (re-)constructs reality to fit his preconception about the legitimacy of continued male hegemony. He shields his vision against challenges from an older generation and those issued by women, concluding that he represents a new cultural ideal of masculinity, which is validated through the affection he is granted by a white woman. This way, PURSUED reveals the arbitrariness and constructedness of gender (since new gender ideals can be constructed in clear distinction to previous ideals), but at the same time confirms the normative power of heterosexuality (since these new ideals insist on being classified as representations of a binary gender order).

4.4.4. Retreat to the Fort: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949)

John Ford’s Cavalry Trilogy, comprising FORT APACHE (1948), SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949), and RIO GRANDE (1950),[324] is of seminal importance to an investigation of the postwar Western. Taken together, the Cavalry Trilogy, as well as each film individually, constitutes a key text in many discussions of the Western genre, whatever their focus, angle, or specific approach (Coyne 48-65; Darby 82-146; Gallagher 246-60; McDonough 99-114; Meeuf 41-72; Westbrook, “The Night John Wayne Danced with Sherley Temple” 157-69; Wetta & Novelli 299-321). Of the three films, FORT APACHE has certainly attracted most scholarly attention and scrutiny. Yet my following analysis will largely focus on SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON – because, as I will illustrate, it addresses a subject matter similar to the dynamics of

---

dynamics in the Western, I do contend that PURSUED might not have been the best example to illustrate his point about flashback narration in as succinct and abridged a fashion as he does here about PURSUED. Mainly, I take issue with his way of applying the active/passive pattern to describe Jeb’s final act of facing Grant Callum as simply passive surrender, because it neglects historical context and the film’s psychological depth. For reasons I have laid out above, I strongly believe that Jeb’s facing Grant Callum reads as an active choice of self-authorization and assertion of power, rather than an indication of paralysis and surrender.

[324] Two of Ford’s later pictures, THE HORSE SOLDIERS (1959) and SERGEANT RUTLEDGE (1960) added to the trilogy and completed the director’s engagement with the United States Cavalry.

PURSUED, thus allowing for a comparison that offers a more representative account of representations of gender in postwar Western films.

That said, the impact of FORT APACHE, which, in many ways, functions as the trilogy's overture, cannot be discounted. FORT APACHE is essential for the understanding of SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON as it already introduces the "single set of themes, characters and images" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 334) that unites the trilogy. Many narrative and visual elements that are introduced in FORT APACHE find their continuation in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON and resolution in RIO GRANDE (cf. Budd 140; Nolley 85; Coyne 64).

This extends to SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON's perspective on representations of gender in the postwar context of veteran readjustment. FORT APACHE investigated for which maybe conflicting reasons the U.S. sent soldiers to war, depicted how they fought it, and contemplated in its most controversial of endings how some were meant to be forgotten while others were decorated with perhaps unjustified honors (cf. Westbrook, "The Night John Wayne…" 159-60).[325] SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, by contrast, tries to find an answer as to how to carry on, how to reconcile between different fractions of society that had seemingly drifted further and further apart as a result. Correspondingly, surprisingly little in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is devoted to combat (for a film that quite overtly deals with day-to-day army life at a remote frontier post). If anything, as Marshall Deutelbaum has shown, the characters in the film avoid combat by any means possible (60-70). SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON references FORT APACHE and the combat experience portrayed there (cf. Buscombe, "Painting the Legend: Frederic

[325] In FORT APACHE, the fort's commanding officer, Colonel Thursday (Henry Fonda), sacrifices his entire regiment in the vain pursuit of eternal fame and glory. Drawing extensively from myth and Western folklore, the film repeatedly associates Thursday with General Custer, and his foolish and ultimately devastating charge at the Battle of Little Bighorn, Custer's infamous last stand (Ford scholar Tag Gallagher even cites an interview from *Positif* (1967) with John Ford, quoting the director saying "[it] is a variation inspired by Custer's last battle. We changed the tribe and the topography" (246)). That in FORT APACHE the battle is lost does not contradict the allegorical reference to World War II, as FORT APACHE, like SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, is by far more interested in the implications of battle on a domestic, psychological rather than global, political scale. This latter aspect, however, has been heavily disputed, especially with regards to the final scene of the film, in which John Wayne's Captain York knowingly falsifies history and deliberately misconstrues Thursday's irrational and ill-fated charge as a feat of utmost valor. Opinions are divided on whether this somewhat inorganic ending constitutes Ford's ultimate surrender to an endorsement of the dominant, conservative thrust of his films, or a multi-layered critique of precisely such ideological underpinnings. Advocating the former, Max Westbrook, for instance, asks with reference to York's remark that in the army "[t]he faces may change, the names. But they're there. They're the regiment": "What does that mean? Obviously, it means the individual cavalryman, with his own face and own name, is not important. Faces and names are interchangeable. There will always be more cannon fodder. Thus the bodycount is of no consequence. The cause for which individual human beings die is of no consequence" ("The Night John Wayne…" 160). By contrast, Tag Gallagher argues: "His portrait of the cavalry is a scathing indictment of arrogance, idiocy, racism, and cast-ridden inefficiency. It is puzzling that so flagrant an irony as FORT APACHE's is commonly mistaken for chauvinism by so many of Ford's critics" (253). Another, perhaps more mediated position, is argued by Charles Ramírez Berg: "A happy ending for FORT APACHE, which might have shown Captain York opposing and changing the system, would falsify the workings of American assimilation as Ford understood them. Instead, Ford demonstrates the cultural and ideological co-optation of a decent man. It is a painful and disappointing ending – and that is precisely Ford's point" (86).

Remington and the Western" 154; 166n1),[326] and then moves on to explore its aftermath. It deliberates how to avoid further dissociation between groups within the American collective, and, ideally, how to bring them back together as one. In much the same way as PURSUED, therefore, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is primarily concerned with what happened to the American populace after the war. Further addressing one of his major themes of the postwar years, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is profoundly interested in the make-up and development of community (cf. Gallagher 245). It examines how (a) society negotiates readjustment along the continuum of triumph and trauma. Accordingly, Kathleen McDonough expounds, albeit with reference to the entire trilogy:

> John Ford's cavalry trilogy addresses both domestic and international concerns of the postwar era. On the domestic level, the films reflect America's dreams of postwar adjustment rather than its fears of a difficult transition to peacetime, and they emphasize the establishment of a healthy community where families can prosper. (112).[327]

Despite its ominous, portending exposition, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is relatively uneventful. In large parts told as a kind of travelogue, a cavalry regiment, commanded by soon-to-retire Captain Nathan Brittles (John Wayne), follows a number of orders that require him and his troop to cross hostile terrain clandestinely in order to evade Cheyenne and Arapaho war parties – because, in addition to their strictly military operation, Brittles's regiment has been "hamstrung" in that they must escort two women into safety: Miss Olivia Dandridge (Joanne Dru) and Abby Allshard (Mildred Natwick), the major's wife and Olivia's chaperone.

This almost seamless mixing of military and civilian interests constitutes one of the central axioms of the film, and incidentally one of my vantage points for a gender-specific discussion: Ford conflates the conventionally masculine sphere, 'the world', with the feminine,

---

[326] Reconnecting with Henry Fonda's portrayal of Colonel Thursday – which was, as explained above, highly evocative of the folklore surrounding General Custer – SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON opens with an image of the regimental flag of the 7th Cavalry waving in front of a blood-red sky, while the narrator emphatically exclaims: "Custer's dead!" Accordingly, carnage still looms over SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON at the beginning (cf. Coyne 64): reports of dead soldiers come in and the stagecoach, one of the fort's few links to civilization, carries only the dead body of the paymaster general. SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON thus resumes where FORT APACHE left of.

[327] The trilogy's perspective on U.S. international concerns, McDonough continues, primarily transpires as a contemplation of America's new-found, self-imposed, post-Marshall Plan and pre-Cold War imperialist 'responsibilities.' McDonough concludes: "The U.S. military around the world was overseeing the rebuilding of counties [sic] destroyed in the war. If the cavalry is a symbol of U.S. forces overseas, then the final image of troops riding by and the voice-over from SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON clearly express an imperialist ideal: 'So here they are – the dog-faced soldiers, the regulars, the fifty-cents-a-day professionals, riding the outposts of a nation. From Fort Reno to Fort Apache, from Sheridan to Stark, they were all the same: men in dirty-shirt blue, and only a cold page in the history books to mark their passage. But wherever they rode, and whatever they fought for – that place became the United States.' As the British Empire films of the 1930s were promoting the ideal of a Pax Britannica, so were the films of the cavalry trilogy projecting a Pax Americana" (113).

'the home', and treats them seemingly as equals. Accordingly, Studlar writes: "The presence of these women asserts the centrality of family life in the fort, and the film accords them respect as a vital part of the community of army professionals" (Studlar, "Sacred Duties…" 57). In SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, the army consists of men *and* women, is family (cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 79). And family, to Ford, is America.[328] SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON acknowledges postwar readjustment as a collective, reciprocal process that involves men and women equally and requires all to learn and adapt.

Crucially however, Ford's ostensibly egalitarian idealization of the army-as-family is inherently sentimental and structurally incoherent. For one thing, Ford's ennobling of his retiree protagonist Captain Brittles exudes a deep, romantic penchant for the past; for another, Ford repeatedly contradicts his seemingly egalitarian agenda. Idealistic optimism seems often at odds with the desire for stability, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON suggests. In a way, this is no news to scholars of the Cavalry Trilogy, or Ford's oeuvre, for that matter. Jim Kitses describes FORT APACHE as "a film of antithetical energies, a liberal critique of militarism that culminates in a conservative defence of tradition, at once both revisionist and reactionary, a film that employs Ford's dual vision to have it both ways" (*Horizons West* 68-69). A similar, if more confrontational (and at times polemical) approach has been put forward by Max Westbrook, who accuses Ford of several "cop-outs" in which the director betrays his own allegedly critical agenda. Westbrook sees FORT APACHE's ending as the completion of "a series of flag-waving, down-home, contradictory signals designed to make a very un-American message seem American" ("The Night John Wayne…" 158). My analysis will show, among other things, that these observations, to some extent, also hold true for SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, and that the conflicting dynamics described by Kitses and Westbrooks parallel a conflicting exploration of gender.

Therefore, while Ford in his long-spanning career evidently showed a recurring proclivity for oppositional or ambiguous motifs and themes (cf. Nolley 83), in many ways, these self-contradicting or self-defeating dynamics also constitute a continuation and solidification of the patterns I described in my discussion of STAGECOACH (see above). Whatever the nature of Ford's mythic Western universe, and whatever the message about postwar U.S. society that he might have intended to go with it in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON: his delivery is jumbled. This, I will argue, is because SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, despite its liberating premise, does not manage to liberate itself from the aporia of heteronormativity.

---

[328] On a related note, Russell Meeuf has pointed out how in the Cavalry Trilogy, Ford's vision of America highlights and celebrates the diversity of a community – of a family that has grown together from different roots. He writes: "Each film provides a loving and often sentimental view of community and familial bonds on the frontier. And yet the Cavalry Trilogy does not simply celebrate a generic ideal of family and community. The families and communities at the core of Ford's frontier are almost always multiethnic groups brought together by geographic and social migrations" (Meeuf 47).

My following analysis of SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON will thus add to these established discussions of Ford's Cavalry Trilogy a decidedly gender-specific perspective, arguing that Ford's seemingly egalitarian construction of gender works only if gender is subsequently disguised as a natural expression of sex, and, specifically, if these gendered expressions of sex have previously been assigned and exercised under male tutelage.

SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON answers to the troubles of a divided postwar American society by restructuring it according to the neat, clear-cut hierarchies, domains, and ritualized practices of the military. SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON shapes an idealized, seemingly reformed postwar America according to old gospel: the heterosexual couple allocated to conventionally gendered spheres and designed by and shaped under the premise of male hegemony. Personifying this figure of male paternalism is John Wayne, the latest addition to the higher echelons of Hollywood superstardom and Ford's favorite arbiter in many collaborations to come (cf. Wills 129).[329] Ever the Irish Catholic, Ford gives the disoriented American flock in John Wayne's Captain Nathan Brittles a benevolent shepherd to guide them: "Wayne became the cool but determined model for Americans living with continual danger" (Wills 159).

Oh Captain, My Captain!

To begin my discussion, this section will investigate the construction of masculinity in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. I will show how the film in its central male character, John Wayne's Captain Nathan Brittles, creates an image of white masculinity that all other characters – men and women – feel compelled to approximate, thereby establishing Brittles as an idealized representation of white masculinity. In a second step, I will demonstrate how SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON differs significantly from PURSUED in its conceptualization and representation of the symbolic male body, although both films ultimately reproduce and reaffirm heteronormativity as society's organizing principle. Finally, I will delineate how the film's peculiar conflation of romantic sentimentalism and optimism fits into postwar social discourses like veteran readjustment and a generally changed self-perception of men and women in America: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON answers the postwar American state of flux with a soothing dose of stability.

[329] The late 1940s mark the ascension of John Wayne to superstardom, as has been widely documented. During World War II, many of Hollywood's male stars had paused their acting or, like John Ford, directing careers to enlist in the military services, while Wayne decided to stay at home and contribute to the nation's wartime efforts by playing He-men (cf. Wills 107-9). By the time the war was over, Wayne had worked his way up the ladder of Hollywood heroes, culminating in his castings in RED RIVER, FORT APACHE, 3 GODFATHERS, and SANDS OF IWO JIMA, the latter of which gave him "the reputation of having won World War II single-handedly on the screen" (ibid. 109). Correspondingly, after the successes of RED RIVER and SANDS OF IWO JIMA, "Wayne […] became an authority figure, and he would remain one ever after" (ibid. 156).

Following the news of Cheyenne 'dog-soldiers' being on warpath, Major Mac Allshard (George O'Brien) orders to alert the fort. Next, we hear a bugle and see a long shot of Fort Stark and its surrounding community, set at the foot of a formation of mesas. Soldiers are riding in, returning from their missions, gathering inside the fort, and closing its gates (Fig. 35). The next shot shows a young man and a young woman inside the fort on a buggy, steering towards the exit of the fort, accompanied by jovial, upbeat music (Fig. 36). Tellingly, the camera does not track the buggy and the young couple; instead, it pans to the right until, centering the frame, we see Captain Brittles, sitting on his horse, smoking, following the buggy's route with his gaze. He does not immediately engage, yet it is made clear that he is watching (Fig. 37).

The following sequence reveals to us the people on the buggy and their intentions. Second Lt. Pennell (Harry Carey Jr.) wants to go picnicking with Miss Olivia Dandridge; yet given the imminent danger outside the fort – and following Brittles's orders – they are denied exit by Lt. Cohill (John Agar). An argument ensues that mainly informs the viewer that both men harbor a romantic interest for Miss Dandridge,[330] who, in turn, uses the men's rivalry over her for her own amusement.

For a moment, the situation seems to get out of hand, with Cohill threatening to arrest Miss Dandridge. But then Brittles, who we know has been watching all along, steps in and deescalates the situation, spoofing the young lieutenants for their juvenile vying for Olivia. The camera positions him right in the middle, slightly atop of the romantic quarrel (he is still on horseback), thus visually underscoring his position as both mediator and figure of authority (Fig. 38) and, in a way, predicting his subsequent position in the narrative. He, as Coyne puts it, "presides over a community whose primary impulse is harmonious" (65). Though predominantly intended to be humorous and to set up the triangular romantic subplot between Pennell, Miss Dandridge, and Cohill, this early scene already provides a paradigmatic example of Captain Brittles's significance as the film's representation of hegemonic masculinity.

[330] We also learn from the scene that the two lieutenants come from different social strata and have different understandings of work ethic. Pennell comes from the upper classes of the East. He does not depend on the army's wages and plans on dropping out once he has served his mandatory minimum – and once he has convinced Olivia to come back East with him. The film makes clear that he is a spoiled rich kid that has entered the rank of lieutenant because his family could afford an education for their boy; yet he fundamentally lacks the qualities of leadership that his position formally requires. Mostly, this shows in his reluctance to engage in army work, his bad calls of judgement, and his un-officerlike conduct. Cohill, on the other hand, comes from the lower social strata and presumably has not enjoyed a formal education. He has worked hard to get where he is. The film makes clear that this has estranged him from the 'real' world – the army and its regulations are all he knows. This makes him equally incompetent to lead. Though officerlike in conduct, he has no idea how to relate socially or emotionally to people, which mostly shows in his awkward and often inappropriately harsh treatment of Olivia. Like in STAGECOACH, Ford in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON confounds discourses of class and gender.

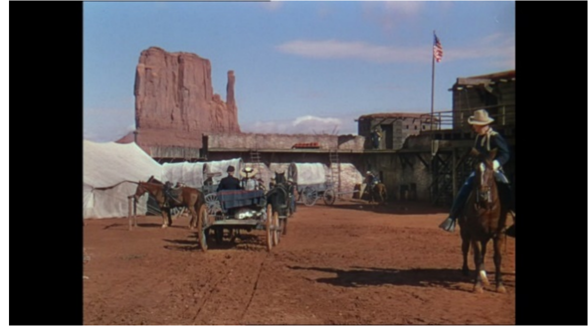


Fig. 35. 00:09:17. Fig. 36. 00:09:31.

Fig. 37. 00:09:36. Fig. 38. 00:10:13.

Source: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. John Ford. Argosy Pictures. DVD.

The scene is structured in a way that conflates Brittles's position as a superior officer in the military with that of a superior human being, as is the entire film. On multiple occasions the film shows Brittles not only being the standard for military strategy but also for anything pertaining to the social relations between his soldiers.[331] He is the "surrogate father within the community" (Darby 123), "the teacher figure among apprentices" (ibid. 139) – in a word: the center of the film. Everyone relates to and gathers their meaning from him.

That the army coalesces the professional and the social sphere recurs as a thematic strand throughout Ford's oeuvre, but in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, the concept is given a name that is repeatedly mentioned and referenced within the diegesis: *being army*. Characters are frequently labelled as 'being army' or 'not being army' (Olivia, in particular; see below), suggesting that this concept describes an ideal form of human conduct that comprises, according to Ford: a profound sense of duty, a professional skillset, and the willingness to put these and everything else into the service of the community. Still more important, however, is the effect that being army implies to generate: *being army* signifies intelligibility. Brittles

[331] Whereas later incarnations of John Wayne would categorically refrain from giving his soldiers advice about their romantic concerns, let alone admitting they would know anything about it, his character in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is highly knowledgeable about the personal affairs of all his troopers – including Olivia Dandridge –, and hence deeply involved in them. This differs starkly from, for instance, John Wayne's conversation with his adoptive son from THE UNDFEATED (see 4.2.2.; n218), or the frequently replicated trope of the alleged inscrutability of women.

perfectly epitomizes this conviction; he personifies what 'being army' means. He has the military capacities to command by rank and the (humanizing) social capacities to lead by natural authority.

Peculiar yet still somewhat typical of the postwar Western, Brittles's representation of white masculinity, or even more precisely, of white masculine authority, is strongly characterized by a high level of empathy. Unlike Colonel Thursday in FORT APACHE, whose command was always strictly by the book and therefore, in the logic of the film, inhumane, Brittles has the emotional and social capacities to relate to his soldiers (as had Captain York, John Wayne's part in FORT APACHE). He knows what is going on in his regiment. He seems aware of almost every conflict in his troop. He senses when people are better left on their own and when to intervene (like in the above example of the picnicking scene). And, crucially, he knows *how* to intervene, *how* to resolve conflicts in a way that is uncomplicated but still fair to everyone.[332] Accordingly, Marshall Deutelbaum professes: "Brittles is remarkably sensitive to the feelings of those around him and adept at finding solutions to problems which permit those involved to retain their self-respect" (67).

To illustrate: In a later scene, Brittles leads his troop through open territory on foot. He calls for Sergeant Tyree (Ben Johnson), gestures with his hand in a straight-ahead direction and says, "Right through that pass!", which apparently fully suffices for the sergeant to understand what Brittles wants him to do (00:25:27-00:25:29). Tyree rides off. All the while the trek is moving along, the camera remains centered on a long shot of Brittles walking ahead – not quite as determined as John Wayne's defining walk as Tom Dunson in RED RIVER, but certainly reminiscent of it. He extends his left hand behind his back, his head still pointed forward. A soldier approaches quickly and places what appears to be Brittles's tobacco pouch in his hand. Brittles takes it and cuts off a slice of tobacco chaw. The soldier remains at close distance, walking behind Brittles. Brittles extends his left hand behind his back again, the soldier takes the tobacco pouch, and reassumes his position in line. No words are exchanged, and the troop does not halt at any point. The camera cuts to Cohill and Olivia, walking side by side, as an argument erupts between them. As their voices get louder, Brittles orders them to be quiet. He commands Cohill to take position at the rear of the troop, looks back, and scans the troop for Sergeant Quincannon (Victor McLaglen). When he finds him, Brittles nods his head toward Quincannon, who immediately understands that this means he is to fall back in line to walk next to Miss Dandridge.

---

[332] In the case of the picnic-sequence, Brittles plays a joke on the young lieutenants Cohill and Pennell: the former, by telling him to wipe the smug and doltish grin off his face when Olivia compliments the army, and the latter by ordering him to pursue his silly picnic by himself. Lastly, he escorts Miss Dandridge back to her quarters and to safety (casually reproducing the paradigm of white femininity as the most precious good that must be protected from savage Native Americans and lusty men).

Unobtrusively, nondescriptly, the scene rolls by, so harmonious is the exchange of orders, so routinely practiced are the gestures of authority and subordination between Brittles and his men, so undisputed is Brittles's leadership. Non-verbal cues are enough for Brittles to issue orders and for his men to execute them. Simultaneously, the film very subtly informs the viewer that under Brittles's watch nothing in his regiment goes by unnoticed, and he is prepared and equipped to act accordingly, which is always justly.

The two scenes exemplify how SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON creates a character in Captain Brittles who personifies power and authority on the one hand, but on the other also occupies the cerebral and emotional center of the film. Brittles is the muscle, the brains and the heart of Fort Stark and its community.

At first, this might sound unusual: was it not the Faith Henleys (HELL'S HINGES) the Molly Starks (THE VIRGINIAN) or the Dallases (STAGECOACH) who by Western convention used to seemingly causally link morality with white femininity? Would this conflation of masculine authority and feminine sensitivity not confuse gender coherence?

Crucially, the film does in no way attempt to complicate Captain Brittles's gender. Unlike PURSUED, where Jeb's empathy was conceptualized as an initially different quality that became re-codified and normativized as a masculine quality in that it induced the reciprocal performance of heterosexuality, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON never considers empathy as a quality that is mutually exclusive with any one gender. At first glance, this may appear as an exceedingly liberal and egalitarian perspective on gender politics. However, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON subtextually controverts any notion of that by its conceptualization and representation of hegemonic masculinity.

To recall, PURSUED is a film of displacement. In creating Jeb as a character which for most of the time acts in opposition to an archaic image of hegemonic masculinity (as represented by the villain-character Grant Callum), only to surpass it and assume a hegemonic position himself, the film moves from a position of inferiority to one of superiority, from ostensible disenfranchisement to self-authorization. PURSUED, figuratively speaking, seemed to be punching up (though my analysis has demonstrated this is effectively more complex). PURSUED was searching for "the father" in a higher place. SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, by contrast, is a film of guidance. The character of Captain Brittles represents hegemonic white masculinity at all times. He is never contested, never challenged.[333] He leads paternally and

[333] Apart from one scene, in which, aptly, Brittles contests and challenges himself. He measures himself against an image of masculinity that only he in his mind has failed to approximate. This is interesting for two reasons: first, it substantiates the reading of Brittles as the undisputed entity of masculine dominance, as he is the only one who is, in terms of the film's semantic structure, equipped to assert that he has failed his mission. Everybody else, Major Allshard, his wife Abby, and Olivia Dandridge, exonerate him readily and emphatically. Second, it illustrates the understanding of hegemonic masculinity as a generative principle, in that the film's bearer of hegemonic masculinity never ceases to perpetually relate to an image of hegemonic masculinity.

benevolently throughout the movie. He instructs others how to approximate hegemonic white masculinity, and, figuratively speaking, how to become fathers themselves. Therefore, the film is punching down, told from a position of hegemony, amalgamating the voices of the character Nathan Brittles, the actor John Wayne, and, most importantly, the director John Ford, as they speak to the American people.

Besides the downward-looking tone of the film, there are other figurative direction of looks to be discerned in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, as the film is also both decidedly forward- and backward-looking. Indeed, the film is driven by the opposition of two generations, comprising past and future. As the young lieutenants and Miss Dandridge look up to Captain Brittles, they also look back at the time he represents (cf. Darby 136). Arguably personifying the future, Pennell, Cohill, and Olivia are sometimes careless and more often aimless. The present in the film describes the transitional period between a certain 'was' and an uncertain 'will be', the time where both generations meet.

Examples of the next generation's immaturity, or practices that signify their unpreparedness, abound[334] – as do the paternalistic wisdoms Brittles is always ready to deliver in response.[335] Yet while Brittles never condones the young people's adolescent foibles, he also never thwarts the romantic squabble between the three. He is at battle with some of their characteristics, but not with the system. On a related note, Westbrook comments on the Cavalry Trilogy accordingly: "Individuals within the system may be wrong or villainous […] but the system itself is to be affirmed whatever the facts may be" ("The Night John Wayne…" 166). The formation of the heterosexual couple, the kind of competition the lieutenants find themselves involved in, is something Brittles implicitly approves of. Similar to his "avuncular role" as Captain York in FORT APACHE (ibid. 159), John Wayne again plays "a kind of fairy godfather to the young lovers" (Darby 85).

There are a few points to be made about these dynamics here: first, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is highly sentimental about the past, nostalgic in the common understanding of the term.[336] Narratively, the film repeatedly features wistful rituals of commemoration, such as Brittles's visiting of his wife's grave. Most paradigmatically and perhaps most memorably, the silver pocket watch given to Brittles on the day of his retirement by the soldiers in his troop,

---

[334] Pennell's silly idea of picnicking in open territory in a situation of grave emergency, the juvenile grin on Cohill's face when Miss Dandridge compliments the soldiers, Miss Dandridge's childishly self-satisfied act of celebration by sticking out her tongue – all these are practices that signify the immaturity of these young people compared to the adult, authoritative rationale of father-cum-teacher Brittles.

[335] Repeatedly, Brittles interrupts the young lieutenants, steering the conversation in whatever direction pleases him. His catchphrase "Never apologize […]! It's a sign of weakness" (00:10:39-00:10:43), here uttered as Pennell tries to explain himself, functions as a piece of paternalistic wisdom that encapsulates Brittles's behavior and ideology. Simultaneously, the aphorism serves to allocate precisely the concept it addresses – weakness – to Pennell in relation to Brittles.

[336] I will complicate this understanding of *nostalgia* below (see 4.6.1.) in my discussion of another John Ford Western, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962).

encapsulates the film's fondness of the past, with the engravement in the watch, "a sentiment," as one trooper declares, reading "Lest we forget" (01:15:00-01:15:55). Structurally, the element of looking back at Brittles expresses a profound yearning for the past, for times when life was ordered just as clearly as a military hierarchy of command. Over the course of the film, the young generation will find inspiration in Brittles. His wisdoms will teach them how to become independent, how to become ambassadors of their own time. Crucially though, Brittles, the embodiment of the past, is the model on which this allegedly new time will be based.

This is another element in which SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON significantly differs from PURSUED. In Ford's film, characters do not contest the past, they do not dissociate themselves from it. Instead, they emulate it, they become it. PURSUED suggested an inconsistent caesura (Jeb breaks with the past only to restore it); SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON an incoherent continuation: After all the sentimental preparations for his farewell, after all his efforts to pass on the torch of leadership, Brittles miraculously lives on, being called back to duty by a pantheon of U.S. military luminaries.[337] The young lieutenants who the viewer believed to carry forth Brittles's symbolic lineage are demoted to subjects at last, as Brittles, indicated in the last "valedictory scene," will be "conspicuously leading a column in the future" (Darby 141), forevermore riding the plains as untrammeled myth.

Second, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is a profoundly optimistic film. Though basically rehashing the past and transposing it to a future, the film is adamant that this future will be harmonious and bright. Unlike the *noir*-ish chiaroscuro of PURSUED, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON radiates in vibrant Technicolor.[338] While elements that are designed to de-romanticize attitudes towards the military and combat certainly echo throughout the film, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is conciliatory, and firmly committed to reaching a compromise, of "find[ing] a middle ground", as Deutelbaum puts it (67). More than a reference to the past, Brittles embodies the desire to secure and pass on a long-lasting future of concord following the turmoil of World War II. He is the benevolent father teaching the manners and mores of the army to the next generation, which imperatively involve the instillation of intelligible genders, which effect the formation of the heterosexual couple and thereby perpetuate heteronormativity.

---

[337] Westbrook comments on the scene: "Once again, the story has denied itself, and what seems at first a narrative flaw turns out to be, upon examination, a sentimental invocation of history. By using the actual names of not one but three Civil War generals, and nostalgically invoking a fourth—unfortunately, the enemy, but nonetheless a hero of white America—the film has asserted the unanimous virtue of the military. Thus YELLOW RIBBON is propaganda in praise of humble obedience to a distant authority which turns out to be omniscient and benevolent" ("The Night John Wayne…" 167).

[338] Jim Kitses comments: "After the crisp, beautiful black and white of Archie Stout's photography in FORT APACHE, Ford embraces Technicolor to produce facsimiles of the West's most prolific and accomplished painter, Frederic Remington. The effect is appropriately emblematic, capturing prototypical characters and events with a vigour and detail that often fixes the images as a series of iconic murals" (*Horizons West* 77).

Before its overly-patriotic ending that prefigures much of the imperialist Cold War ideology,[339] SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON ends with the juxtaposition of several heterosexual couples: at the final dance, a new couple is formed (Cohill and Olivia) and old couples continue to be (Mac and Abby Allshard; Nathan and Mary Brittles). This scene is particularly interesting because it substantiates the optimistic tone of the film with discourses of pre-determination and pathology, and instantiates the film's concealing the process of the cultural construction of gender (the ritualized practice of the dance) by emphasizing the ensuing gender binarity as natural consequence. As Brittles remarks that "everybody above the rank of Second Lieutenant" knew all along that Cohill and Olivia would eventually marry (01:37:31-01:37:38),[340] SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON adds to their romantic union an element of inevitability that at once camouflages its construction and functions to reassure a postwar audience that men and women will eventually overcome the difficulties of postwar readjustment, recognize one another, and find to each other again. Intertwining past and future, romantic sentimentalism and optimism, Brittles represents everything Ford wants America to have been and be again: a functioning family, encapsulated in one term/concept: army. Amplifying his message with nothing short of fate, furthermore, Ford via Brittles speaks to his family, allaying their fears of an uncertain future, of conflicts, of separation. As SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON illustrates – perpetuating the ideological thrust of decades of Western filmmaking – good men and good women are meant to find each other and thus stabilize social order.

This brings me to the third point I wish to make. One of SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON's major narrative and allegorical concerns is stability. Early in the film, Brittles declares: "The sun and the moon change. The army knows no seasons" (00:06:03). The army-as-family (cf. *Kitses, Horizons West* 79) provides the one constant in Brittles's, hence in America's life. Its "myriad rituals of soldiering" (Schatz, *Boom and Bust…* 372) provide a reliable and reassuring routine for the film's soldiers, and thus a metaphor for Americans' longing for stability. This constitutes a radically different way of reconnecting with the war experience than portrayed in PURSUED. SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON asserts that America must learn to accept and live with the atrocities committed (by all sides) in World War II (qua its initial reference to FORT APACHE). Now, however, it is imperative to tackle new tasks and assume new responsibilities,

---

[339] Intimately tied to SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON's exploration of gender is the film's involvement in post-colonial and imperial discourse. There is a conceptual kinship of hegemonies that I will investigate further below (see 4.5.2.) but that I cannot explicate here. For a discussion of the Cavalry Trilogy against the backdrop of Colonialism and in relation to the British Empire Genre, see McDonough's "WEE WILLIE WINKIE Goes West…" (99-114) or Wetta and Novelli's remarks about the same subject in their article "'Romantic, Isn't It, Miss Dandridge?'…" (302-3). For an investigation of at least one of the trilogy's films, FORT APACHE, with regards to the U.S.'s role in the Cold War, see Stanley Corkin's study *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* (51-93).

[340] This notion is already introduced earlier in the film, when Brittles and Quincannon share a private comment about an argument they just witnessed between Cohill and Olivia. Quincannon remarks: "They'll make a fine couple when they're married, Captain" (00:45:58-00:46:01).

domestically and globally[341] – both of which call for peace and harmony, both of which necessitate stability and order. Writes Deutelbaum:

> […] the film's interest in debunking romantic hyperbole about military life, together with its celebration of accommodation and disengagement in place of direct conflict, suggest that this well-structured narrative is less a pacifist work than a timely and sensitive comment on the problems of readjustment faced by soldiers returning to civilian life. To this extent Brittles's progress through the film may well provide a pattern for other soldiers forced to put aside the military values that served them well in war but are no longer useful now that the war has ended. […]. The values it celebrates are the generous, cohesive attitudes that promote concord instead of conflict and serve to reintegrate former soldiers into peaceful society. (70)

Whereas PURSUED highlighted individual trauma, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON speaks out in favor of collective responsibility. "At once a moral critique of our 'victory' and an affirmation of the importance of the patriotic solidarity that made victory possible" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 334), SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is by no means triumphalist, but it predicates all its action on the notion of triumph. In PURSUED, Jeb Rand disposed of his Medal of Honor the moment he returned from war. Yet whereas PURSUED, at least on one ontological level, alleges to be iconoclastic, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is always already conformist: The wounded soldiers, young lieutenants, and army wives in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON can think of no higher achievement than be merited with another stripe on their uniform, a pat on the back that says 'good job', or a "Thanks, soldier", like Brittles says to Abby (00:44:32-00:44:34) – to be rewarded and remembered forever for their services (cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 78), not as wounded individuals but as a victorious collective, and to draw strength from precisely that credo for subsequent conflicts (cf. Maddrey 38). Expressing a similar point, Ken Nolley has observed about the Cavalry Trilogy that "Ford chooses to paint our past in brighter colors and

[341] There is an interesting additional layer to this, as Russell Meeuf's study of the international impact of John Wayne's representation of masculinity shows. In short, Meeuf discerns how Wayne's representation of masculinity often connects to discourses of transnational politico-social phenomena. In the case of the Cavalry Trilogy, according to Meeuf, these are "the broad transformations of space and social relations occurring internationally in the years after World War II through international migrations and the migrations of urbanization" (43). He writes: "[…] the spectacular narratives and iconography of the western genre, along with Wayne's complicated masculine identity as the prototypical western individual, actively produce the dramatic unevenness of the spaces of the western frontier, constructing an ambivalent fantasy of space that has yielded arguably the most resonant and popular set of images and character types in the history of cinema around the world. […] Mirroring the kinds of spatial reorganizations transforming economic, political, and social relations in the years after World War II through the globalization of capitalism and the concurrent increase in population mobility, the Cavalry Trilogy reproduces the spatial relations of new and diverse communities built out of migration and within spaces of uneven development, spatial relations that required new negotiations of gender and racial values. Within that emerging spatial order, of course, John Wayne proved the ideal masculine subject, able to navigate the complex cultural negotiations of modern space" (ibid. 43, 45).

with more noble postures than it actually exhibited, […] hoping to inspire us as a culture to live up to the demands of our ideals, to realize our own best selves" (83).

Like its main character Captain Nathan Brittles, then, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is extremely empathetic with the war experiences of the American people. In the same vein, however, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, both in terms of its socio-political message and its gender-political underpinnings, comes from a position of triumph (again: without being triumphalist). Ford's film is kind, understanding, and knowing, as it "provides a loving and often sentimental view of community and familial bonds on the frontier" (Meeuf 47). Yet while all these attributes testify to SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON's psychological and emotional depth, they also describe the film's universal endorsement of the firm belief that father knows best.[342] Whereas PURSUED transpires as an allegory of self-authorization, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON never pretends to assume anything other than the position that authorizes. This position, embodied by the ascending epitome of American manhood, John Wayne, is without questioned codified as male; the practice of authorization, drawing from conventionally male discourses like the military and fatherhood, and perpetuating absolute trust in paternalistic rule, as masculine.

SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, therefore, finds solace and stability for the troubled American collective in the re-stabilization of hetero-patriarchy. Towering over the confused, erring, meandering young souls like a masculine demigod, John Wayne's Nathan Brittles exemplifies Ford's imagination of a dreamscape, organized by clearly gendered lines: the harmonious coalescence of army and family, of professional and private, of individualistic and domestic. SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON suggests that if only the army were to continue (structurally) – with its distinct-yet-invisible chains of command, its separated-yet-united spheres – America would rehabilitate, restabilize, would come together again as a family.

Being Army

Twelve minutes into the film, Captain Brittles visits the fort's graveyard. As he puts down some flowers, the camera shows three headstones: Brittles's wife Mary and their two children, Elizabeth and Jane. The camera stays with the image long enough for the viewer to read the inscriptions: all three died within one week in June 1867, nine years from when the film is set. At no point in the film are the circumstances of their deaths explicitly explained or contextualized. But given their dates and since they are all buried in an army graveyard at one

[342] Coyne has argued that "At the heart of the genre which exalted patriarchy, RED RIVER, like DUEL IN THE SUN and FORT APACHE, posited the subversive notion that father may not always know best" (55). While his assessment may hold true if one considers Henry Fonda's Colonel Thursday a father figure in FORT APACHE, I contend that the same cannot be said for John Wayne's Captain York, and certainly not for Captain Brittles.

of the remotest frontier outposts, we infer their deaths were sudden, premature, and perhaps violent.[343] Brittles tends to the graves. He talks to his dead wife and brings her the tragic news of General Custer's fatal defeat and an impending Native American uprising. Visits of this kind are a standing ritual of Brittles's, something he has been doing since their deaths nine years ago and something he will continue doing for as long as he can (in fact, a reprise of this scene closes the film).

Fig. 39: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. John Ford. Argosy Pictures. DVD. 00:14:20.

[343] The only contextualizing piece of information the film gives is a passing comment made by Brittle: On the day of his retirement, he has a somber but witty conversation with Sergeant Quincannon, in which he offers to have a drink to the latter's forthcoming retirement in two weeks. Brittles points to the pictures of his wife and children, saying: "Well Sergeant, I haven't had a drink since… that day" (01:12:44-01:12:48). The elliptic remark hangs nebulously in the air. Since Quincannon's body obstructs the view to what Brittles is pointing at in that moment, the viewer can only infer these are the family portraits on his desk (they have been presented in a close-up very early in the film (00:04:03-00:04:05) and another one after Brittles's crestfallen return to the fort (01:10:49-01:10:51). Furthermore, if anything, the remark obfuscates even more the circumstances of his family's deaths, since it leaves entirely unclear whether his drinking "that day" was a potential reason for the disaster (perhaps he was too drunk to do his duty, incapacitated, unable to defend his family from an attacker) or a reaction to it (trying to drown his sorrows in alcohol). An enigmatic piece in the film, James Warner Bellah's short story *War Party*, on which the film is partly based, offers a more conclusive answer to the ambiguity, though this is not explored in the film. Frank J. Wetta and Martin A. Novelli elaborate with reference to excerpts from Bellah's story: "As in the film, Brittles visits the fort's graveyard, not to *talk* to his dead wife, a sin the film indulges – Bellah would never succumb to that sentimentality – but just to visit his family for one last time: 'Mary Cutting Brittles, Nathan Cutting Brittles, and their dates. George Brittles, February-June, and his poor little date.' This last death Brittles feels with particular bitterness: 'Soft hands touched him for a moment, and an agony he had denied himself for years came back in all its lost terror. The noon heat was the red fever of smallpox again – the blasphemous fire in a soul that would not accept. So the madness had come upon him and for months he had traded that agony for whiskey, until he was no good for his grief, no good for his job'" (313).

Suddenly, Brittles stops talking, his gaze freezes looking in the direction of Mary's headstone. The camera cuts to the headstones, presenting an approaching shadow gradually growing taller: Olivia's. It is one of the most meaningful, most evocative images of the film: as Olivia's shadow merges with the image of Mary's headstone, their paths symbolically cross, their fates unite, their stories blend into each other, transcending time, life and death (Fig. 39). Accordingly, Kitses describes: "Apparently a digression, the sombre scene is at the centre of the film's concerns" (*Horizons West* 79).

The arrangement quite literally foreshadows Olivia's development; it gives purpose and meaning to where she is headed (cf. Darby 135). This, of course, is not to say that she is headed for death, but rather toward what Mary represents. By no means is this to imply that Ford in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON considers a dead wife a good wife.[344] Far from it, in this sequence Mary receives the highest veneration from Ford and his film, albeit as but another iteration of Ford's "sexual paternalism of machismo" (Dempsey 9), as the director pedestalizes Mary "to serve as a remote icon whose earthly virtues we are expected to take on faith" (ibid. 8). In Ford's view, the graveyard is a place to celebrate a spiritual union and to commemorate the "suffering and hardships" that particularly women endured for the sake of civilization (Meeuf 60). Mary gave her life for the army, a symbolic community which, as Jim Kitses has shown, equates with family (cf. *Horizons West* 79). Honors do not get higher in Ford's cinema: Ford wants the viewer to understand how highly he thinks of women and how deeply he respects the sacrifices they made for America (a notion that resonated even stronger in the immediate postwar social discourse).[345]

However, although Ford's veneration of 'woman' constitutes a counterpoint to the demonization of women in *film noir* and the *noir*-Western, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is still a far cry from being progressivist or egalitarian in terms of gender politics. This is because Ford's vision of idealized white femininity is "mired in stereotypes" (Dempsey 7) and never escapes the conventional, pathologizing discourses of virginal purity, wifely loyalty, and motherly sacrifice.[346] The mortal individual, Mary, is of lesser interest to Ford than her immortal soul, her

---

[344] Elsewhere, Max Westbrook has hinted at the potentially problematic tradition of this image, stating: "since the visits seem to fulfill the old warrior's needs, the ironic implication is that the best family for a man obsessed with his duty is a dead one" ("Flag and Family in John Wayne's Westerns: The Audience as Co-Conspirator" 32). For a detailed analysis of the "conjunction of beautiful woman and death" I refer to Elisabeth Bronfen's study *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (x).

[345] Wood has described a similar narrative pattern in Ford's earlier YOUNG MR. LINCOLN (1939), describing the significance of idealized white femininity in relation to the male hero: "she exemplifies the myth of the 'great woman behind every great man' […]. Abruptly, Ann is dead, but ice is breaking up on the swift-flowing river and Lincoln brings the first spring flowers to her grave. It is her continuing influence that drives Lincoln on, his allegiance to her memory […] being crucially important" ("RIO BRAVO & Retrospect" 191).

[346] Michael Dempsey expounds: "[Ford's women] exist only in relation to men, whom they mother, feed, comfort, and bury. These functions add up to their only true role in life; they rarely do anything for their

image. The graveyard, of course, is also a place void of any notion of corporeality. Mary's grave functions like a sanitized version of the saloon posters of Lily Langtry in THE WESTERNER or the paintings in THE OX-BOW INCIDENT and YELLOW SKY. Blended into the hostile desert landscape, her image has become one with the fort – even more than that: it has become a sight for ritualized practices of death-defying heterosexuality. An eternal monument to women's 'being army', Mary's headstone reflects and gives everlasting testimony to women's incorporation in the army-as-family collective.

However, at the same time, Mary as the symbolic female body is given a place that is most decidedly characterized by its immobility, by silence, by spatial and conceptual subordination. Qua Mary, Ford awards women with the highest venerations but hinges them on an ultraconservative image of white femininity – which, fundamentally, in this scene, precedes the white female body that is going to incorporate it, and the expressions of which he proverbially casts in stone. Mary's grave betokens Ford's romanticized vision of the gilded cage of paternalism, an example of what Robin Wood has described as "the traditional concept of the woman's role under patriarchy at its noblest, finest, most respectable" ("RIO BRAVO & Retrospect" 191) with regards to Ford's treatment of women.

This is the image Olivia Dandridge will be measured by and will be related to in the course of the film. Like her own shadow growing larger on Mary's headstone, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON will largely involve Olivia's growing understanding of what it means to 'be army', of her approximation toward the symbolic female body condensed in Mary's headstone, her conformization with conventional conceptualizations of gender, her becoming intelligible as a woman.[347] As Olivia's visiting Mary's grave suggests, this is essentially a process of remembering, of wistfully looking back – in other words, of retroactively emulating a conventional female habitus, of becoming a vision of the past.

Yet there are lessons to learn for Olivia Dandridge that a gravestone cannot teach her, begging the question as to how exactly she comes to understand what it means 'to be army'

own sakes, nor do they really have lives of their own. The men feel genuine reverence for them but also, at bottom take them for granted. They are marked by all the negative implications of 'pedestalism'; their glorification effectively removes them from 'masculine' areas of life. Being idols, they are not fully human, need not be taken with true seriousness" (7).

[347] The picnicking-scene had focused on her childish, un-army conduct. In the graveyard scene, Olivia Dandridge makes amends. She is remorseful, courteous, respectful – acknowledging Brittles's benevolent authority as well as the imperativeness of subordination to army orders. She will later admit that she knows that she "wasn't army enough to stay the winter" (00:50:34-00:50:39), but the film in the graveyard-sequence with Brittles already prefigures that she eventually will be. Aptly, the scene ends with Captain Brittles sanctifying the connection between Olivia and Mary. As Olivia leaves the graveyard, having paid her most polite respects to Brittles and his wife, he looks at her walking away and murmurs: "It's a nice girl, Mary. Reminds me of you" (00:12:46-00:15:20). From then on, Olivia's becoming like Mary will be a key element of the film. Likewise, to Olivia's concession that she was not army enough, Brittles retorts: "You're not quite army yet, Miss. But you know never to apologize. It's a sign of weakness" (00:50:38-00:50:46). Here, not only does he adumbrate that she will eventually make it and become 'army', but also validates her honesty, as a sign of her increasing moral integrity, with the catch-phrase he has usually reserved for his most favorite soldiers.

or to be ‘a proper army wife’? While there are sequences in the film that approach these concepts *ex negativo* – that is, sequences that explain the film’s understanding of ‘being army’ by showing precisely what does *not* qualify as ‘being army’ – SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON also uses direct juxtapositions as well as positivist representations of what it considers properly feminine conduct. Put differently, the film occasions and entertains gender contingency – as in markedly constructing abject genders – only to eventually rebound and realign them with dominant, hence normative conceptualizations of gender.

Olivia, undoubtedly the film’s central female character, is frequently coupled with the film’s second major female character, Abby Allshard (Mildred Natwick), Major Allshard’s wife, and essentially a postwar reprise of one of “[Ford’s] most effective women, Donna Reed’s stoic, strong, radiant military nurse in THEY WERE EXPENDABLE” (Dempsey 7). Olivia’s representation of white femininity is repeatedly measured against Abby’s representation of “the ideal cavalry wife” (Darby 145); that said, however, apart from an early, profoundly symbolic image that immediately aligns the two women’s fates (Fig. 40) and an equally symbolic reprise of that image at the end of the film (Fig. 41), they hardly share the screen.

Fig. 40: 00:08:06. Fig. 41: 01:24:34.
Source: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. John Ford. Argosy Pictures. DVD.

Yet through repeated cross-cutting between such sequences that feature Olivia and such that feature Abby, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON creates a direct comparison. Crucially, these sequences exclusively illustrate how the women individually position themselves in relation to men, or, in more general terms, the army/family. In addition, as Olivia’s conduct causes trouble while Abby’s efforts are met with compliments and praise, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON casts a clear value judgement, and thus normativizes, as per which representation of white femininity is acceptable and which is not. These value judgements are pronounced by Captain Brittles or another senior male representative of the army (Major Allshard or Sergeant Quincannon, for instance). An inadvertent enactment of what Silvia Bovenschen describes as the “dictate of images” (57; Transl. T.S.), in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, good men decide

what is acceptable for a good woman; and good women are expected to accept and respond to the wisdom of good men.

To illustrate: Shortly after the graveyard sequence, Major Allshard orders Captain Brittles to take Abby and Miss Dandridge along on his next patrol and escort them to the next stagecoach station, where they are supposed to leave for safer places during the coming, critical winter months. Brittles protests: escorting the women through dangerous open territory will compromise the chances for accomplishing his mission and will imperil the lives of everybody involved. The major is aware of this but remains adamant. Apologetically, he explains his decision: “Nathan, I sat up half the night with this. I can’t keep the Dandridge girl here. She ain’t army” (00:18:08-00:18:17). Of course, the picnicking sequence has already presented the viewer with enough evidence to make them endorse the Major’s decision; in fact, her not ‘being army’ is precisely the reason why Brittles protests the Major’s orders.[348] Her infantile behavior and self-serving interest of toying with the young lieutenants’ feelings disqualify her from ‘being army’, as do her “overly romantic and overly dramatic expectations of Army life” (Deutelbaum 69). Enter Abby Allshard, the tough, quick-witted, resilient army wife, suitably nicknamed “Old Iron Pants” (00:20:08-00:20:16).

In the Major’s office, Abby speaks frankly and freely, moves confidently across this space, and even orders the major’s adjutant, Sergeant Hochbauer (Michael Dugan), to sit down again comfortably after he jumps up to formally greet her. Wearing army attire, she walks to the front of the frame. The men look at her: she controls their gazes as they muster her. Arms akimbo, she says: “Well, here I am, all ready” (00:20:01-00:20:04). She has come prepared for the job; that is, primarily not to be in the way of the men getting theirs done. Brittles pours himself a cup of coffee. He comments on Abby’s army outfit (which, apparently, she fixed for herself from parts of Sergeant Quincannon’s old uniform), yet clearly in terms of functionality, not looks. The atmosphere exudes a certain level of familiarity in the word’s most literal sense.[349] The scene is intimate without being sexual. Aptly, when Abby and Mac kiss each other farewell, Brittles discreetly averts his gaze.

The film cuts to a scene outside. Olivia Dandridge walks towards Lieutenant Cohill. During their ensuing conversation, Olivia makes repeated verbal and non-verbal references to her outfit, inviting Cohill to look at her. But this is a decidedly different gaze-construction. Olivia is fishing for compliments; she wants him to acknowledge her looks, not the functionality of her outfit. Olivia wants to flirt: their exchange of gazes has a clear sexual connotation. Moreover, she wears a yellow ribbon in her hair, which she is eager to display. Like the lock of Lily

[348] At the same time, the graveyard sequence has equally provided enough evidence for the viewer to still care for her development.

[349] Abby even has a nickname for Captain Brittles (“Old Marchin’-through-Georgia”; 00:20:08-00:20:16) – an indicator of a character’s likeability (qua her proximity to the hero as expressed through the nickname) not only in Ford’s Western universe (cf. Wood, “RIO BRAVO & Retrospect 179).

Langtry's hair in THE WESTERNER, the yellow ribbon functions as another fetish object, the meaning of which is immediately explained to the viewer: As Cohill sheepishly suspects that Pennell has "branded" her with the ribbon (00:20:43-00:20:47), thereby declaring her Pennell's sweetheart, the ribbon is introduced as an object condensing hetero-romance and heterosexuality. The ribbon reifies the bond between a man and a woman in the army. However, inverting the ribbon's traditional meaning, Olivia wears the ribbon in her hair to suggests availability, not her faithful belonging to or remembering of someone special.[350] The film has her deliberately communicate mixed messages about her desire to flirt with and tease the young lieutenants. Aptly, Olivia replies to Cohill's remark: "How do you know it isn't for you, Mister?" (00:20:48-00:20:51), an insinuation that Cohill receives with sincere happiness.

Suddenly, the scene is interrupted by Brittles, who storms out of a room which we infer must be the adjacent Major's office. Brittles, too, notices Olivia's ribbon. Asking her who it was for, she replies: "Why, for you, of course, Captain Brittles" (00:21:13-00:21:16), an answer which is at once jokingly false and profoundly true. In the course of the film, we will be made to understand that, while Brittles is not Olivia's object of sexual desire, she (metaphorically) wants, waits for, and learns to identify (or rather: remember) what Brittles represents: hegemonic white masculinity – something that Cohill, her real sweetheart, must emulate in order to eventually qualify as a veritable suitor.[351]

The scene continues: Brittles leaves, and, for a moment, it seems as if Olivia and Cohill confess their love to each other in a kiss, but their romance is stalled again, this time by Abby, who, to add to the romantic confusion, makes a passing comment about the ribbon, too. She thinks it is intended for Pennell. While this denies the romantic union of Cohill and Olivia for now – withholding narrative closure and thereby adding narrative suspense – Abby's remark also ensures that their union as the heterosexual couple is not consummated on sexual terms. Both characters must first approximate their respective gender ideals for their romance to become true. For now, supporting this reading, Olivia merely adds fuel to the fire by playing along with Abby's quip and Cohill's jealousy, enjoying the attention she receives from the rivalry between the two lieutenants over her, "toy[ing] with [their] affection" (McDonough 104).

What SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON does then, in a matter of minutes and within two consecutive scenes, is directly juxtapose Abby's representation of white femininity in relation to her husband and Captain Brittles (who are incidentally the two figures of masculine authority

---

[350] While the yellow ribbon has a myriad of iconographic significations, within the context of the U.S. cavalry, the ribbon usually suggests according to its likely Purtian origin: "A woman of destiny is under some sort of test or trial as she waits for her beloved to return. Will she be true to him? This seems to be the lingering question and the basis for a great unfolding drama" (*Wikipedia*; 20 Oct 2020; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_ribbon#United_States>.).

[351] Supporting this reading, the film ends with Olivia, now married to Cohill, handing over a yellow ribbon to Brittles before he "makes his report" to Mary. Having learned, or, more precisely, remembered her part in the gender order, Olivia symbolically returns the object that condensed her 'faults' to the one who taught her to abandon them.

– one by rank, the other 'by nature') to Olivia's representation of white femininity in relation to the multiple suitors she entertains, both of which have been previously characterized as juvenile. Abby is faithful to her husband, loyal and totally willing to put herself in the service of the army.[352] Olivia, by contrast, entertains the notion of promiscuity. She is egocentric and vain, and reluctant to put herself in the service of the army. Darby succinctly summarizes the sequence: "[…] the women's assumption of military garb […] allows us to see that Olivia must gain character while the elder Abbey [sic] already has it. However, in both cases, these perceptions result only because of Brittles's actions with the women" (Darby 129). And later, he adds: "Olivia's greatest mistake is encouraging the two young officers in their romantic pursuit of her – an attitude that, in spite of Brittles's remark that there is never anything wrong with embarrassing junior officers, strikes at the overall cohesion of the cavalry society" (ibid. 145).

Another example, one which I already referenced earlier in a different context, will substantiate my point: Brittles leads the cavalry regiment, including Abby and Olivia, through open terrain. The soldiers have dismounted their horses and walk beside them. The camera cuts to Cohill and Olivia walking side by side. Cohill starts a conversation:

> Lt. Cohill: Romantic, isn't it, Miss Dandridge? Guidons gaily fluttering, bronze men lustily singing, horses prancing, bunions aching.
>
> Olivia: Must you always be so… so vulgar, Mr. Cohill?
>
> Lt. Cohill: The Cavalry doesn't go in for refinements, Miss Dandridge.
>
> Olivia: Cavalry! This ridiculous business of dismounting and walking every hour or so. Might as well be in the… the infantry.
>
> Lt. Cohill: And we soon would be if we didn't ease these mounts. Why didn't you ride in the wagon?
>
> Olivia: No, thank you. Why doesn't the army put springs in its wagons?
>
> Lt. Cohill (sarcastically]: Oh, the men said they'd rather have finger bowls.
>
> Olivia [sarcastically]: I think that's terribly funny, Mr. Cohill.
>
> Source: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. John Ford. Argosy Pictures. DVD. 00:25:30-00:26:17.

---

[352] The film will repeatedly present situations where Abby will prove she is every bit as good and tough as the soldiers, most prominently in a later sequence in which Abby assists the doctor in surgery while the regiment is forced to move on through open territory. Surgery is successful, the patient survives. Brittles sincerely thanks her, awarding her with what the film considers the highest praise (cf. McDonough 107): "Thanks, soldier" (00:44:32-00:44:34). Her outward appearance, her active, professional involvement in army matters, her presence in open territory, suggest an element of gender mobility, as Abby performs conventionally masculine acts within a conventionally masculine sphere. Yet the film marks this as *masquerade*, an act she must put on in order to survive and further the cause of the community. After the completion of the task Abby sits on the edge of a wagon, visibly shaken though still somewhat composed. She has managed to get the job done, but it has taken a heavy toll on her. Clearly, the film suggests in showing her exhaustion, this task has gone against her 'nature'.

So far, the sequence is reiterating the narrative patterns of before: Olivia is not army. She complains, she has no understanding for military procedures (like the necessity to rest the horses), she even openly disrespects the cavalry by comparing the regiment's protocol to regular infantry soldiers. To top it off, she utters the most out-of-place wish for luxury – springs in a cavalry wagon – which Cohill teasingly debunks for what it is (in the film's logic): the request of a spoiled Eastern lady, used to comforts and etiquettes that are simply unsuitable for the West and the army. More to the point, Cohill's question – "Why didn't you ride in the wagon?" (00:26:13-00:26:15) – implies that this, according to protocol, would probably be the appropriate place for Olivia, which she most likely refused for her outlandish and gratuitous demand for comfort.[353]

Then the film abruptly cuts to a position farther back the cavalry train, showing Abby, sitting precisely where, in the logic of the film, army women are supposed to sit: in the back of a wagon, doing precisely what army women are expected to do, which is putting themselves in the service of the regiment, being "helpmates to their men" (McDonough 107). Sure, she complains, pointing out to the doctor sitting next to her how she desperately tried to cultivate a garden for the past ten years, yet how all her attempts were in vain since the army demanded she and her husband never stayed in one place long enough to see her efforts bloom. Still, her smile when she sighs: "Oh, the army!" (00:26:25-00:26:27) implicates just as much reverence and loyalty as it explicates her bitterness.

The camera cuts back to Olivia and Cohill, now arguing. Again, the scene is almost about to get out of hand, like earlier in the picnicking scene, with Olivia deliberately trying to manipulate Cohill and Pennell. And again, Brittles takes notice of the quarrel that is happening behind his back and deescalates the situation, this time by ordering Cohill to join Pennell at the rear of the train, leaving Olivia to walk next to Top Sergeant Quincannon.

While the former example contrasted Miss Dandridge's and Abby Allshard's (not-)being army by relating them to men, the second example concentrates on their relation to the army itself, though both aspects are semantically intertwined. First, the film, by an immediate juxtaposition of Olivia and Abby, and their respective attitudes towards the army, shows that Olivia still is a far cry from emulating the habitus that is expected of her (represented by Abby). She does not put herself in service of the community. Instead, she expects the community to

[353] In his reading, Marshall Deutelbaum has also suggested that the sequence directly links to discourses of postwar America: "Cohill's attempt to force Olivia to see her experience more realistically seems designed to prevent her from perpetuating the naïve romantic myth of the gallant cavalry that might lure others to enlist with mistaken visions of heroic battles waiting to be fought. As SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON finally demonstrates, day-to-day life is more routine than heroic and differences settled without bloodshed can be more satisfying than the carnage of unnecessary battle. […] [t]he film's interest in debunking romantic hyperbole about military life, together with its celebration of accommodation and disengagement in place of direct conflict, suggest that this well-structed narrative is less a pacifist work than a timely and sensitive comment on the problems of readjustment faced by soldiers returning to civilian life" (70).

accommodate her. And, to make matters worse, she complains when community does not. Second, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON dramatizes that her promiscuous flirt with two lieutenants causes trouble within the community, with Cohill and Pennell making a vexing spectacle of their rivalry. In either case, the sequences illustrate how SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON consistently normativizes 'proper' femininity by subjecting women's behavior to the judgement of authoritative men, and by pointing out the potential and actual consequences of improper conduct for the formation and/or stabilization of community.

About an hour into the film, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON reaches the turning point for the triangular romance – that is, the point when Cohill, Pennell, and Olivia finally begin to embrace social demand for them to 'be army'. At the most inappropriate of times – after the burial of a group of soldiers who died because Brittles's regiment was late to support them against a Native American attack (as a result of being slowed down by the necessary precautions Brittles had to take with the two women in his company) – Pennell and Cohill decide to violently fight for their right to 'claim ownership' over Olivia. Again though, Brittles steps in. This time, however, his tone is angrier, more authoritative, more direct:

> Brittles: Mr Cohill. It is a bitter thing indeed to learn that an officer who has had nine years experience in the cavalry, the officer to whom I am surrendering command of this troop in two more days, should have so little grasp of leadership as to allow himself to be chivvied into a go at fisticuffs while taps still sounds over a brave man's grave. God help this troop when I'm gone!
>
> Source: SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. John Ford. Argosy Pictures. DVD. 00:55:17-00:55:37.

When Pennell and Olivia try to explain themselves and come to Cohill's defense, Brittles cuts them short and harshly sends Olivia back to the troop area. Brittles spits out, presumably from chewing tobacco, in the direction of where Olivia left the scene, underscoring his disgust for her behavior. Next, he gives orders to Pennell and Cohill and leaves. The scene ends with Cohill and Pennell ruefully apologizing to each other. Father has told the children off. They have exhausted his patience and they know it. But Brittles's lecture, his policing of the boundaries of intelligible gender performance, has also bound them together. They know what to do now.

William Darby has already hinted at how SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON eventually resolves the tensions created by the lieutenants' initial incompetence and Olivia's promiscuity. Recalling the connection between Mary and Olivia as established in the graveyard sequence, he writes: "Olivia clearly fits the mold, since her silhouette coincides precisely with the dimensions of a worthy predecessor; but she can measure up to such dimensions only by committing herself to Cohill and by being a proper army wife" (135). In other words, what is

required of her and Cohill in order to salvage the future of the fort (read: secure a harmonious existence and stabilize community) is to become a couple.

Yet first there are preconditions that must be met: rites of passage that attest to their eventual conformity with dominant conceptualizations of sexuality and gender. Olivia must relinquish her promiscuity and finally (and faithfully) commit herself to Cohill. Cohill, in turn, must prove his professional and authoritative qualities as a commanding officer. Accordingly, Brittles, in a subsequent scene, relieves part of his regiment to Cohill's command. The young lieutenant is to buy his superior officer enough time so that he can safely escort the women and wounded soldiers back to the post. Underscoring the notion that this act of authorization, of trusting the young man with his command, is a rite of passage signifying Cohill's reaching maturity and ascertaining adult masculinity, Brittles refers to him as "son", 'branding' the young man as one of his own and a successor in lineage (01:05:42-01:05:44). Moreover, for the first time in the nine years they have known each other, Brittles addresses Cohill informally by his first name, Flint – a sign that Brittles considers him an equal now.

As Brittles readies his part of the regiment to leave, Olivia runs to Cohill and they kiss. Finally, Olivia has openly confessed and committed to her love. This has essentially two implications: First, her public display of affection confirms her acceptance of the female habitus that is expected of her. She commits to the yellow ribbon in its original meaning: the sign of a faithful army wife-to-be who will anxiously await her sweetheart's return from a perilous mission. Her conformization with the image of idealized white femininity is complete. She commits to heterosexual monogamy. Second, as an immediate response to Brittles's entrusting Cohill with command, she in turn also validates Cohill's adoption of hegemonic masculinity. The idealized heterosexual couple, white woman and white man, reciprocally confirm each other's gender identity in their union, and stabilize social order by concealing this social construction as natural. Their kiss completes their transformation, their conformization. Olivia and Cohill are prepared to emulate the respective gender roles that are expected of them. No histrionics, no self-serving acts of insubordination: order is restored. They have become 'army',[354] "affirm[ing] the continuity of Army tradition" (Deutelbaum 64).

In his discussion of the Cavalry Trilogy, Russell Meeuf links discourses of space, mobility, and migration to representations of gender. Primarily assessing FORT APACHE, Meeuf writes:

[354] A subsequent shot very briefly reveals the total dissolution of the romantic triangle. After the kiss, Olivia mounts her horse next to Pennell. She looks at him and bares her feelings: "I guess that's how it is, Ross," to which he replies: "I understand" (01:06:36-01:06:38). Pennell has also learned what is expected of him: not to disturb the community's peace, not to upset or destabilize the monogamous heterosexual order.

> While all the members of Ford's frontier communities are migrants of one kind or another, once they are settled in the new social structures of fort life, gender roles assume specialized spatial functions. Men navigate the complex spaces of the frontier, wandering on patrols or scouting ventures that test their masculinity and then returning home to the fort and the comforts of domesticity. But women become synonymous with the community itself, creating a settled, domestic world that stands in opposition to the nomadic tendencies of the masculine sphere. (58-59)

First, I would like to propose that Meeuf's observations apply to SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON in very much the same way. Second, and more to the point, his assessment substantiates the notion that Ford's film, however egalitarian and sympathetic with its treatment of women on one level, reveals profoundly conservative underpinnings when it comes to his mapping out of gender ideals. A far cry from the transgressive *femme fatales* or the sometimes distorted, sometimes compassionate insights into a traumatized male psychology of *film noir* and its Western hybrid-offspring, the gender universe in SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON is comfortably ordered and reassuringly clear-cut: an anodyne to the troublesome and disconcertingly mysterious postwar U.S. social world. Gender contingency, like Abby's donning of military garb and performing professional tasks in open spaces, is only temporary, and exclusively attributable to unprecedented circumstances.

Just as the oppositional spatial spheres that Meeuf identifies to have specific gendered connotations, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON's engagement with gender amounts to an initiation of juvenile, 'untamed' identity to a fixed set of roles that corresponds with a binary gender order. Ultimately, the characters' learning how to 'be army' transpires as nothing else than their learning how to conform with a system organized by patriarchal heteronormativity. Cohill's story unfolds as a young man's quest of learning how to assume male hegemony; Olivia's story unfolds as a young woman's quest of learning how to love hegemonic masculinity. The army provides the discoursive space wherein this process of learning 'proper' heterosexuality is made possible, thus projecting the rules and principles of one strictly hetero-patriarchal system (the military) onto another (postwar U.S. American society at large). Under the tutelage of the undisputed figure of authority – Captain Nathan Brittles within and John Wayne outside the narrative confines of the film – young Americans learn how to assume intelligible genders. In the process, they test the limits of heteronormativity, as they momentarily refuse to accept the roles society expects of them. Eventually however, they concede and see, in the film's logic, the overall benefit of the heteronormative matrix to themselves as the future nucleus of American society. Accordingly, McDonough writes about Olivia: "[H]er acceptance of Lieutenant Cohill's marriage proposal symbolizes her integration into the community" (104); in other words: her acceptance of institutionalized monogamous heterosexuality confirms the foundations of the system.

In her study “Woman’s Place: The Absent Family in Film Noir”, Sylvia Harvey has laid out that

> [i]n so many of the major and so-called ‘non-political’ American films, it is the family which has served a crucial function in inserting within the film narrative the established values of competitive, repressive and hierarchical relationships. The presence of family has served to legitimate and naturalise these values; that is, to present them as the normal, natural and unthought premise for conducting one’s life. Moreover, the representation of women has always been linked to this value-generating nexus of the family. The value of women on the market of social exchange has been to a large extent determined by the position of women within the structure of the family. Woman’s place in the home determines her position in society, but also serves as a reflection of oppressive social relationships, generally. (36)

PURSUED and SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON offer two decidedly different, yet undeniably cognate explorations of the postwar white American family, and women’s place within its structure, respectively. True to its *noir*-ish influences, PURSUED recapitulates the traumatic experiences of World War II and the difficulties of the readjustment period by situating the heterosexual couple within the context of a broken family (cf. Harvey 37-38). The film finds social stability in the transcendence – which is really only a replacement – of old familial habits, which it locates as the root and cause for war, trauma, and social instability. However, true to the optimism of the traditional Western formula, PURSUED shows how a new family re-instates itself through the white man’s self-authorization as a hegemonic masculinity. In the end, Jeb and Thorley as the heterosexual couple “are transformed into [father] and [mother], into [a family]” (ibid. 37). Though they dissociate themselves markedly from their parents, they take on the very same familial roles within the very same familial framework.

SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, on the other hand, envisions a strong, stabilizing familial network, emblematized in the “competitive, repressive and hierarchical” (ibid. 36) – but essentially inspiring and benign – system of the army. Finding its fatherly representation in John Wayne’s Captain Nathan Brittles, and its motherly equivalent in Mildred Natwick’s Abby Allshard, the film explores the difficulties to re-introduce a younger, more independent-minded generation to a social order defined by clearly demarcated, yet equally respectable, gendered spheres. As the young lovers, Lt. Flint Cohill and Olivia Dandridge eventually form the heterosexual couple, thus signifying their acceptance of and conformity with the heteronormative paradigm, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBONS exacts the conservation of ‘old’ ideals and celebrates their being passed on to the next generation. In this film, the army-as-family functions as a point of reference to inspire the next generation to re-shape and re-stabilize society in the image of those who returned as triumphant veterans. PURSUED flirted with revolution, only to rebound to conservativism. SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON advocates commemoration, and in the process finds reform.

4.5. Containment (1952-1961)

"You're tearing me apart!" (00:11:26-00:11:30)– this line from Nicholas Ray's REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE (1955) unquestionably constitutes one of Hollywood's most memorable moments. What is more, yelled by a desperate and tormented Jim Stark (James Dean) at his parents, these words also epitomize like none other the generational differences and frictions between Americans during the 1950s. Because of Jim's repeated verbal and physical abuse of his father Frank (Jim Backus), the film has achieved a certain notoriety for its stirring depiction of conflicting ideals of masculinity (cf. Mellen 213-4). However, as Michael Kimmel correctly points out, "[m]ost of the continuing cult audience seems to have misread the film […] as a celebration of rebellion against dull conformity" (249). The author clarifies:

> To be sure, the movie turns on Jim's confrontation with his ineffectual father […], who wears an apron in the scene as if to underscore his inability to relate to his desperately needy son. But it's also a celebration of the nuclear family – not the ones that the three teenage waifs were given by nature but rather the alternative family that they are able to create for themselves. Jim and Judy (Natalie Wood) find each other and together provide a home for Plato (Sal Mineo), whose wealthy parents are too preoccupied with their own lives to care at all about him. (ibid. 249)

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, therefore, and contrary to the assumptions one is tempted to make from its title, does not at all feature a rebel. As Jim, Judy, and Plato replicate an image of the nuclear family that is very much in tune with the one they are supposedly rebelling against, the film ultimately confirms traditional values and returns to a conventional bourgeois orthodoxy (cf. Mellen 191). Accordingly, Günter Giesenfeld notes that "Jim does not have a problem with the grown-ups' values, only with their inability to live them" (241). That notwithstanding, transgression and dissent in REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE do provide alluring, ambiguous fantasies – so long as, in the end, all transgressive elements are eventually rebuked. As perhaps one of the most popular and culturally significant films of the fifties,[355] REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE is highly indicative of the ideological trends of the decade, and thus provides a good starting point for the following analysis.

---

[355] Christine Sprengler has convincingly argued to differentiate between monikers like the 'fifties' and so on, and their "numeric counterparts" that stand for "the actual historical period of time between 1950 and 1959" (64n1, 39). Frances Smith summarizes her argument: "For Christine Sprengler, Kennedy's death brings about the end of The Fifties, the nostalgic construct brought about by the mythologizing efforts of the period itself, and reignited in the 1970s and 1980s. It is to be distinguished from the 1950s, which denotes the decade between 1950-1959 in all its complexity" ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: Re-Reading Gender in the 'Nostalgia Film'" 483n5). Accordingly, in this part of my analysis, whenever I speak of the fifties, I intend to reference the years 1950-1962.

The crucial point here is that the fifties constituted a decade of severe and intricate social tensions (cf. Cohan ix), perhaps contrary to public perception (cf. Mellen 186).[356] Writes Michael Kimmel: "In our stereotypic image the 1950s was an era of quiet, order, and security. What we like to remember as a simple time, 'happy days,' was also an era of anxiety and fear, during which ideas of normality were enforced with a desperate passion" (236). Showing just how variegated were the discourses that were beginning to reveal frictions, Costello illustrates:

> The early cold war (1947-1963) was an era of social change, with an emerging postindustrial economy, new planned communities, and the rise of a national security state of unprecedented power and scope. Within this context of change a new politics of group interests emerged, including the civil rights movement, a politics of gender, and early signs of a youth movement. […] Amid this social and political change, citizens, government, business, and cultural agents attempted desperately to cling to some form of consensus. (175-6)

What reverberates in Costello's observation about "change" and "consensus" is an image of fifties America struggling to reconcile seemingly mutually exclusive currents. In the fifties, an unprecedented desire for freedom surfaced in many Americans while at the same time global developments and the experiences of the recent past called for a new, unprecedented need for security. This created tensions in many aspects of people's daily lives.

Naturally, these tensions extended to and were intertwined with the conceptualization and negotiation of sexuality and gender (cf. Costello 176; cf. Gordon 2). Here, too, the fifties issued unparalleled challenges for the American people in terms of identity formation, asking them to attune established cultural ideals of gender to the changing times. The idea of marriage, for instance, though still a mainstay of white American heterosexual identity, suddenly constituted a contested field with often opposing agendas for men and women (cf. Dorr 28). As women were pushed back into the role of "the suburban housewife" (Friedan 11) and men felt obligated to become white collar husbands and fathers (cf. Kimmel 245-6), the hitherto pervasive cultural ideal of individualism was now more than ever at odds with the desire for domestic conformity, familial security, and demobilization.

Offering a different perspective, Bill Osgerby has argued in his study of men's magazines of the fifties that "[m]en were presented […] as falling easy prey to a new generation

[356] Sprengler has made the case that this popular misconception of the fifties has its roots in the obfuscating (mis)representations of the decade on television. As she writes that "the 1950s was the first decade to represent itself on a mass scale through a *visual* mass medium" (41; emphasis in original), Sprengler argues that the iconic signifiers and epistemes that comprised 'the fifties' eventually eclipsed the often-harrowing events that characterized the 1950s. Thus, we remember "poodle skirts, tail-finned cars, pink refrigerators, Levittown, paint-by-numbers, Ozzie and Harriet, jukeboxes, speckled turquoise formica, rock 'n' roll, Ike, hi-fi, and Marilyn Monroe" but seem to dismiss "a 1950s reality that also included abject poverty, the neglect and subsequent deteriorization [sic] of urban centres, institutionalized and politically-sanctioned racism, lynchings, misogyny, McCarthy witch hunts, the Korean War and nuclear anxiety" (40-41).

of women who were conniving to undermine and usurp American manhood". Osgerby's study reveals that many American men were experiencing difficulties to find their place in "a society where traditional certainties were collapsing." As men feared they "were being robbed of their status, power and virility", the "spectacle of masculinity *in extremis*" (28), as Osgerby terms it, transpired as but a symptom of the complexities of identity formation that specifically white American men had to deal with in the fifties. Osgerby continues:

> The period saw US society thoroughly recast by the explosion of consumerism, suburbanization, changes in gender roles and the rise of civil rights activism. While these changes were often occasion for optimism and confidence, they also generated tensions and disquiet, a sense of anxiety that was often condensed in debates about sexuality and gender roles. Especially prominent were concerns that the trajectory of social change was draining American men of their authority, vigour and sense of self. As historian James Gilbert puts it, '"What's Wrong with the American Male" became the preoccupation of public intellectuals, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists, as well as journalists and advice columnists'. (30)

Indicating just how far-reaching and impactful these anxieties really were, K.A. Cuordileone has related the specific rhetoric of this inherently gendered and sexualized discourse to a political one. Cuordileone points out the striking similarities of the anxieties and concerns of (and about) white American men to another prevalent scare of the time:

> American males had become the victims of a smothering, overpowering, suspiciously collectivist mass society – a society that had smashed the once-autonomous male self, elevated women to a position of power in the home, and doomed men to a slavish conformity not wholly unlike that experienced by men living under Communist rule. ("'Politics in the Age of Anxiety'…" 522-3)

Correspondingly, Alan Nadel and other scholars have shown how a certain rhetoric device, originally employed by the U.S. government to label their political efforts against Communism and Soviet Russia's expansionism, equally pertained to discourses of gender and sexuality: *containment* (Costello 176; Kimmel 236; cf. Nadel 2-3). Suggesting that the containment of sexuality, in fact can be considered "congruent to and commensurate with the American foreign and domestic policy of containing communism", Nadel explicates:

> This containment of sexuality permeated the full spectrum of American culture in the decade following the war and contributes to explanations of such varied cultural phenomena as strictly censored television programming, the drop in average marriage age, the suburban housing development, the public elaboration of dating etiquette, and the rigidly constrictive and restrictive structure of female undergarments. (117)

"Perhaps nowhere," writes Steven Cohan, "are those tensions in greater evidence […] than in the era's movies" (ix; also cf. Biskind 4, cf. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* 97-98; cf. Mellen 190). Films like GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES (Howard Hawks, 1952) ON THE WATERFRONT (Elia Kazan, 1954), REAR WINDOW (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH (Billy Wilder, 1955) or THE MAN IN THE GREY FLANNEL SUIT (Nunnally Johnson, 1956), all from various angles and to varying degrees of realism, thematized the clash of cultural ideals of gender. With regards to film melodramas of the fifties, Benshoff and Griffin write that "[m]any of them acknowledge that 'something is wrong' with gender relations while trying desperately to maintain traditional values" (233). The authors elaborate:

> Actors like Marlon Brando, James Dean, Montgomery Clift, and Paul Newman created characters that were introspective, tied in emotional knots, and yearning for a sense of release from the stress of conforming to a set of expectations about traditional masculinity. In their films, these men cried, had emotional outbursts and mental breakdowns. This was a far different image of men than had been promulgated during the previous 30 years of Hollywood. (274)

Yet these tensions did not only concern conceptualizations of (white) masculinuty. A quick look at Marilyn Monroe's part in Billy Wilder's THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH reveals that fifties Hollywood also promulgated a far different image of white femininity than in the thirty years before. The film further shows that this new image was at odds with an equally pertinent conceptualization of white femininity – that of the domestic housewife and mother. Sure enough, Wilder's film merely imagines the effects of changing images of white femininity from a white male protagonist (who suddenly finds himself trapped in a conundrum between sexualized overstimulation and, seemingly, a lack of release in the realms of domestic conformity). Still, THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH is reflective of apparent changes in the conceptualization, performance and negotiation of gender and sexuality in the fifties, as well as the conflicts that resulted from them.

These tangible rifts between binary configurations of gender – as well as the larger social and geo-political events that informed them – are also painstakingly evident in many fifties Westerns (cf. Weidinger 129). In fact, the Western ascended to become the most popular and prolific genre of the 1950s (cf. Buscombe 426-8; Corkin 127; Coyne 71), for one reason or another.[357] Richard Slotkin describes in *Gunfighter Nation*:

[357] To reiterate a methodological remark: All subsequent elaborations of mine are made exclusively with reference to the fifties A-Western, as well as to a limited number of of B-Westerns. Considering the already vast canon of this study, I cannot address cognate subjects like Western television culture or Western-themed comic series. Given their assumed target audience and profound impact on fifties America, these equally constitute highly relevant avenues for ideological-critical research. See, for instance, Grieve (2018), Wildermuth (2018).

The beginning of the Cold War in 1948 inaugurated the Golden Age of the Western: a 25-year period, regularly punctuated by the appearance of remarkable films, that saw the genre achieve its greatest popularity and that ended with its virtual disappearance from the genre map. The rise and fall of the Western mirrors the development of the Cold War and its sustaining ideological consensus […]. During this period there was a more or less continual exchange of symbols, themes, and concerns between the discourses of politics and movie production. The genre provided a frame in which alternative approaches to the political and ideological problems of the Cold War era could be imaginatively entertained. (347)

Although this does not monologically explain the Western's extraordinary popularity in the fifties (cf. Weidinger 126-7), the historical correlation between geopolitical events and the rise and fall of the Western as described by Slotkin and others is certainly a point worth noting. The genre's aptitude to mirror and incorporate *containment*, *expansionism*, and other themes of Cold War ideology, whilst in many cases explicitly "refus[ing] political allegory" (cf. Mellen 192), certainly helps justify the Western's preeminent position in American popular culture in the fifties. Offering a similar explanation, Cohan has described with reference to several historians that the 1950s can be regarded a "period of self-examination" (x; also cf. Mellen 192). And although fifties Hollywood in general shows a great proclivity for self-examination, the Western – due to its inseparable link to American myths of national and gender identity – has proved to be most accommodating for such processes.

This, in turn, helps explain why fifties Westerns have consistently attracted the interest of academics. Especially those scholars pursuing ideological-critical research have found plenty ground to cover, in particular with regards to the genre's representations of gender. Consequently, the fifties Western constitutes an already well-researched field that very nicely reflects the ubiquity and diversity of the genre in its time.[358]

As a result, I will discuss in the following two films that might not necessarily be considered canonical: THE NAKED SPUR (Anthony Mann, 1953) and THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (John Sturges, 1960). I believe, however, that these films address and negotiate the crucial gender-political dynamics of the decade in exemplary fashion. I will add new perspectives to the scholarship of the genre where I can, refer to points well-made when appropriate, and

[358] Several articles and entire monographs have been written about the figureheads of the genre – Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Delmar Daves, John Ford, Randolph Scott, James Stewart, John Wayne – as well as the canon of films they produced: THE GUNFIGHTER (Henry King, 1950), HIGH NOON (Fred Zinnemann, 1952), SHANE (George Stevens, 1953), JOHNNY GUITAR (Nicholas Ray, 1954), THE MAN FROM LARAMIE (Anthony Mann, 1955), THE SEARCHERS (John Ford, 1956), THE BIG COUNTRY (William Wyler, 1958) RIO BRAVO (Howard Hawks, 1959), WARLOCK (Edward Dmytryk, 1959), THE MAGINIFICENT SEVEN (John Sturges, 1960), THE ALAMO (John Wayne, 1960).

generally bring together different arguments made by a host of researchers and relate them to the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

A true methodological inspiration to this section has been Jennifer Peterson's article "The Competing Tunes of JOHNNY GUITAR: Liberalism, Sexuality, Masquerade", in which the author not only surveys a set of values and dynamics that are highly relevant to my own study in a pivotal 1950s Western, but also acknowledges, even emphasizes the centrality of respecting conflicting ideological strands in film analysis. Peterson writes:

> JOHNNY GUITAR is hard to pin down. To a greater degree than many films it supports multiple and contradictory discourses, and analysis of it has usually focused on one or another discursive level at the exclusion of others. A responsible reading of the film must recognize these oppositions, for this polyvalency is its key. (322)

I contend, with reference to the general cultural currents I have outlined above, that the kind of oppositions Peterson convincingly discerns in JOHNNY GUITAR (Nicholas Ray, 1954) are indicative of the fifties Western, and – by extension and to varying degrees – indicative of U.S. society in the fifties. Only by respecting these oppositions, these seemingly mutually exclusive dynamics, these paradoxical ideological strands, can one attempt to approximate a representative reflection of fifties U.S. as observed through the prism of the Western film.

In my discussion of THE NAKED SPUR, I will show that the film on the one hand expresses a trenchant critique of excessive individualism as a cornerstone of hegemonic masculinity. At the same time, however, Mann's film defends male hegemony and heteronormativity as society's organizing principles in its suggestion that heterosexuality, domestic conformity, and the self-subjugation of women reflect a societal consensus and thus constitute a necessary compromise, according to which society must be re-organized in order to work.

In my discussion of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, I will demonstrate that the visual representation of male hegemony and white American hegemony reveals striking structural similarities, and I will argue that in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN these similarities are consciously deployed to arbitrate the United States' unprecedented imperialist involvement using the familiar language and iconography of discourses of gender. At the same time, however, using basic elements of postcolonial theory, I will show that THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is reflective of the irritations caused by an ideological paradox: Deeply embedded in the practice of empowering an ethnic subaltern (like the white Americans do the peaceful Mexican villagers in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN) lies the conviction that power (or the representation thereof, coded in terms of gender and ethnicity) can be imitated, can be appropriated, can be resignified, and is thus evidently performative. Yet this realization stands diametrically opposed with the ideological mission of legitimatizing white male authority by naturalizing it. Unravelling these

seemingly mutually exclusive currents, my reading of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN will add nuance to the established interpretations of the film and situate its dynamics within the bigger picture of the fifties Western, specifically, and the developments of the generic formula at large. As such, both THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN and THE NAKED SPUR are reflections of a changing American society enmeshed in the opposing socio-cultural currents of past and present, of individualism and domestic conformity, of the aporia of heteronormativity.

4.5.1. Heterosexuality as Compromise: THE NAKED SPUR (1953)

Anthony Mann can without question be regarded one of the most significant and most influential directors of Westerns in the 1950s (cf. Bayer 145-7; cf. Fuller 40). The eleven[359] Westerns he helmed between 1950 and 1960 are indicative of the genre's "shifting […] from the myth of foundation to a concern with social transition" (Pye, "The Collapse of Fantasy" 168; with reference to Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* 246-7). As such, they consistently address "the passing of the Old West into modern society and the Western hero's increasingly complex and ambiguous relationship to that process" (ibid. 168).

Concomitantly, Mann's Westerns in the eyes of many "represent the essence of what is now referred to as the psychological Western subgenre" (Indick 116). His Westerns are psychological in the sense that their main narrative drive results from what happens with the 'inner' of his characters, while 'outer' events transpire as manifestations of the characters' 'inner' state (cf. Bayer 165). Accordingly, Jeanine Basinger notes: "The remarkable thing about the Mann western is that physical space becomes the equivalent of psychological space" (71). Fuller similarly observes: "The baleful wilderness of these films […] gives the journeys of Stewart's obsessives a metaphysical depth" (40). Mann's cinema reveals a clear continuation of the narrative and stylistic peculiarities of the *noir*-Westerns of the 1940s.[360] This includes the director's way of representing gender.

THE NAKED SPUR – his fifth Western – falls into Mann's defining phase as a director of Westerns. According to Jeanine Basinger, the film, in conjunction with BEND OF THE RIVER (1952), THE FAR COUNTRY (1955) and THE MAN FROM LARAMIE (1955), comprises the core of his directorial oeuvre (cf. 71), and, according to Jim Kitses, it is THE NAKED SPUR (among others) that shows Mann had "arrived at the summit of his personal authority and expressiveness" (*Horizons West* 141). Aptly, THE NAKED SPUR features as the central protagonist James Stewart, Mann's protégé actor and favorite vessel.[361]

---

[359] Ten, depending on whether one considers Mann's remake of CIMARRON (1960) a 'true Western' (cf. Basinger 71).
[360] Incidentally, Mann's first directorial efforts were, in fact, *films noir*.
[361] Dennis Bingham has illustrated that in casting James Stewart as the Western hero, "an actor with a 'feminine' image" (57) in a reputedly masculinist genre, Mann's Westerns engage in discourses of

Scholarship of Anthony Mann to date has been relatively scarce considering the significance of his contribution to the genre's development during the 1950s.[362] Jim Kitses's insightful discussion of the director's core themes in his seminal work *Horizons West* certainly ranks as one of the most vital contributions to the scholarship of Mann's Westerns.[363] In keeping with his genre-theoretical approach, Kitses concentrates on the overarching thematic coherence of Mann's directorial efforts rather than discussing film by film in detail. Kitses delineates the motif of *hysteria* in THE NAKED SPUR's main character, Howard Kemp (James Stewart). He discusses the film's focus on physicality as well as its moral ambiguity as features that are emblematic for the director's oeuvre (*Horizons West* 139-71). Yet Kitses's emphasis on aesthetics means that he rarely links these features to the socio-political context of the 1950s, let alone to developments in representations of gender that influenced or drew inspiration from aspects outside the cinematic universe.

By contrast, Douglas Pye in his article "The Collapse of Fantasy: Masculinity in the Westerns of Anthony Mann" points out the shift in representations of masculinity from "fantasy figures of supreme completeness" towards "a nightmare of psychological trauma, violence and hysteria", Pye retraces Mann's recurrent motifs and persuasively denotes them as indicators of the genre's transformation during the 1950s (Pye, "The Collapse of Fantasy" 170).

Recently, German-speaking film scholarship has produced another nuanced discussion of Anthony Mann: Ines Bayer's *Anthony Mann: Kino der Verwundungen* (2019). In her chapter on Mann's Westerns, Bayer groups his films into thematic units and discusses

---

sexuality and gender politics (cf. ibid. 58) (This constitutes an interesting parallel to Gary Cooper's sexually ambiguous star persona of the late 1920s and early 1930s; see above). Accordingly, Benshoff and Griffin have observed: "[…] Jimmy Stewart had risen to popularity in the 1930s and 1940s playing shy, idealistic young men who epitomized the ideal average American 'Joe.' In the 1950s, however, Stewart increasingly played men with psychological scars, men who were trying a little too hard to pretend that everything was fine and that they were still in control of their lives. In several films directed by Alfred Hitchcock […], Stewart's all-American guy was twisted into an obsessed neurotic. In Westerns directed by Anthony Mann […], Stewart's cowboy heroes verged on psychosis in their quest for control and vengeance" (274). Ines Bayer concurs in her discussion of THE MAN FROM LARAMIE (1955): "It may have been the corporeal insufficiencies that drove Stewart's Westerners in the direction they eventually took: to the persistent, careworn, neurotic. Mann understood to develop tension from the discrepancy between the image of the ideal body of the Westerner and the reality of Stewart's body, thereby addressing deficit straight on" (156; Transl. T.S.).

[362] Kitses speculatively attributes this to the director's early death in 1967 (cf. *Horizons West* 165).

[363] Kitses concludes his discussion with a critical survey of other approaches towards the subject. As the most notable contributions, Kitses lists Jeanine Basinger's discussion of Mann's Western films in her comprehensive structural analysis of the director's work, as well as Paul Willemen's 1983 essay 'Looking at the Male', whose psychoanalytical readings he dismisses for Willemen's tendency to give undue preference to a film's "Freudian undercurrents" while neglecting their dramatic substance (*Horizons West* 168). While Willemen's elaborations about doubly coded, at times conflicting gaze constructions are certainly significant with regards to queering representations of the male body, I concur with Kitses's verdict on Willemen's contribution, seeing that the author is more interested in making a general, psychoanalytical point about gaze constructions than the idiosyncrasies of Anthony Mann's cinema. Lastly, Kitses mentions Dennis Bingham's study of masculinity, whose discussion of *masquerade* and *performance* are predicated on the notion of a direct connection between "Stewart's career and star image" (ibid. 168). For another succinct overview on scholarship on Anthony Mann see Bayer (19). For another particularly interesting take on BROKEN ARROW see Hearne (126-59).

them accordingly. In centering Mann's penchant for extreme physicality above all (147), Bayer retraces the genre's transformation from its naïve roots to the sceptic 1960s in the example of Mann's accentuated corporeality (155).[364] Bayer begins her elaborations with a succinct assessment of the tropes of the classic Western formula (147-55) only to subsequently contrast them with Mann's variations (or deviations). Therefore, her study implies a difference in style and tone that is at once emblematic for the 1950s Western and points towards a transformation of generic conventions. As she intersperses her analysis on several occasions with references to pertinent theoretical concepts she burrows from psychoanalysis and gender theory, these transformations prominently include representations of gender. However, Bayer, too, does not explicitly contextualize the aesthetic or ideological peculiarities of Mann's Westerns as reflections of changing socio-political tides in 1950s America.

This study will pick up where these previous examinations of Anthony Mann's Westerns have left off. I will show on the following pages that, much like PURSUED, if far more excessive, THE NAKED SPUR is at battle with the discrepancy between the world from which men embarked to war and the world to which they returned. However, whereas PURSUED dramatized that seemingly new ideals of gender lay just beyond the horizons, THE NAKED SPUR is by far more fatalistic. Mann's film speaks of irreconcilable frictions among men and between a binary set of genders, mirroring the erosion of individualism and domestic conformity as cultural ideals. Yet the film's resolution is informed by a profound structural conservatism that reflects the "hegemonic narrative" of the time: containment (Costello 176; Kimmel 236; cf. Nadel 2-3).

This will be the vantage point for the following analysis: In a first step, I will demonstrate that the culturally pervasive tensions between individualism and domestic conformity are evident in THE NAKED SPUR and describe how they transpire narratively as well as visually. In a second step, I will elaborate how THE NAKED SPUR advocates to resolve these tensions via strategies of containment. Lastly, I will contextualize these processes as reflections of the socio-political discourses of the time encoded primarily in the language of gender and sexuality. This way, I will illustrate how THE NAKED SPUR in exemplary fashion tries to reconcile the gender-political rifts of the 1950s, as the film attempts to stabilize heteronormativity and male hegemony against better judgement. By this I mean that the film openly reveals the inadequacies of heteronormativity to comprehensively explain and heal the attrition caused by excoriating, seemingly mutually exclusive ideals of gender and sexuality, dramatizing in its markedly desperate recourse to the conventional heterosexual couple formation the shortcomings of this monological, monolithic ideological narrative. In THE NAKED SPUR, (heterosexual) love is not *the* answer. It is not a universal remedy.

---

[364] Emphasizing Mann's significance for a discussion of the 1950s Western, Bayer writes: "Mann was substantial to […] the Western hero's rebirth. Above everything else, the crisis of the hero manifested itself in his body, which became the arena for negotiations of modern identity" (147; Transl. T.S.).

“A herd of bachelors”

THE NAKED SPUR begins *in medias res*. Once the opening credits have rolled through, we see a white man, photographed from behind as he is climbing a knoll. He has detected smoke on the other side. The opening music fades out and the camera cuts to an elderly man saddling his donkey – as we hear the voice of James Stewart ordering the old-timer from atop the grassy ridge: “Don’t move! Turn around.” The James Stewart character – as-yet unnamed – approaches the old-timer, holding him at gunpoint. Is this a hold-up, we wonder? He searches the old man, who later introduces himself as Jesse Tate (Millard Mitchell). Stewart’s character anxiously rummages through Jesse’s belongings and begins to interrogate him: “Fixin’ to meet somebody?” Jesse’s reply is wordy but innocent. Sensing his captor’s unease, he attentively surmises: “Looks like you’re the one expecting company.” At last, Stewart’s character decides the old man is harmless and lowers his gun. Eventually, he reveals his name, Howard Kemp. He produces a handbill of a man named Ben Vandergroat (Robert Ryan), an outlaw from Kansas who allegedly killed a marshal. This is who he is looking for, he tells Jesse. So, is Howard Kemp an overly cautious peace officer hunting down a criminal, we are inclined to think? At least Jesse assumes he is. But in response, Kemp falters, “momentarily arrested in the action of stuffing the paper back into his pocket” (Bingham 59), if only for a second. The incongruency between Jesse’s conjecture and Kemp’s suspiciously confused, guilty look, makes us doubt that he is sincere. Yet if Kemp is neither law nor outlaw, what is he? And what exactly is he after? (00:01:19-00:04:39).

In many ways, this opening sequence sets the tone for the rest of the film. Aesthetically, the sequence – using only minimal camera movement and very few cuts from opening credits to the disclosure of Howard Kemp’s name and ostensible goal – exemplifies Mann’s visual style, “based primarily on composition, not editing” (Basinger 70), “preferring mise-en-scène to montage” (Bayer 170; Transl. T.S.). Narratively, much of THE NAKED SPUR’s suspense results from the viewer’s ignorance about Howie’s true motivations, which the film reveals only bit by bit, obstacle after obstacle, and often in small, subtle-yet-powerful gestures like Howie’s confused look in the scene above. Subtextually, as we experience Howie to be reluctant to reveal any kind of information about himself or his motives, the film invites the viewer to distrust its hero just as much as the hero distrust everyone he meets.

Trust and trustworthiness – that is, the lack thereof – are major issues that thematically characterize the relations, especially among the male characters of the film.[365] In THE OUTLAW, acts of distrust could be shrugged off by repeated demonstrations of individual skill and counteracts of deception, in keeping with the film’s grotesque atmosphere. THE NAKED SPUR,

[365] Indeed, this is a motif that resonates throughout the most significant Westerns of the 1950s, see for instance, HIGH NOON (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) or RIO BRAVO (Howard Hawks, 1959).

however, engenders a pandemonium of unease among its characters. What is more, THE OUTLAW used the *trust*-trope to illustrate and, in a way, showcase men's allegedly perennial urge to best themselves, identifying inter-male competition as a decisive feature of the contemporary cultural ideal of white masculinity. All characters in Mann's film, by contrast, especially Howie Kemp, suffer physically and mentally because they cannot and will not trust anybody. Indeed, most virtues that the prewar years had causally linked to conceptualizations of white masculinity – like trust between men – are unattainable for the men in THE NAKED SPUR. They chase after an image of white masculinity that consistently eludes them, that is forever out of their reach. In the same way as Douglas Pye has described the dynamics of another Mann Western, THE FAR COUNTRY, in THE NAKED SPUR, too, "the transcendence available for heroes in earlier forms of the genre, of confident action and perfected moral identity, is precisely what Mann denies" ("The Collapse of Fantasy" 169).

In THE NAKED SPUR, men are "on the verge of a nervous breakdown (McGee 109; Bayer 54, Transl. T.S.). In a genre that once revered the notion that men could easily punch each other in the face, then have a drink, and become best friends in a process, THE NAKED SPUR presents a homosocial environment characterized by an all-encompassing angst. Like Paul Wells has observed about the representation of masculinities in 1950s Sci-Fi B-movies, in Mann's Western, too,

> [T]ime and again, men […] demonstrate ineptitude in their attempt to secure power and take control of their circumstances. They have inherited the frontier myth and its patriarchal lore but they find themselves in a society where these values are subject to change and re-definition. Men can no longer trust their status and position. The world is in flux, and the promise of the future is destabilization […]" (182).

Similarly, Mann's film suggests that it has become progressively harder for men to make friends with other men – and for good reason: all male characters in THE NAKED SPUR are deceptive, shady, and bereft of sound moral judgement. They are fundamentally flawed.

Jesse, for instance, bears much resemblance with the "old-timer" stock character type of the classic Western (cf. Buscombe, *BFI Companion* 197). Often played by the likes of Walter Brennan, Jay C. Flippen, or George 'Gabby' Hayes, the old-timer ordinarily functions as a loyal and wise aide to the hero – a sidekick. Impaired by age and physical degeneracy, however, the old-timer is often portrayed as a somewhat laughable character that is therefore a subordinate but essentially trusted friend to the hero. By contrast, Jesse may be commensurate with this character type in that he is wise and physically inferior to the others. But he is thoroughly corrupt and, therefore, far from loyal.

Initially, twenty dollars buy Howie his services as a mercenary scout. We learn that Jesse has spent some time roaming the wilderness in search for gold but instead of earthly riches he found nothing but loneliness and dirt. The idea of striking rich quickly has eaten up most of his lifetime. Though he seems generally affable and amicable, we soon understand that his failure has sullied him. Aptly, the hollow promise of a hidden gold claim is all it takes for Jesse to betray Howie and tangle up with the verified outlaw Ben Vandergroat. Once provoked, Jesse's greed knows no bounds.

Roy Anderson (Ralph Meeker) is even more suspicious. Dishonorably discharged from the Sixth Cavalry because of "conduct unbecoming an officer" and deemed "unsatisfactory" as well as "morally unstable" by his former superior officer (00:08:48-00:08:53), Roy has a certified record of untrustworthiness and failure. The film emphasizes his moral corruption by showing him express highly problematic attitudes towards women and Native Americans.[366] He has a temper. He is self-serving and prone to excessive violence – all of which signifies that he lacks restraint and, as a result, is more of a (sexualized) threat to the group than he is of help. The grimacing smile he wears in even the most inappropriate situations is a demonic mask, suggesting good intentions when all he has in mind is his personal gain and dubious pleasure. In Roy's facial expressions the film condenses the anxieties that lurk in incoherence and incongruency: the friendly face of an officer, recalling the honorable gentlemen of John Ford's Cavalry Trilogy, is now but a distorted grimace, a false promise, a trap. Instead of male-male camaraderie and codified, orderly, intelligible terms of gender performance, this face now heralds sexual transgression, betrayal, and mania.

Ben Vandergroat, at first, seems like a mere pawn in Howie's passionate quest for revenge. In fact, for quite some time the film is ambiguous about the true nature of Ben. Especially as he is paired with a young white woman at the beginning of the film, the viewer is left guessing whether Ben's villainy is circumstantial or pathological. Soon enough, however, Ben's relationship with Lina (Janet Leigh) turns out to be thoroughly abusive, and THE NAKED SPUR ascertains that "[h]e is evil, through and through" (Basinger 91). Basinger continues: "His apparent ease is later revealed to come from a moral vacuum rather than grace under pressure. […] Everything in his life is like the stories he spins out as they ride – distanced, meaningless" (91-92). Ben is a sadist, a reckless egomaniac, and a cunning manipulator. He looks for weaknesses in others and tries to use them to play both ends against the middle, "scratch[ing] open sore spots," (00:21:03) as he calls it. Noticing, for instance, that Howie and

---

[366] This is a familiar trope of the genre, as I have noted above with reference to Gaylyn Studlar ("'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg…'" 147) and Charles Ramírez Berg ("The Margin as Center…" 80).

Lina share a dream of quiet domesticity, he repeatedly tries to sell her out to Howie to save his neck, even if that entails jeopardizing her life.[367]

Given this environment, it is certainly plausible that the film's hero character, Howie Kemp (James Stewart) experiences difficulties in forming social bonds with those men. That said, however, THE NAKED SPUR repeatedly indicates that Howie and the three men have much in common. Indeed, Howie shares Jesse's obsession to chase after an irrational goal, with Roy the inclination to excessive violence (cf. Basinger 92; cf. Bayer 171), with Ben the nihilist recklessness and an unhealthy dose of egocentrism. Arguably the film's hero, Howie shows indications of all these things, to varying degrees (cf. Indick 124). Like Errol Flynn's character in DODGE CITY (see 4.3.1.), then, THE NAKED SPUR compartmentalizes its (alleged) hero character to display *in excess* those characteristics that are irreconcilable with the hero.[368] Crucially, all these characteristics ultimately translate to practices of non-conformity, non-compliance, and a general disregard of the interests of the collective. Jesse's greed, Roy's transgressive lust, and Ben's nihilist mania all signify excessive individualism. These are men who have completely forgotten to care about anybody else but themselves.

It is here where the film departs from generic Western traditions. Since these characteristics are all indicative of moral degeneracy, THE NAKED SPUR markedly obfuscates the line between heroism and villainy, as several commentators have noted (cf. Indick 124; cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 148). Much of the film's energy results from the tensions and ruptures that arise when Howie shows his semblance with the villainous characters: THE NAKED SPUR thus calls into question both the normativism of the Western hero's representation of gender and the status of individualism as a key component thereof. Mann's film places "the genre's typical motifs of violence, masculinity and honor" (Indick 116) under scrutiny.

The prewar ideal of the classic individualist Western hero who could clear up the town with a little friendly assistance (see, for instance, DODGE CITY) had started to crumble with the rise of the *noir*-Western of the late 1940s. By the 1950s, THE NAKED SPUR illustrates, this image is delusional. One, because there are no friends. Like Gary Cooper's Marshal Will Kane in HIGH NOON, Howie Kemp in THE NAKED SPUR is all by himself, abandoned by a society that no longer supports his cause. More than that: THE NAKED SPUR indicates that the spirit he clings on to, the kind of individualism that mobilized Errol Flynn's Wade Hatton and in fact the community that backed him up in his endeavors, is harmful to men's mental and physical

[367] The individual failures of the three men – Jesse's to strike rich, Roy's to conform with army etiquette, Ben's to live morally upright – are coded in decidedly gendered terms. I will discuss the implications thereof in a later part of this section.

[368] To clarify: In a film like DODGE CITY, the emphasis of the hero's compartmentalization lay on establishing a *difference* that marked the central character, Wade Hatton, as a superior man in relation to his companions. In THE NAKED SPUR, the emphasis lies on establishing a *semblance* that marks the central character, Howie Kemp, as similarly flawed and morally unstable in relation to his companions.

health. In its most excessive realization, THE NAKED SPUR suggests, individualism corrupts men's moral integrity and dislodges then from community. Rather than make them desirable to women, thus precipitating heterosexual romance, in THE NAKED SPUR, individualism threatens to disqualify men from domestic conformity. On a narrative level, then, Mann's film rings down the curtain to the kind of excessive individualism Hollywood had promulgated before the war. The question is if THE NAKED SPUR's departure from this supposedly obsolete idea translates to a structural critique of (or a radical alternative to) conceptualizing gender.

Hysteria and Masquerade

Although he shows many villainous traits, Howie is not a villain. What separates Howie from the other, irreversibly doomed men is a redeeming, humanizing trait that none of them has: a genuine desire for a domestic life.[369] Unlike the others, Howie's ulterior motive for all the potentially transgressive acts he commits is that he desperately wants to give up the kind of lifestyle that makes him so much like the villains. He wants to leave behind his excessive individualism. In keeping with the pattern of compartmentalization and, for that matter, the film's psychological discourse, what transpires narratively as perennial (outer) conflicts with the other men is really only Howie's (inner) conflict with himself. It is the physical manifestation of the metaphysical coercion to exert excessive individualism, on the one hand, and his desire to call it quits, on the other. Howie is caught between these two opposites, individualism and domesticity, tugging him tirelessly and inexorably in one direction or another, until he tears. In Howie Kemp's conflict with domesticity and individualism, THE NAKED SPUR reflects genre history,[370] and exemplifies the aporia of heteronormativity.

To illustrate: About halfway into the film, in the film's arguably central scene (cf. Bayer 169), the group makes camp to give Howie a rest, as he is recovering from a gunshot wound in his leg. The camera shows an idyllic, pastoral image of the night-time landscape (the scene is photographed in day-for-night). Jesse is sitting at the campfire by himself. There is no diegetic music and no score. As the camera slowly descends, the viewer is invited to marvel the picturesque background: a quiet lake, surrounded by trees and crowned by a snow-covered mountain range. Suddenly, Howie shoots up into the frame of the camera, releasing

[369] Again, this has implications that the film articulates with a decidedly gendered subtext. This will also reverberate in a subsequent part of this analysis.
[370] In similar terms, Jim Kitses has described this pattern as characteristic for Anthony Mann's cinema. He writes: "The dynamic interplay of the concepts of individualism and communal responsibility within the form allowed Mann to return time and again to the strange neo-classic conflict of passion and duty that was always to preoccupy him. He was never to resolve the tension; and his fascination for the charismatic individual, the superior man, led him finally to the idea of transcendence, and, inevitably, the epic. Crucial, therefore, was the ambiguity of the Western's own attitudes towards these concepts, providing a structure of fruitful tension within which it was possible to achieve an art both personal and integrated" (*Horizons West* 141).

a blood-curdling scream: “Where are they? Where are they?” (00:40:17-00:40:20). The camera stays in medium shot, there is no cut to a close-up shot of Howie’s face. Mann chooses not to alienate the viewer’s experience of Howie’s torment by formal interferences; again “preferring mise-en-scène to montage” (Bayer 170; Transl. T.S.; also cf. Basinger 70). Instead, we are like paralyzed spectators, defenseless to the terror that unfolds. Howie twists and turns. He tries to stand up and run away in panic, his leg injury hampering the attempt. Roy and Jesse scramble to restrain him, holding him to the ground while Howie violently fights their grip, screaming in anguish all the way through: “Keep your hands off! I’ve got to find her! I’ve got to… I’ve got to find her!” (00:40:23-00:40:32).

When the men do not seem to be able to calm Howie down, Lina intervenes, resting a wet cloth on Howie’s forehead. She seems surprisingly calm; the situation does not unnerve her to the extent it does the men. The camera cuts to a medium close-up shot of Lina and Howie. His breath steadies as she cools his face. Then Howie begins to wail:

> Howie: Mary! Mary! Mary! [A soothing score begins to sound]. Mary. Don’t worry. The war won’t last a year. I’ll be home before you know it. There’s no sense getting married and then having to say goodbye, you understand that.
>
> Lina [posing as Mary to comfort Howie in his fever-dream]: Sure, I understand. Now, get some sleep.
>
> Howie: You can manage, Mary. The boys will take care of the stock. When I get back it'll be just like we talked about last night. You understand, Mary? You remember what you said?
>
> Lina: I remember. I said, ‘I'll wait for you.’
>
> [Howie sighs in relief.]
>
> Ben: He got what was coming to him! Half of Abilene know about it. I've heard of some big suckers in my time...
>
> Jesse: This ain't our affair!
>
> Ben: You know what he done? When he marched off to preserve the Union, he signed over his ranch to this gal so she could work it legal. Guess what? Come back to find out she'd sold it...used the money to run off with another fella!
>
> Lina: It's nothing to laugh at!
>
> Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD. 00:42:46-00:44:08.

It is in this scene that we finally learn why Howie truly hunts down Ben Vandergroat: While he felt obliged to do his patriotic duty in war, his fiancée, Mary, broke her promise to wait for him. Instead, she sold the ranch that he, as a token of his love for her and commitment “to a life of domesticity and responsibility” (Bingham 58), had signed over to her before he left. Mary then absconded with the money and married a different man. Howie returned from war a heroic veteran, but one without wife and home. Trying to undo the past, Howie is now

determined to make fast money as a bounty hunter in order to rebuy the land that had been stolen from him, return to the life of domesticity he so desires, and symbolically punish transgressive masculinity in the process; or, put differently, stabilize the vision of intelligible masculinity he learned to pursue and emulate. Yet as he tries to hold Ben Vandergroat accountable for what he considers to be wrong in this world – the semantic field of excessive individualism, disloyalty, nihilism – he himself must become the kind of man he so despises. The resulting conflict, we learn, begins to eat him up from the inside, causing him to crack.

To describe the point wherein Mann's heroes in general, and Howie Kemp in particular, crack, several commentators have borrowed from psychoanalysis the concept of *hysteria* (Basinger 91-92; Bingham 56-62). Though this entails a theoretical slant I do not necessarily subscribe to in this study, the concept, as for instance applied by Dennis Bingham and elsewhere by Ines Bayer, is helpful for approaching the dynamics that characterize THE NAKED SPUR's central male protagonist. Bingham uses the concept of *masquerade* to theorize the way Howie consistently tries to emulate male authority (cf. 62). Bingham gives the examples of Howie "mimicking the lawful authority of a sheriff, the ruthlessness of a bounty hunter, and the moral outrage of a righteous citizen" (62), all of which are discoursively established entities that signify male authority. The film then gradually debunks them by showing Howie's ineptitude to persuasively represent them, thus revealing the constructedness of these performances; that is, his *masquerade* of hegemonic masculinity.

Bayer then proceeds to relate Bingham's elaborations to a succinct, heuristic summary Freud's deliberations on *hysteria*, stating that, broadly speaking, "hysteria manifests where [Howie's] masquerade fails" (169, Transl. T.S.). These are those instances, when outer stimuli – provocations by others, physical exhaustion – affect Howie to an extent where he cannot restrain his 'inner' (cf. ibid. 169). In other words, according to Bingham and Bayer, *hysteria* – transpiring as outbursts of unfiltered, unrestraint emotion, like in Howie's primal scream of the scene above – denotes the state in which the authentic essence of the character rebels against and, ultimately, overrides the façade of Howie exerting male authority, of his compulsive attempts to emulate the construct of the symbolic male body. Bingham writes: "Stewart's restraint serves as a contrast to the moments when the character 'cracks,' revealing the toughness as a construction" (55). Accordingly, one may think of *hysteria* in THE NAKED SPUR as a concept to grasp those instances when Howie's profound desire for domesticity, his authentic 'inner', is at battle with the compulsive façade of individualism, his hollow 'outer', which circumstances coerce him to maintain. In these cracks, both the fragility and cultural/symbolic power of male hegemony and heteronormativity become visible.

In terms of the scene's gender-theoretical implications, several points are to be made here. Firstly, especially the latter half of the scene is particularly interesting considering the established academic discourse about Anthony Mann's visual style specifically, and gaze-

constructions in the Western generally. Previous researchers have already discussed what Paul Willemen originally claimed to have identified as Anthony Mann's characteristically "spectacular" way of "looking at the male" (209-12), albeit mostly with reference to Mann's staging of violence inflicted on the male body (cf. Willemen 211), a pattern that is unquestionably evident in THE NAKED SPUR. Kitses refers to it as "[…] Mann's distinctively physical style" (*Horizons West* 142). In this scene, however, we are allowed a different look at the male character, equally voyeuristic but propelled by a different incentive: introspection, a "self-examination" of "what it means to be a man" (Mellen 192).

In the scene we experience a very intimate moment between Howie and Lina partially from Lina's perspective. Fig. 42 shows us Howie in his fever dream from her point of view. With her forearm and hand reaching into the frame from bottom center, the camera almost directly looking at Howie (that is, almost directly establishing eye-to-eye level), this, I argue, qualifies as a first person shot. The reverse shot (Fig. 43), by contrast, shows us Lina's face slightly at an angle – hence, an abstracted, somewhat warped displacement of Howie's point of view. This is highly unusual, as the Western before has rarely approached its subject matter from an active woman's perspective – that is, it has rarely allowed viewers to engage with a man's psyche through the eyes of a woman, let alone allow its male characters this level of vulnerability, such as to be caught completely off guard, permitting the female gaze to enter his mind unchecked (cf. Berkenkamp 59-62). Lina penetrates his 'inner' and breaches what German literary scholar Klaus Theweleit in the 1970s labelled the male "Körperpanzer," a fascist utopian construct and cultural ideal of a new man, "his physique machinated, his psyche eliminated" (Theweleit 162; Transl. T.S.).

Yet, like Theweleit's study, monocausal and static positions like the one I just adopted often fall short of grasping the dynamic and processual nature of such scenes (cf. Schößler 137). Compare, for instance, Bingham's interpretation of the scene:

> The active female gaze is made plain so that it can be punished later for the threat it poses. The transgression represented by a female or gay male look (the two are certainly equated when it comes to the gaze – both are forbidden) at the man's body is very clear. Moreover, the male body itself is punished and mutilated for posing as an object for both male and female gazes. (57)

Such an interpretation, while highlighting the nuanced and meaning-laden peculiarities of gaze constructions and its implications for the male character, fails to take into account the relationship between characters that such a gaze construction seeks to establish. Shifting the active gaze from Howie to Lina has the profound effect that the viewer notices the ideological common ground between these characters. Adopting Lina's perspective, in shot and, to an extent, in reverse shot, allows us to comprehend visually what is exchanged between the

characters narratively: the underlying, undeniable truth of their mutual desire for a domestic life. In this scene, we are not looking at Howie *just* to learn about his vulnerability that manifests in his spell of *hysteria*. It is not *just* about "what it means to be a man" (Mellen 192). We are also invited to understand how deeply embedded this mutual dream is between Howie and Lina. This subtle camera arrangement foreshadows visually the intensifying-if-conflicted romance between them.

Fig. 42. 00:43:22. Fig. 43. 00:43:47.
Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD.

Secondly, with reference to the *masquerade*/*hysteria* dynamics outlined by Bingham and Bayer, the context of the scene provides ample evidence to corroborate their argument. Howie has been shot in the leg, the physical exhaustion of riding through the day is taking its toll during the night. Physical and mental afflictions coalesce (cf. Weidinger 129-30). He is too worn out to uphold the *masquerade* of individualism, of determination and physical toughness. His feverish nightmare signifies the surfacing *hysteria*. His 'inner' is vying with his 'outer', eventually breaking through in an outpour of emotion, revealing for the first time his sentiment for domesticity and the origin of his troubled mind: having been abandoned by his wife for a different man, a process he experienced as emasculation (cf. Bingham 62).[371] The viewer learns that, coming home from the war,[372] Howie had aspired to settle down, have neighbors

[371] It should be noted that this is not a narrative strand unique to Anthony Mann, as Martin Weidinger has shown (cf. 129), or even the fifties. The dynamics of treating (lost) women synonymously with (lost) property as tokens of (lost) male authority has consistently (re)surfaced throughout the development of the Western genre in its negotiations of gender (one might say as consistently as the attribution of alleged crises of masculinity). Likewise, the dynamics of enveloping the hero's *hysteria* in an involuntary confession to a woman – who simultaneously represents the ostensible remedy to his condition – is equally nothing new considering THE VIRGINIAN (1929), where the nameless hero was similarly shown to confess in a fever dream his unrestraint emotion to a nursing Molly Wood (here too, physical and mental ailments coalesced).

[372] The reference to a war experience that is in some way related to the configuration of postwar masculinities is still prevalent in the fifties. Characters and their representations of gender, specifically white men and their relation to the symbolic male body, are often heavily affected by experiences of violence, combat, war, as well as the anxieties that are commensurate with them (cf. Fuller 38). THE NAKED SPUR, too, reveals war as "the detrimental turning point in the hero's heretofore peaceful life" (Lenihan 109) (also cf. Weidinger 129).

(like he later discloses), be like the others and thus be at peace. Yet the fulfilment of this promise was taken away from him. Howie never found closure in domestic conformity. Instead, circumstances have forced him to retain the façade of the authoritative individualist, an image he is secretly tired of and that is therefore proving harder and harder to convincingly perform. Douglas Pye has identified these dynamics as typical of Mann's cinema, summarizing:

> In Mann's films, the contradictions that Ford displaced on to Doc Holliday [in MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, T.S.] are focused on the hero himself and become dramatised very intensely as a psychic split that is impossible to resolve. The terms of that division are essentially traditional. They are presented as competing images of masculinity: on one hand, the claims of settlement, civilisation and social responsibility, and on the other of wandering, wilderness and independence. ("The Collapse of Fantasy" 169)

Conceived of in this logic and considering the level of awareness that THE NAKED SPUR reveals about the constructedness of these competing images, Howie's spells of hysteria identify the fragility of heterosexual orthodoxy and translate to acts of insurgency against the self-contradictory gender doctrine of 1950s America (cf. Benshoff & Griffin 276).[373] As Benshoff and Griffin have elaborated, this pattern is emblematic for a plethora of films produced in 1950s Hollywood. The struggle of the male characters in THE NAKED SPUR exemplifies the dilemma of many American men, demonstrating "that living up to the masculine ideal was a difficult, if not impossible, task" (274).[374] What 1950s America expected of men – to become suburban, domestic, white-collar providers whilst retaining the image of the omnipotent individualist, "subordinating one's heroic vision to a dull routine" (Kimmel 245) – is what causes Howie to suffer consistently and snap occasionally. *Hysteria* is the articulation and visualization of his feeling inferior to a standard that he is asked to but cannot sustain.

THE NAKED SPUR addresses this predicament and evidently takes issue with normative masculinity as traditionally represented in the Western (cf. Pye, "The Collapse of Fantasy" 168). The film empathizes with men's struggle to adhere to a paradoxical dogma that demands they adjust their gender identity according to seemingly mutually exclusive virtues; that demands men become "other-directed" pluralists when all they ever knew was to be "inner-directed" individualists (Biskind 256, 251; with reference to Riesman, Glazer, and Denney's

[373] In this respect, THE NAKED SPUR also connects to more general political discourses of the time. John H. Lenihan remarks: "Whether a conservative bemoaned liberal deviance from the constitutional framework of limited government or a liberal faulted Eisenhower with inaction and drift, political criticism, like the intellectual-social criticism of rampant conformity and individual anxiety, connoted dissatisfaction with an America that had lost all sense of direction and purpose. America, it was believed, could ill afford such weaknesses at a time when the rest of the world either challenged or depended on U.S. leadership" (116-7). As Howie seemingly lacks both orientation and decisiveness to go one way or another, THE NAKED SPUR closely reflects the political climate Lenihan describes.

[374] Also see Biskind 250-77.

The Lonely Crowd). THE NAKED SPUR thus asks itself and its audience, as Pye puts it: “can a man be a man *and* settled?” (“The Collapse of Fantasy” 169).

Thirdly, the scene already foreshadows how the film will eventually attempt to reconcile the clash between individualism and domestic conformity. True to Western conventions, this element of ostensible closure is inextricably tied to the image of idealized white femininity, gradually approximated by the only female character of the film: Lina. More to the point, it is the recognition of a mutual desire for domesticity that promises salvation for Howie in that it reciprocally realigns his and Lina’s representations of gender with more conventional gender configurations. In addition, the way Lina’s representation of gender is administered to resolve Howie’s inner conflicts closely reflects the hegemonic narrative of the 1950s: containment.

The concept of containment provides an excellent tool to dismantle THE NAKED SPUR’s intricate subtext. In the following, I will discuss, first, the film’s representation of white femininity in Lina, and show in a second step, its relation to and implications for heteronormativity.

Fantasy Figures

In her discussion of masculinities in Hollywood films of the 1950s, Joan Mellen asserts:

> [O]ne would think that the films of the fifties would reflect the fear in the air, glorifying John Wayne and his style of masculinity with a zeal surpassing even the cavalry Westerns of John Ford. But this did not happen. It was the retrograde image of *women* in the fifties films that reflected the official mood of the day. Women were sent home from the wartime workplace where they had accumulated seniority, and were encouraged not to compete with but to serve men. (189)

Following Mellen’s observation, representations of white femininity are most revealing for an analysis of representations of gender in 1950s Hollywood cinema. By contrast, most researchers discussing Anthony Mann and his Westerns have not failed to point out that his films overwhelmingly engage in negotiations of white masculinity (cf. Weidinger 130) – Bayer terms this phenomenon Mann’s interest in the “conditio masculina” (52-54). Unfortunately, research of Mann’s cinema reflects this general tendency of his films. Yet as it turns out, Mann’s conceptualization of white femininity in THE NAKED SPUR offers intriguing insights and an accurate reflection of societal trends in the United States of the 1950s.

In the character of Lina, the film systematically denotes a certain set of values and attributes as allegedly ‘inherently feminine’, as causally inscribed to the female body. A closer look at THE NAKED SPUR reveals that the film retains a position of structural conservativism, despite its empathetic and seemingly liberal negotiation of discourses of masculinity, in that it employs white femininity and all its semiotics to contain transgressive white masculinity. Without doubt a product of the discourses of its time, THE NAKED SPUR’s representation of white

femininity is informed by a firm belief in gender coherence, heteronormativity, and male superiority that relies on women's self-subjugation. As the legitimacy of these concepts began to crumble during the 1950s, THE NAKED SPUR emphatically reinforces them.

When we first meet Lina, she is entangled with the outlaw Ben Vandergroat. We are left unsure about whether Lina has a redeeming influence on Ben, or whether Ben has a corrupting influence on her. Kitses certainly seemed to be convinced of the latter when he wrote that Lina was "a morally doubtful character" (*Horizons West* 144). However, I contend that Lina is profoundly benign and utterly aligned with conventional images of idealized white femininity – only her true colors come to light comparatively late in the film; that is, she is ultimately confirmed as an intelligible representation of white femininity. Those virtues that seem to put her in disrepute are eventually disambiguated as circumstantial or expedient. That she is associated with the wholly immoral Ben Vandergroat, for instance, is eventually disclosed as an act of unconditional loyalty, as Howie Kemp declares in a conversation with Lina. THE NAKED SPUR gradually removes the tarnishes imposed on her by others and culminates in an emphatic transformation that has her *become* the idealized white woman, even though the film simultaneously reveals that she has had the potential all along. Layer upon layer, the narrative peels off Ben's corrupting influence, incrementally liberating her from the polluting grasp of excessive individualism. The right white woman only comes to light in reciprocity with the right white man.

While the scene I discussed above is already indicative of these patterns, I will clarify in the following the concurrent construction and naturalization of Lina as the epitome of white femininity and warden of heterosexuality. First, the film addresses Lina's *difference* from Mary, and therefore, incidentally, her similitude to idealized white femininity. Having learned that Lina sat up with him all night, caring for him during his spell of feverish horror, Howie asks her incredulously:

> [Establishing shot of the two of them sitting together underneath a tree.]
> Howie: You sat up with me?
> Lina: Yeah.
> Howie: Why?
> Lina: Somebody had to. You was ravin' so nobody could sleep.
> Howie: Why should you care?
> Lina [insulted]: I don't. And I'd done it for a dog if he was sufferin'.
> Howie: Thank you.
> Lina: You're welcome.
> Howie: You said I was ravin'. What about?

[The camera cuts to a back-shoulder shot of Howie looking at Lina. The cinematography underscores that the following exchange is now about Lina, her gender performance, how Howie perceives her, and how we as viewers are therefore to evaluate her.]

Lina: Nothin' that made sense. You thought I was your girl. You kept calling me Mary. Uh, you were really outta your head. We ain't nothing alike, Mary and me.

[Cut to a back-shoulder of Lina looking at Howie, ascertaining Lina's moral integrity by relating what she is about to say to the viewer's Self and Howie's face as a projective foil.]

Lina: At least, that's what Ben said.

Howie: Ah Ben's just like all the rest of 'em. What does it even matter?

Lina: Well, he knows what she did.

Howie: What she did is her business.

Lina [emphatically]: She had no business selling your ranch!

Howie: Alright, you're different. You would've done it different. Well, that's, let it go…

[Cut to back-shoulder shot of Howie looking at Lina.]

Lina [softly]: How do you mean, I'm different?

[A romantic score softly begins to play.]

Howie: I mean you got a man. At least you stick to him.

Lina [defensively]: He's not my man!

Howie: Well, you with him, ain't you?

Lina: Not like you mean!

Howie: Alright, forget it.

Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD. 00:46:55-00:47:37.

The scene maps out a field of potent ambiguities around Lina. On the one hand, the film constructs an image of white femininity by pointing out the *difference* between Lina and Mary: Lina would have been loyal when Mary was not, which puts Lina in closer proximity to the cultural ideal of white femininity as in accordance with monogamous heterosexuality. Correspondingly, Lina promises sexual gratification – crucially, without acting it out – through her emphatic rebuttal of a sexual relationship with Ben ("He's not my man!"; "Not like you mean!"). The sexual energy, which the scene implies she most definitely exudes, is deferred until the climactic formation of the heterosexual couple.[375] The as-yet-unrealized promise of

[375] It should be noted, that in terms of outfit, haircut, or demeanor, Lina shares little with the visual excesses of more explicitly sexualized representations of white femininity. Compared to, for instance, THE FURIES (Anthony Mann, 1950, featuring Barbara Stanwyck), RANCHO NOTORIOUS (Fritz Lang, 1952, featuring Marlene Dietrich), RIVER OF NO RETURN (Otto Preminger/Jean Negulesco, 1954, featuring Marilyn Monroe) or JOHNNY GUITAR (Nicholas Ray, 1954, featuring Joan Crawford), to name but a few of its contemporaries, Janet Leigh's ingénue in THE NAKED SPUR seems almost demure. Whereas the other films in a way allow for the spectacularization of white female sexuality while eventually containing it to the realm of monogamous, heterosexual orthodoxy (cf. Faulstich, *Filmgeschichte* 167-8), THE NAKED SPUR is by far more conservative. Female sexuality is only acknowledged as a token for male authority. It has symbolic value but is not overtly showcased.

heterosex, in other words, holds white female sexuality in a fragile double bind, an ambiguous pattern described by Alan Nadel as indicative of 1950s containment culture:

> […] [T]he responsibility for this containment [of sexuality] in the postwar era fell on women, whose role was to resist and channel the 'natural' sexual energies of men. Female sexuality thus had the burden of supporting the monolithic goals of cold war America through the practice of duplicity: the woman had to attract and stimulate male sexual drives but not gratify them. Female sexuality was thus always double – it had to be the thing that would gratify a normal male's sexual desires for the rest of his life while not doing so during courtship; it had to signify abstinence and promise gratification; it had to indicate its presence through abstinence. (117)

I will briefly move my discussion to another film of the 1950s, Howard Hawks's RIO BRAVO, starring John Wayne and Angie Dickinson as male and female leads, because it most paradigmatically illustrates the pattern described by Nadel and thus exemplifies the sexual double bind that characterizes 1950s images of white femininity. Throughout the film, John Wayne's character, sheriff John T. Chance, has repeatedly flirted with the idea of settling down with the much younger Feathers (Angie Dickinson), but so far, he has eschewed commitment. As he enters her hotel room, she is dressed up wearing only undergarments and tights. Her appearance is highly sexualized and evocative, her body and its charms are put on display, presented to attract Chance's gaze as well as the audience's (Fig. 44 and Fig. 45). Yet, as Feathers reveals to Chance that she is about to perform in front of a saloon crowd in this outfit, their ensuing conversation reveals Feathers' predicament:

> Feathers [with reference to the tights]: […] [Y]ou don't like them?
> Chance: I didn't say that I didn't like them.
> Feathers: You don't want me to wear them?
> Chance: I didn't say that either.
> Feathers: Is it because they show so much of me?
> Chance [disapprovingly]: They certainly do that. […]
> Chance [as Feathers is about to move downstairs to perform]: Where are you going?
> Feathers: Downstairs.
> Chance: You better not.
> Feathers: Why'd I better not?
> Chance: Because I'm still sheriff. You wear those things in public, I'll arrest you. […]
> Feathers: Tell me something: These tights, now, why didn't you want me to wear them?
> Chance: Because I didn't want anybody but me to see you in them.
>
> Source: RIO BRAVO, Howard Hawks (1959). Warner Bros.. DVD. 02:12:00-02:14:28.

Fig. 44. 02:11:42. Fig. 45. 02:11:43.

Source: RIO BRAVO, Howard Hawks (1959). Warner Bros.. DVD.

Feathers even deciphers his seemingly contradictory expectations of her: "You just can't make up your mind about me, can you? You like what you see. You like kissing me. You like what you touch" (02:12:05-02:12:14), and at the same time, Chance wants to arrest her, which she translates as his commitment to monogamous, heterosexual love. What Chance wants is a highly sexualized bombshell – to his private eyes – who is also happy playing the part of the domestic housewife – to the public eye. She is a "male fantasy figure," a typical "Hawksian woman," (Wood, *Rio Bravo* 44), a perfect reflection of the conflicting discourses of idealized white femininity in fifties Hollywood cinema.

To return to THE NAKED SPUR, another aspect about Lina must be mentioned. In the historical context of 1950s America, her emphatic denial of a sexual relationship with a man – "Not like you think!" – certainly has the potential to ambiguate her character with regards to her sexuality. Already ambiguated by her gender-bending physical appearance, wearing buckskin trousers and sporting a short haircut, Lina's rebuke recalls Calamity Jane's transgressive gender habitus from THE PLAINSMAN. Though decidedly different in their demeanor, Lina and Calamity in their nonconformity with dominant images of white femininity share the radical potential to make visible the constructedness of heterosexuality. Accordingly, Robert J. Corber elaborates about the discourses surrounding fifties' female sexuality:

> Because she was the one who could pass for straight, the femme overtook the butch in the discourses of national security as the lesbian whose deviant gender identity created the greatest homophobic anxiety. Virtually indistinguishable from that of the straight woman, the femme's femininity threatened to reveal that, rather than biologically mandated, the normative alignment of sex, gender and sexuality was an ideological fiction that worked to maintain the dominance of heterosexuality. (34)

THE NAKED SPUR, too, evinces these patterns, as the film, on the one hand, repeatedly invokes violations against heteronormativity (revealing its fragility), only to systematically

realign all characters – male and female – in compliance and conformity with heterosexual desire.

To illustrate: Given that most character interactions in THE NAKED SPUR are between men, and given that all male characters are already to a degree associated with homosexuality qua what would have been interpreted as gender failure in its time (cf. Kimmel 236-7),[376] the film inevitably runs the risk of blurring the usually carefully demarcated lines between male homosociality and male homosexuality (cf. Sedgwick 4-5). However, the film relatively early establishes heteronormativity as the principle that organizes the characters' performances of sexuality. Gathered around a campfire, Ben starts a conversation:

> Ben: Nothing like a good woman to stir a pot, huh.
> Jesse: Nothing like a good woman.
> Ben: I guess you got the years to know better than any of us, Jesse. D'you ever marry one of 'em?
> Jesse: Never had to… with my good looks.
> Ben [laughs]: No sense in asking Roy here about women. He'd keep us up all night.
> Roy [smiling, shifts his gaze to Lina]: Well, right now I'm sort of in between.
> Ben: Well, looks like we're a herd of bachelors. Even Kemp. Never should've marched off to war, Howie. Should've stayed home and married the girl. 'Course, none of my business.
> Howie: That's right, it's none of your business. Come on, let's get this stuff cleaned up.
> Jesse: Alright, girlie. Grab a handful.
> Lina: I'll do mine and Ben's.
> Jesse: You do what I'll tell ya, that's what you'll do. [Condescendingly] Women.
> [Lina walks off]
> Roy: I think I'll go along to protect her.
>
> Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD. 00:26:44-00:27:38.[377]

[376] This association is informed by political discourse, as Michael Kimmel explains: "No wonder Senator Joseph McCarthy so easily linked homosexuality and communism – both represented gender failure. McCarthy raged against both as 'egg sucking phony liberals,' effete eastern intellectuals, emasculated half men who, with their 'pitiful squealing,' had sold the country down the river and lost China and Eastern Europe through indecision and fear. […] McCarthy's witch-hunt for 'pinks, punks and perverts' uncovered a State Department that was 'a veritable nest of Communists, fellow travelers, homosexuals, effete Ivy League intellectuals and traitors,' according to one of the senator's aides. […] The trappings of gender failure were all around us in the 1950s, and American men discovered what happened to men who failed, especially the sons of men who failed as breadwinners and fathers. They became homosexuals, they became juvenile delinquents, they became Communists – soft, spineless dupes of a foreign power, who were incapable of standing up for themselves" (236-7).

[377] Equally, this sequence also illustrates, in keeping with Western genre conventions, how a man's virtue shows in *how* they relate to women (see 4.3.1.). Ben is an opportunist and ego-centrist who cares very little about Lina apart from her being a commodity he can use to improve his position. Jesse, as Roy observes, is simply too old; Roy is abusive, too violent; Howie, at the beginning, is complicit with the other's misconduct, but reveals in his visions what he really wants – the domestic life with wife and children, which is where the film and the genre has its conservative sympathies.

What Ben instigates with Jesse and Roy is basically a toxic scramble for authority by way of insinuating their respective sexual prowess and promiscuity, a sequence of which, aptly, neither Howie nor Lina are active parts. But these insights aside, the scene also ties on to anxieties about sexual nonconformity. In that Ben explicitly thematizes the sexual availability of all men ("Looks like we're a herd of bachelors") in a mostly homosocial environment, and considering the aspect that neither Jesse's nor Roy's performance of sexuality (Jesse's ironic, self-deprecating reference to his "good looks" and Roy's mischievous vagueness) come across as particularly sincere, the film references the socio-political discourse of all-encompassing homophobia in McCarthyite America of the 1950s, and plays on the alleged kinship of sexual nonconformity and moral degeneracy (cf. Corber 37). We are made aware of the potentially transgressive sexual energies that hover over this campfire scene.

However, THE NAKED SPUR is also quick to make sure this sexual energy is displaced and projected onto a female object. Both in terms of mise-en-scène, with a camera pan to the right revealing that Lina is a part of this ostensibly homosocial scene, and narratively, with Ben, Roy, and Jesse supplanting their inadequacies with expressions of gender authority over Lina, THE NAKED SPUR formally implements and fortifies heterosexuality as diegetic normalcy. Lina, like Lily Langtry in THE WESTERNER, absorbs the sexual tensions among the men as the camera identifies her as the sexualized object. The ambiguity that lingers between them is thus juxtaposed to the formal consistency of vectorizing sexualized gazes according to the heterosexual matrix. The aberration from the norm vilifies the men, and in turn, sanitizes Howie's display of sexuality as he strictly refuses to take part in their toxic negotiation. Her presence absorbs and concurrently makes visible non-normative sexuality.

To illustrate the aspect of the film's attempt to conceal the construction of gender by strategies of naturalization, I briefly return to Lina's previous interaction with Howie during his fever dream. It is important to note that, unlike the fever-dream arrangement in THE VIRGINIAN, for instance, the sequence in THE NAKED SPUR is configured as a conversation. Howie speaks from his subconscious, and Lina, posing as Mary, answers back. Lina apparently does such a convincing job of channeling Mary that she manages to access his subconscious and to soothe his torment to the point where he falls back asleep with a sigh of relief. At this point, Lina barely knows Howie, and it is the first time she hears about his history with Mary. Nevertheless, she can instinctively understand Howie's pain and provide a remedy to cure it. Lina articulates the promise he had expected his wife to keep: To be faithful, loyal – all encapsulated in Lina's intuitive reply: "I'll wait for you." In this scene Lina *becomes* the ideal white woman – the image of white femininity that Howie has identified as ideal and desirable, and therefore confirmed as intelligible, and that will ultimately elicit Howie's decision to *become* the ideal white man.

What this promise entails, and how it is implemented in the denouement of the film, not only conforms with dominant conceptualizations of white femininity – comprising virginal purity, faithfulness, and domesticity above all (cf. Indick 124-5) – but also reveals the pathologizing and tautological underpinnings of the film. Lina knows how to nurse Howie back to sleep because she is a woman; she is a woman because she knows how to nurse Howie back to sleep. Put differently, Lina knows how to perform white femininity because she is a white woman. Lina is a white woman because she knows how to perform white femininity. Both are revealed as she inspires the white man to realize white masculinity, which reciprocally inspires her. Gender coherence is maintained. The wide-reaching gender-political implications of these dynamics will be the subject of the following part.

A Pyrrhic Victory

To THE NAKED SPUR, the war represents an iconoclastic event, an all-encompassing caesura after which life in the United States had changed dramatically. Anthony Mann's film provides a survey of how life changed for the American people as well as why. As per the *how*, the film outlines the prevalent pop-cultural narrative of "masculinities in crisis": men do no longer feel comfortable with or secure in their own gender identity, facing the seemingly insurmountable task of reconciling the mutually exclusive virtues of individualism and domestic conformity. As per the *why*, the film opines that, broadly speaking, the postwar crisis of masculinity is largely due to the (alleged) fact that men do no longer know how to relate to women, because women's priorities have changed. Embedded in the subtext of Howie's returning home from war, finding that his fiancée has abandoned him, THE NAKED SPUR misconstrues women's post-war emancipation as an act of selfish disloyalty, which manifests itself once more in economic independence and wanton sexuality. Breaking the promise of a mutual domestic life as husband and wife is equated with her breaking a sacrosanct contract, the consequences of which are suffered overwhelmingly by men.

Two preeminent and interconnected narratives crystallize in THE NAKED SPUR: the demobilization of gender identities and the containment of sexuality. First, with regards to the containment of sexuality, male and female homosexuality are subliminally addressed, yet the film – through strategies that I have discussed above – expels both as soon as suspicions arise. In order to provide a sense of security, and in order to ultimately fulfill the promise of heterosexual couple formation that entails domestic conformity (and vice versa), the film systematically precludes, and therefore paradigmatically contains what it renders as transgressive desire.

Second, with regards to the demobilization of gender identities, it becomes evident that the kind of individualism that shaped the American prewar mindset is no longer relevant in the

context of the fifties. More to the point, THE NAKED SPUR suggests that this kind of excessive individualism, in fact, has become a threat to people's mental health and a false trail in the pursuit of self-fulfillment. Excessive individualism, according to THE NAKED SPUR, is a force that compels men and women to perform in line with an obsolete dogma, even though it quite obviously corrupts them and leads them astray.[378] By contrast, the film identifies domestic conformity as a societal ideal because it connects men and women, and thus precipitates monogamous heterosexuality, the family, the home.

> Howie: What are you doing with Ben, anyway? You expect to run and hide forever?"
>
> Lina: Ben was taking me to California. He was gonna start new.
>
> Howie: Start new at what?
>
> Lina: Ranching, maybe. He knows a lot about cattle.
>
> Howie: Yeah, other people's cattle. Did you ever think for a minute that Ben had the temper to settle on the land? To clear it? To build on it? To bring in the cattle and nurse 'em through the winter and round up strays? Brand calf? Start anew? The only thing Ben will start is trouble.
>
> Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD. 00:47:40-00:48:10.

The scene contrasts Howie's profound desire for domesticity with Ben's nomadic individualism, ultimately identifying qua Howie, the film's focal character, domesticity as desirable, a goal to aspire to. Conversely, we have seen Howie suffering under the dogma of individualism and have seen its corrupting effects in Jesse, Roy, and Ben. Crucially, by the end of his pathos-laden speech about Ben's ineptitude to settle down and work the land – which is just a displacement of his own desire – the camera cuts to a back-shoulder shot of Howie looking at Lina, allowing us to witness her reaction. She is completely immersed in Howie's speech, whereby we learn that she shares this dream.

Therefore, THE NAKED SPUR alleges that men and women of the fifties should no longer strive to maintain the narratives of mobilization of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Instead, they might be happier settling down, building a home, finding a place to rest, becoming demobilized. However, there are nuances to the film that fundamentally complicate such a reading, since in THE NAKED SPUR, a wholly positive resolution of men's and women's dilemmas is impossible.

[378] Lina's initial representation of femininity, as a woman living in open spaces on her way to start anew in California, and, perhaps even more importantly, as a woman living in an ambiguously uncommitted or unspecified relationship with a psychotic, often abusive man, is equally deemed an image of excessive individualism, hence unbecoming of desirable white femininity. Mirroring the processes Howie undergoes, Lina's determination to cling on to Ben and her plan of going to California are equally codified as *masquerade*. According to THE NAKED SPUR, the open sphere wherein she initially operates and the habitus she attempts to emulate are unnatural and incompatible with the contemporary cultural ideal of white femininity.

Before I conclude this analysis and bring together the film's gender-political implications, I would like to recall the film's final scene, in which the narratives of demobilization and containment converge with heteronormativity. Crucially, THE NAKED SPUR does not end with a clear and unequivocal resolution of the conflicts it had previously addressed. Though the film's subtext reveals that it is still fundamentally informed by the primacy of male hegemony and heteronormativity, in text the film explores and problematizes the paradoxical standards inherent to the conceptualizations and representations of gender in the Western film.

After a violent shoot-out in which Jesse, Roy and Ben have died, Ben's body has fallen into a raging torrent. With tremendous effort Howie tries to retrieve it from the floods. Ben's body remains the final vestige of Howie's frantic attempt to uphold the *masquerade* of the violent killer, the bounty hunter, the epitome of excessive individualism; aptly, the body is dead. Lina is the lone internal spectator who anxiously watches Howie exhaust himself as he salvages the body. Repeatedly, the camera cuts to Lina, allowing the viewer to watch her watching Howie. Her face contorts with fear that something might happen to him. Eventually, she begs him to cut the body loose, to let go of the dead weight, to let the water carry away its strenuous burden, to finally drop the mask. But Howie refuses. Ardently, he declares: "I don't care anything about that. The money, that's all I care about. That's all I ever cared about. […] Maybe I don't fit your ideas of me but that's the way I am" (01:25:11-01:25:25) (Fig. 46).

As he speaks, the camera tracks him from behind. We do not see his face. The visual arrangement underscores the notion that Howie quite literally tells this to himself. Then, the camera cuts to Lina (Fig. 47). The medium close-up shot of her upper body in front of the roaring torrent anticipates the climactic shot of her *becoming* the ideal white woman (Fig. 50). No word is spoken. Instead, the camera cuts away to a medium close-up shot of Lina and Howie together. With the camera positioned behind her, Lina faces Howie and embraces the cultural ideal of white femininity (Fig. 48), as she speaks:

> Lina: Alright, if that's the way you want it I… I'll ride with you. I'll ride with you all the way.
> Howie [still in denial]: I'm taking him back.
> Lina: I know. I'll marry you. I'll go with you. I'll even live on that land with you. What else do you want from me?
>
> Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD. 01:25:33-01:25:44.

At this point, Howie begins to take down his mask. He begins to accept the surrender of his individualism. Lina has given him the ultimate promise of unconditional loyalty, of sempiternal trust, thus offering to take away all the anxieties that plagued him. Still, Howie is not ready to accept her offer. The camera shows a close-up of his face, as he turns to Lina and sobs (Fig. 49): "Why? Tell me, why. I'm taking him back, I'll swear it. I'm gonna sell him

for money" (01:25:44-01:25:57). These are his last hollow efforts of defiance. Finally, the film confirms visually what it has already indicated narratively. The camera cuts to a close-up of Lina's face, shot from a little below eye-level against the bright blue sky, her golden hair elevating her to an almost angelic creature (Fig. 50). She says nothing. The camera cuts back to a medium close-up of the two of them together (Fig. 51). Howie holds her firmly by her arms, still weeping. Abruptly, he turns around and begins to take Ben's body off his horse. Lina – that is, her image – has convinced him. He surrenders. The camera cuts to a medium shot of Howie, shot from below, assuming Lina's perspective, looking down at him looking up at Lina (Fig. 52). He defers to her image and the promise it entails. As if to validate the authority the film has already awarded to her image, the camera cuts back to an identical shot of Lina against the blue sky (Fig. 53). Lastly, to show its immediate consequence, the film cuts back to Howie unpacking a shovel from his mule as he starts digging a grave for Ben's body, proverbially burying his past to start anew with Lina (Fig. 54):

> Howie: You still wanna try for California?
> Lina: If you want.
> Howie: That's it then.
> Lina: I'll fix some of Jesse's coffee for you.
>
> Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD. 01:26:33-01:27:14.

The camera pans to the mountain range in the background. Then, the final shot of the film shows Lina, Howie, and their mule riding together through the barren landscape, off to a new horizon (Fig. 55), just like Faith Henley and Blaze Tracy decades before them in HELL'S HINGES.

Fig. 46. 01:25:14.

Fig. 47. 01:25:28.

Fig. 48. 01:25:33.

Fig. 49. 01:25:54.

Fig. 50. 01:25:58.

Fig. 51. 01:26:07.

Fig. 52. 01:26:23.

Fig. 53. 01:26:24.

Fig. 54. 01:26:40.

Fig. 55. 01:27:25.

Source: THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953). MGM. DVD.

In this scene, Howie and Lina take on their true forms, their destined roles: Howie relinquishes his individualist mask of the reckless, self-serving bounty hunter to embrace the

image of the domestic provider. In keeping with a general observation about masculinities in 1950s Hollywood made by Joan Mellen,[379] Howie, "the alienated, tormented [hero]", is "brought around and forced to conform" (191).[380] Lina is confirmed as domestic (house-)wife. She makes the coffee while he does the digging; she does domestic chores while he works the land. Evoked by the film's adoption of Christian iconography,[381] both appear as transformations realized. Camera and score codify the denouement of the film as divine ascensions, as conversions into higher states of being.

But what is this higher state's complexion? Lina's vision of a clear-cut heteronormative order that comprises domestic husband and domestic wife constitutes what THE NAKED SPUR ultimately reveals as a woman's projection of ideal gender relations – as imagined by a male director – to which a man succumbs. Lina has the agency and authority to elicit Howie's transformation and design their mutual future according to her preferences and by her own volition, which is precisely why the film's ending does not provide any form of closure for Howie or the viewer. Visuals that present only his back, show him avert his gaze (as if ashamed), or – even more evocatively – crouching down and looking up at Lina, complement a subtext that clearly frames Howie's surrender of individualism as an act of emasculation, reflecting the thematically and discoursively consistent "fear of impotence that haunts the hero threatened by marriage" (Pye, "The Collapse of Fantasy" 169).

THE NAKED SPUR emphasizes that the domestic life that awaits the newly established couple, especially to Howie, feels like a pyrrhic victory, as it requires him to sacrifice what the film maintains is an essential aspect of his self-conceptualization as a man. What is more, the conventional Western trope of the hero's choice between riding off alone or settling down with a good woman is re-imagined in THE NAKED SPUR to be, first, inherently contradictory, and second, not a real choice at all: "[E]ach of the apparent options is presented in ways that undercut any residual positive connotations the genre might allow" (Pye "The Collapse of Fantasy" 170). This is another, and perhaps the most salient instance of the film's revealing its awareness about the paradoxical nature of the Western's conceptualization of gender, as well as its issuing of a concomitant critique thereof. Yet there is more to this.

In that Howie's transformation carries the devastating toll of abandoning his individualism – excessive or no – THE NAKED SPUR upholds the seemingly causal connection

[379] Admittedly, Howie greatly lacks the "grace and self-possession" in his concession that Mellen also attributes to male heroes of the fifties, and he certainly does not "display an assertiveness and flair, as well as sensitivity and concern" (192).
[380] Finding analogy to Greek mythology in THE NAKED SPUR, Doug Williams names Howie as an "[example] of the Pentheus-hero, recalled from the edge of Dionysian self-destruction by the Apollonian woman" (97).
[381] The burial ritual that resembles an offering, the iconographic shot of the angelic Lina, the notion that this is what Mary should have done, the idea of sacrifice, the pan to the mountain range to underscore the notion of transcendence/ascension, their leaving together "through a landscape of blighted and dead trees" (Pye, "The Collapse of Fantasy" 172), all carry strong Puritan significance.

between the virtue and heroic masculinity and the male body. Only by giving an unusual degree of agency and authority to Lina (by assuming her gaze onto Howie and by showing her to be capable of bending his will simply by looking at him sternly), the viewer experiences the link between masculinity and individualism via its marked and irreversible disruption. Howie had tried to convincingly emulate the image of the individualist Western hero and failed. Now he is giving up entirely. In burying Vandergroat, in agreeing to ride away with Lina and marry her, he has cut all ties to an integral aspect of masculinity. To the film, this is a sacrifice that entails a tragic loss and, correspondingly, dissociates Howie from a cultural ideal of masculinity that the film still holds dear, despite its criticism thereof. Ultimately, THE NAKED SPUR's lachrymose undertones outweigh its cerebral approach. The film reveals a level of sentimentalism about supposedly old and gone conceptualizations of masculinity that already anticipates the genre's negotiation of these issues in the films of the sixties (most notably, Ford's THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE).

What is more, THE NAKED SPUR's call for men and women to relinquish the individualist dogma of the past and transcend together to a peaceful, domestic future is predicated on decidedly anti-feminist underpinnings. To begin with, THE NAKED SPUR attributes the miserable state of men to women's emancipation. Before Lina absolves her sex of Mary's sins, the film seems to hold women responsible for men's malaise. Second, as Lina pledges to return to the home and reinstate the nuclear family, "compelling [Howie] to surrender" (Bingham 66),[382] THE NAKED SPUR suggests that for men's *hysteria* to recede women are to return to the domestic. Accordingly, Bingham writes that THE NAKED SPUR "begin[s] (before the film opens) with home and a personal crisis, going far from home in search of a resolution, ending with the Love of a Good Woman and a return to home, wherever it can be found" (58). The author continues: "Women in films like this one […] might be compassionate, liberalizing influences, bringing men down from their selfishness and their power trips, but they are compelled to want marriage. They move men into their proper places in patriarchy so that they can assume their own" (67).

Lina's place, THE NAKED SPUR makes unequivocally clear, is subordinate to Howie, which the film recodifies as 'at his side': She virtually pledges to do anything to make him happy, implying that a life as domestic (house-)wife would bring her fulfilment. THE NAKED SPUR, though critical of unhealthy ideals of prewar masculinity, fundamentally adheres to the

[382] Bingham elaborates and hints at the scene's socio-political implications: "[t]he first half of the film sets up the hero to be beaten by his own determination to 'do what a man's gotta do.' The second half depicts his capitulation at the feet of the noble 'feminine' social conscience, part Janet Leigh, twenty-five-year-old ingenue, part Eleanor Roosevelt" (67).

legitimacy of male hegemony, which the film – given its awarding Lina with agency and authority – can only persuasively realize through Lina's self-subjugation.[383]

To summarize: In having Howie chase after the ghost of prewar masculinity, illustrated in the *masquerade* of excessive individualism that he tries – but fails – to convincingly perform, THE NAKED SPUR thematizes the change in conceptualizations of gender that followed postwar readjustment. Howie moves from wartime mobilization and its concomitant idolization of domesticity (as the ultimate goal awaiting those who would return) to postwar disillusionment and the perceived threat of domestic complacency. Neither the image of excessive individualism nor the kind of domestic life that demands Howie's surrender have the films full – that is, coherent – approval. That notwithstanding, THE NAKED SPUR reiterates a consistent narrative: whether it was Calamity Jane in THE PLAINSMAN, Abbie in DODGE CITY, Rio in THE OUTLAW or later Feathers in RIO BRAVO – all these female characters showed the willingness to subjugate themselves to the men they loved, despite their flaws. With regards to the Western's representation of white femininity, THE NAKED SPUR serves as another example of how the genre contained progressive, feminist ideas of gender and sexuality within a patriarchal system, suggesting that true liberation was to be found in the compliance with the hetero-patriarchal status quo.

Mann's film identifies the conflicting discourses of gender inherent to the genre's formula, and thus, by extension, American society, but subtextually reinforces the seemingly causal link between masculinity and individualism by nostalgically mourning Howie's relinquishing his. In the end, THE NAKED SPUR does not offer a conflict resolution in the traditional sense; instead, Howie is made to settle for a compromise: he trades what the film ultimately reasserts as true masculinity (the individualist ideal) for a new conceptualization of gender relations, which are characterized by a mutual appreciation of domesticity. The changing times demand genders to reevaluate their self-conceptualizations, to abandon individualist views and to ascertain what they agree on: essentially, to find a consensus (cf. Costello 175-6). If we accept THE NAKED SPUR to be reflective of the broader socio-political dynamics of the United States in the fifties, settling for domestic conformity might not be fulfilling, but it constitutes precisely that consensus which is necessary for society to work. THE NAKED SPUR identifies heterosexual monogamy, institutionalized in marriage, as the consensus that brings Americans back together again to form a cohesive unit.[384] In dramatizing Howie's

[383] A narrative such as this one provides the basis of Betty Friedan's seminal feminist critique in *The Feminine Mystique*.

[384] In his discussion of other iconic Western films of the fifties such as THE GUNFIGHTER, SHANE, THE SEARCHERS, and THE LAST SUNSET, Michael Coyne has persuasively argued that another prevalent narrative of the time was the tragedy that lay in such stories that denied their male heroes the fulfilment of the promise of marriage. He writes: "Thus, throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, in an era when many Americans commonly viewed marriage as a socially stabilizing factor which encouraged 'responsibility, community spirit, respect for children and family life, reverence for a Supreme Being,

desperate attempts to pursue and conform with the alleged heterosexual consensus (i.e., heteronormativity), but emphasizing how the realization of it only requires another sacrifice, THE NAKED SPUR ultimately withholds closure from its main protagonist: Lina's heterosexual love cannot heal the wounds of Howie's fractured gender identity. The irresolvable struggle between individualism and domesticity have worn him out, and neither allows him to form a coherently gendered subject because he is always already his own abject.

THE NAKED SPUR extends the hope that demobilization, compromise, self-subjugation, and sacrifice – as the virtues it most closely associates with its heteronormative denouement – will have the unique propensity (and hegemonic power) to stabilize and re-organize society in an era chiefly characterized by social change. Mann's film presents us with characters who are in search of happiness and purpose, which they initially all belief, in one way or another, to be found in tokens of excessive individualism (money, vice). Only the film's heroes, Howie and Lina, eventually reveal that they share a dream of an orderly domestic life, and that their respective individualistic pursuits were but a mask they put on to survive and deal with past trauma. The film assumes a conservative stance in presenting Howie and Lina's way as the true source of happiness by linking this mutual dream to sexual conformity (i.e., heterosexuality), whereas the pursuits of Jesse, Roy, and Ben are connotated with sexual nonconformity. Once again, it seems, heterosexuality is equated with social and personal stability, whereas non-conformative sexuality is equated with social and personal instability. This way, THE NAKED SPUR reveals the normative power of heterosexuality.

Yet ultimately, THE NAKED SPUR is also a testimony to the inadequacy of heteronormativity to stabilize because its premises are profoundly unstable. Upon realizing he is to abandon his individualistic pursuits, drop his *masquerade*, and give in to the domestic vision he so cherishes, Howie is riddled with anxiety and anguish. The film suggests especially in its final scene that giving in to domesticity requires from Howie a fundamental sacrifice: his individualism. No more is he to embark on adventurous exploits like pursuing a wanted criminal for bounty, hence the symbolic burial of Ben Vandergroat's body. Zooming in on Lina's face as Howie surrenders his individualism, the film associates this act with the white woman's power to domesticate. Crucially however, the film suggests in Howie's reluctance and weariness that Lina's rise to symbolic power necessarily entails Howie's loss of symbolic power, which THE NAKED SPUR mourns as a tragic, if inevitable and necessary reciprocal effect. Unlike the fantasy indulged by HELL'S HINGES or DODGE CITY, there is no having it both ways. This is where the frontier ends. The end result of all men's individualistic efforts, domesticity, makes them obsolete. As Douglas Pye writes in his aplty titled paper "The Collapse of Fantasy": "There is no alternative to settlement, but the fantasy that these figures can […] keep their identity and

humility, love of country', Westerns focused in large part on loners who could not assimilate, tormented souls to whom the contentment and security of family must forever be denied" (81).

strength as Westerners while contently and successfully settling is strongly undercut" (172). In other words, THE NAKED SPUR reveals that the tenets of heroic white masculinity defeat themselves upon realizing their goal, from which follows that the reciprocal recognition of man and woman as binary gendered individuals dissolves upon realization. If that which defines Howie as a man is eroded once he conforms to the definition, how, then, can he ever be a man? What, then, is a man but an individual compelled by the image of how to be a man? This is the aporia of heteronormativity. THE NAKED SPUR identifies the pattern – first, in Howie's spells of *hysteria* that reveal the contradictory nature of heteronormativity; second, in its denouement that withholds closure – and commiserates its ramifications for men.

4.5.2. The Absence of Consensus: THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (1960)

By the end of the decade, the Cold War between Soviet Russia and the United States had intensified. As the United States engaged in proxy conflicts in countries such as Korea or Vietnam, the nation's role as a superpower began dominating public thought. Naturally, public concern about these dynamics entered Hollywood film production. Once more, the Western genre proved ideal to mediate the political and social dynamics of the grander global affairs and condense them into palatable, captivating narratives with a quintessentially American veneer. Westerns such as GUNFIGHT AT THE OK CORRAL (John Sturges, 1957), THE ALAMO (John Wayne, 1960) or THE PROFESSIONALS (Richard Brooks, 1966) all in their own ways explore and reflect the complexities of the Cold War, in which the people of the United States suddenly found themselves enveloped.

Famously inspired by Akira Kurosawa's SHICHININ NO SAMURAI (SEVEN SAMURAI 1954), John Sturges' THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is such a Cold War Western. Moving the setting from 16th century Japan to the U.S.-Mexican border region of the late 19th century and replacing samurai with gunslingers, Sturges's film features a group of Mexican villagers calling for help in their desperate struggle against oppression from a gang of Mexican bandits, led by Calvera (Eli Wallach). The villagers hire seven American gunfighters, headed by Chris (Yul Brynner) and Vin (Steve McQueen), who use their professional skills and violence to kill Calvera and liberate the village.

Although the film struggled on the domestic market, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN presents one of the most internationally successful Western films of the time (cf. Maddrey 86; cf. Hannan 116). Moreover, considering its long-lasting influence on cinematic history even beyond Hollywood and the United States (cf. Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns* 127-8; cf. Smith 185-207; cf. Stott 251), THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is perhaps one of the most significant Westerns of all

time (cf. Buscombe, *BFI Companion* 282-3).[385] To illustrate, Richard Slotkin states that the film "became the basis of imitation and a rich source of commercial iconography. The main theme of Elmer Bernstein's score became the theme of the Marlboro cigarette commercials, […] which ended by identifying the whole West as 'Marlboro country'" (474).

Research about THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN has been scarce. Re-reading my own synopsis, this may not even come as a surprise, as the film appears deceptively self-evident: Americans riding into a foreign land to contain a despotic force from spreading, allying with and eventually liberating the native inhabitants – the politics and ideological underpinnings of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN seem very straightforward, as in profoundly informed by and in support of U.S. imperialism. Considering the plethora of cursory assessments of the film, which often fleetingly dismiss the film as a reflection of precisely that (cf. Maddrey 84-86), it seems that scholarship of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN has endorsed this opinion, or at least has rarely questioned it. In fact, only two major publications include detailed discussions of the film: one by Richard Slotkin in his comprehensive study *Gunfighter Nation*, the other by Stanley Corkin in his book *Cowboys as Cold Warriors*. Both studies adopt a politico-historical approach. Between the two of them, Slotkin and Corkin have offered the perhaps most significant ideological-critical discussions of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN within the greater political context of the Cold War to date.

Reading the film against the backdrop of Modernization Theory,[386] Corkin argues that "THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN provides a liberal interventionist model based on the view that U.S.

---

[385] In an attempt to explain why, of all Westerns, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN sparked such interest in cinemas all across the globe, Edward Buscombe invokes the appeal of the film's Mexico setting and its narrative of professionalism (ibid. 283) – two aspects that were also picked on elsewhere by Christopher Frayling as particularly inspirational to the Westerns that mushroomed across Southwestern Europe during the 1960s and 1970s (cf. *Spaghetti Westerns* 127-8). Indeed, Buscombe notes THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN as the one stand-out Western that signaled that "the Western was by now a truly international form" (*The BFI Companion to the Western* 48). He writes: "If a Western could be made from a Japanese movie, with the plot virtually unchanged, then the genre belonged to anybody" (ibid. 48). Giving another reason for the film's success, Richard Slotkin refers to THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's eclectic array of character types: "By multiplying the heroes in this way, he enlarges a form that had canonically focused on a single gunfighter. He gives us a platoon of isolatoes whose psyches map the range of heroic motives and even take in a range of ethnic possibilities" (*Gunfighter Nation*, 477). This is certainly a valid point, especially in light of Antoine Fuqua's recent remake of the film (THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, 2016). This recent version of the Seven-material arguably draws its appeal from formulating a contemporary elaboration of exactly the kind of ethnic diversity Slotkin describes as already dormant in Sturges' version, suggesting that, indeed, one of the main reasons for the material's continued popularity lies in its disposition to assemble a diverse cast and explore several heroic characters in relation to one another.

[386] Wolfgang Knöbl defines Modernization Theory as follows: "As a non-Marxist, macro-sociological and often interdisciplinary theory of social change, modernization theory tried to conceptualize either historically or typologically the development of societies, focusing in the beginning mostly on the relationship between culture and economic progress, but increasingly also on that between culture and political development and between economic growth and democracy. As has been shown by various interpreters of the history of this approach […], modernization theorists assumed that: (1) modernization is a global and irreversible process, which began with the Industrial Revolution in the middle of the eighteenth century (or even earlier) in Europe, but which nowadays, that is, since the end of the Second

hegemony can actively work to lift up people in underdeveloped nations materially" (179). However, as he declares that "there is also a clear inferior/superior relationship" (181) between the Mexican villagers and the gringo gunfighters, Corkin's argument unfortunately falls short of grasping the film's nuanced involvement in practices of identity construction and their concomitant multilateral power relations. In a way replicating the unilateral and monolithic tenets of Modernization Theory, Corkin seems to expect (and thus reproduces in his reasoning) a certain "fixity" in the construction of (mostly) white American masters and their stereotypical inferior Mexican subjects. Consequently, his approach neglects the polyvalency of many of the discourses THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN explores. As I will later show with reference to Homi K. Bhabha, the assumed fixity that underlies the stereotype and that informs "the ideological construction of otherness" (94) is, however, surprisingly "unstable and fragile" (Castro Varela & Dhawan 222). (Power) relations between colonizers and colonized, or in the case of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN between American liberators, Mexican oppressors and Mexican oppressed, are not "stable and unitary" (Moore-Gilbert 116), but, according to Bhabha, "trapped in a complex reciprocity" (Castro Varela & Dhawan 222). This is a point that Corkin's argument does not take into consideration.

Slotkin, by contrast, reads the film as a reflection of "the theoretically ideal form of a counterinsurgency mission" (*Gunfighter Nation* 474) that "anticipates several aspects of the American approach to the Vietnam War" (ibid. 481). Slotkin's analysis mostly foregrounds political and historical context, offering an extensive overview over the culturally pervasive narratives of the time and how they were treated and embellished in the Western. Slotkin's interpretation of the film is much more differentiated than Corkin's, providing room for ideological-critical discussion about, for instance, Calvera's "paradoxical combination" of characteristics of both "the principle of excessive order (tyranny) and excessive disorder (banditry, revolution)" (ibid. 479), which makes him "a savage parody of paternalism; but as such he also offers a critique – implied and stated – of the character and motives of the Americans" (ibid. 479). Contrary to Corkin's assessment, then, Slotkin predicates his argument on a fluid, reciprocal and at times ambivalent understanding of identity construction and its political implications.

World War, concerns societies all over the world; (2) modernization is a historical process leading from traditional to modern societies, thus implying a sharp antithesis between tradition and modernity. (3) in traditional societies and countries of the so-called 'Third World' there is a dominance of personal attitudes, values and role structures which can be characterized by terms like 'ascription', 'particularism' and 'functional diffuseness', and which are to be interpreted as powerful barriers for economic and political development; (4) in modern society of the Euro-American civilization there is a predominance of secular, individualistic and scientific values and corresponding role clusters; (5) modernization is a more or less endogenously driven process to be localized within societies which should be regarded as coherent wholes and – if possible – analysed with the theoretical instruments of structural formalism; and (6) social change towards modernity in different societies will take place in a rather uniform and linear way" (96-97). I refer to Knöbl's article for a detailed discussion of the origins and developments of Modernization Theory (96-107).

Relying on a heuristic application of Bhabha's elaborations about *ambivalence*, *mimicry* and *hybridity*, I propose a reading of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN that ties into the competing dynamics outlined by Slotkin.[387] I argue that the film imagines a Mexican Other – in the form of villagers and bandits alike – both of which reflect different sides to postwar U.S. American imperialism. As a foreign people under duress by despotic leadership calls for help from American interventionists, the film clearly reflects the United States' Self and their ambivalence about the nation's role within the global political arena. The constructions of ethnic *difference* in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN contain elements of Self-conceptualization (cf. Schößler 125) that at once conceive the United States as a superior nation that is destined to expand and challenge the legitimacy of that very claim. Rather than reading the film solely as a unilateral, univocal affirmation of U.S. postwar imperialism, I suggest that, in fact, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN reveals much more depth if understood as an exploration of the hyper-narratives of its time: of the careful negotiation of a want for freedom and a need for security, of the (im)possibility of finding a consensus, of the (un)viability of containment, of the (ir)reconcilability of individualism and domestic conformity. As such, the film offers astonishing insight into the various sensibilities and insecurities about discourses of cultural and gender identity that characterized the fifties.[388] Put differently, rather than read the film as political allegory with the hindsight of history, I propose to revisit the film and grant it the benefit of the doubt about its ideological underpinnings. Meeting THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN on uncertain terms and respecting the polyvalency of the discourses it engenders, in fact make visible the many uncertainties that permeate the film's narrative and its corresponding identity constructions – and ultimately paint a more complex picture of the United States in 1960.

In my discussion of the film, I will concentrate on the relationship between what the film constructs as Self and Other, arguing that the same processes I have outlined in my analysis of THE NAKED SPUR – predominantly, a complex negotiation of individualism and domestic conformity – are still at play in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN. However, while my analysis of THE NAKED SPUR focused on the complex nature of the film's negotiation of gender, THE

---

[387] Adding extracts of postcolonial theory to my gender-theoretical approach has three advantages for an analysis of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN: One, in a film that almost parabolically takes on U.S. international military involvement in the Cold War, it seems appropriate to adopt an approach that prioritizes negotiations of culture and ethnicity to negotiations of gender. Two, in a film that has overwhelmingly been received as a story of naturalizing power disparities, a theoretical slant like Bhabha's lends itself perfectly to reveal the film's investment in strategies of contingency, subversion, and destabilization. Three, the performative element inherent to both Bhabha's theory and parts of my theoretical framework allow for a transfer that, in the example of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, unravels the interchangeability – or rather, the interdependency – of concepts such as white hegemony and male hegemony.

[388] Nota bene: Borrowing elements from postcolonial theory will necessarily affect the terminology and language used on the following pages. Therefore, I would like to clarify that in adopting such terms as "colonizer"/ "colonized" or "imperialist"/ "imperialism" I deliberately blend the meanings of such concepts that pertain to postcolonial studies and such that pertain to the theoretical foundations of this study, such as Connell's usage of *hegemony*.

MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's overt engagement with discourses of imperialism – fueled by the fact that the film appeared within a climate of U.S. American global expansion – opens it to an intersectional approach. As Anne McClintock writes that "[g]ender power was not the superficial patina of empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class and race," and that "rather, gender dynamics were […] fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise" (6-7), I will investigate in this part of my analysis how discourses of gender and ethnicity inform each other.

In a first step, I will investigate how THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN imagines a U.S. American Self in relation to a Mexican Other. I will show how the film constructs diametrically opposing images of Otherness between which the film negotiates American identity *ex negativo*. The film creates *difference* between Self and Other that is based upon ethnicity, a distinctive non-ability trait that the film uses to 'naturalize' and thus legitimatize the Self's claim to superiority. In a second step, consulting the theoretical groundwork of Bhabha, I will demonstrate that the images the film constructs to establish ethnic *difference* are, however, informed by an underlying ambivalence that opens avenues for ideological-critical discussion. I will show how THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, despite its rigorous efforts to naturalize (and thus racialize) U.S. American dominance, reveals subliminal anxieties and insecurities that call into question the alleged fixity and assumed self-evidence of that claim.

In a third step, I will show how these dynamics invariably link to conceptualizations of gender. This means, in turn, that such images that reflect and investigate U.S. American ethnic superiority frequently entail explorations of male hegemony.[389] Reconnecting with my analysis of THE NAKED SPUR, these investigations bring to the surface a great deal of anxiety concerning the conflicting societal expectations toward individualism and domestic conformity. Finally, this discussion will illustrate in the example of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN that the categories of Whiteness and maleness as tokens of idealized cultural American identity are inextricably linked, and that neither is invisible.

I will demonstrate that beneath the film's self-congratulatory overtones that herald U.S. American imperialism dwell deep-rooted anxieties about the fabric of U.S. American identity, if understood as a story that constructs a certain image of Otherness (both in terms of ethnicity and gender) to explore the makeup of a fluid, ambivalent, contingent Self.

---

[389] To clarify the intent of this intersectional approach, I wish to prepend my analysis with a note first issued by Anne McClintock in her study *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*: "Gender […] is not simply a question of sexuality but also a question of subdued labor and imperial plunder; race is not simply a question of skin color but also a question of labor power, cross-hatched by gender;" and like McClintock, with my following intersectional discussion of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, I "do not mean to imply that these domains are reducible to, or identical with, each other; instead, they exist in intimate, reciprocal, and contradictory relations" (5).

Difference

The day after the Seven's arrival, the village community celebrates the anniversary of their settlement. The village is decorated with sunflowers and colorful ribbons. Several carts carry exotic fruit and other items of food. There are fireworks. The villagers wear oversized wooden masks and fancy costumes. They perform tribal dances to the pulsing rhythm of drums. For the first time in the film, the villagers communicate in Spanish. All the while, the American gunslingers stand (or sit) and watch, keeping their strategic lookout points around the village, as the festivities take place. The Americans do not engage with the villagers or their merriments, except for what is framed as a brief metonymical gesture of cultural exchange (and a profoundly paternalistic one at that), as Bernardo O'Reilly (Charles Bronson) crafts a small flute and gives it to a little indigenous girl. As the scene goes on, news breaks that three spies of Calvera's bandit gang have been spotted nearby. With hand signals, eye contact and little bits of conversation (which is drowned out by the noise of the festival's commotion), the Seven communicate what are essentially military-style combat tactics amongst themselves across the festival ground without raising alarm or disrupting the joyous atmosphere. We have never seen them practice this before. They just know. They are quintessentially the kind of "professionals" described by Will Wright in his study *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* as representative of what he has labeled the professional plot of Westerns: "They are […] men doing a job. They are specialists who possess the unique skills used in their profession;" they are "heroes working for money" (97). They are "co-ordinated; they function as a unit" (Carroll, "The Professional Western" 47) While the festival goes on unimpeded, the Seven efficiently thwart an ambush (Fig. 56-61).

Fig. 56. 00:46:14.

Fig. 57. 00:47:08.

Fig. 58. 00:47:12.

Fig. 59. 00:48:35.

Fig. 60. 00:49:10.

Fig. 61. 00:52:06.

Source: THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, John Sturges (1960). MGM. DVD.

What this scene offers is a salient portrayal of establishing an allegedly natural *difference* by way of negotiating an ethnically coded Self and Other (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 476).[390] THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN imagines an exotic, alien culture of Otherness that fascinates and amuses the Americans. Brown skin is juxtaposed with white skin; plain white clothes with cowboy attire of denim and leather; dancing with sitting; extravagance with composure. Most importantly though, the sequence juxtaposes subject with object (also: with abject): observation with spectacle. The Seven are curious onlookers to the villagers' display of ethnic and cultural *difference*.[391] They do not engage with that culture (except for one character, Bernardo, whose ethnic heritage is already marked as intermediate). When an external threat eventually prompts the Americans' attention, their gazes shift away from the festival and toward each other.

Thus, the film differentiates between the action that is really of consequence, and visual décor. It prioritizes the Seven's professional execution of violence over the spectacle of the

[390] Edward W. Said has shown in *Orientalism* that representing the Other in such a way from a U.S. American point of view – that is, submitting the Other to be constructed as the Other – is an aspect of cultural hegemony in and of itself (cf. 5-7).

[391] The scene, as Noël Carroll has noted, does on a different level also establish an element of similitude, as the Mexicans' festivities are portrayed "as an Independence Day celebration, replete with native dancing and fireworks" (53). Though their cultural identity is clearly marked as *different*, the Mexicans and the American gunfighters share a similar, seemingly universal, notion of human liberty.

village festival. The former navigates, directs, controls the gaze (of the characters, of the camera, of the viewer); the latter remains entirely passive, a to-be-looked-at. The scene presets the viewer with two seemingly oxymoronic modes of action: active passivity (vigilant, observing Americans) and passive activity (celebrating, dancing Mexicans). Crucially, the direct juxtaposition of both groups evokes an alleged causality between the attributes that characterize a performance and the ethnicity of the performer. In this scenario, Otherness entails an alluring performance of spectacle, a colorful, vibrant, exhilarating sensation. The scene reveals the spectacle as intriguing to the American eye up until the point at which it becomes an obstacle. The Other's culture is dynamic, impulsive, naïve, unwitting. By contrast, the Americans are characterized by their distance, their expert calculation, their consideration, their determination, their professionalism. Put differently, one is characterized by restraint and the ability to act when circumstances call for it; the other is characterized by lack of restraint and the inability to act when circumstances call for it.[392]

Via this direct juxtaposition, the film reveals two *different* modes of performing cultural identity that denote different levels of authority based on their familiarity with the U.S. American value system and the established modes of representing the Western hero (of relevance here is especially the element of restraint, or "whiteness as repression" (Dyer, "White" 741).[393] Correspondingly, because of the way the scene organizes and hierarchizes gaze constructions, the film inevitably discriminates between subject (the American Self) and object/abject (the Mexican Other).

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN abounds with examples like this. Repeatedly, the film utilizes such sequences that feature the display of ethnic *difference* to dissociate from it its construction of a white U.S. American Self. Indeed, the film opens with a prolonged sequence which does exactly that. After the opening credits have rolled through, the film's first image shows three male Mexican farmers threshing corn, as Calvera rides in with his men. In a series of establishing shots, we see several villagers react to the impending threat. The villagers hardly move. They sit or stand as if petrified, as Calvera's caravan gradually occupies more and more of their space. If they move at all, they do ever so slowly, hesitantly, carefully. We see the villagers either turn their heads, or by default position look at Calvera and his men (Fig. 62).

---

[392] This closely resembles Richard Dyer's observations about constructions of Whiteness in SIMBA (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1955), wherein he notes that "the colonial landscape provides the occasion for the realization of white male virtues, which are not qualities of being but of doing – acting, discovering, taming, conquering" ("White" 740).

[393] In a way corroborating the distinctiveness of his portrayal of physical restraint, Yul Brynner's performance of Chris has inspired Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette to perpetuate his image as an ideal of the warrior archetype in their infamous Jungian survey of the male psyche *King Warrior Magician Lover*. The authors write: "The Warrior never spends more energy than he absolutely has to. And he doesn't talk too much. Yul Brenner's [sic] character in the movie THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is a study in trained self-control. He says little, moves with the physical control of a predator, attacks only the enemy, and has absolute mastery over the technology of his trade" (83).

They hardly speak. Calvera attracts and binds their gazes. The villagers stand and watch in silence, spellbound, with their arms pressed firmly against the sides of their bodies (Fig. 63).[394] This first depiction of the Mexican villagers constructs an image of the ethnic Other as fundamentally submissive, static, powerless, helpless.

Fig. 62. 00:02:47. Fig. 63. 00:02:51.
Source: THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, John Sturges (1960). MGM. DVD.

By contrast, Calvera epitomizes a system of oppression that, at least in this opening scene, predominantly manifests itself by its ruthless appropriation of space, which is both a narrative precondition for the bandits' subsequent exploitation of resources and a visual means to corroborate that narrative. Calvera and his men occupy the village center, enter buildings and storage rooms uninvited, and ransack supplies. In its exposition, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN presents us with a seemingly clear dyadic relationship between oppressor and oppressed, of a uniform victimized collective fully at the mercy of a villainous tyrant and his posse. In its depiction of Calvera, then, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN constructs a different image of ethnic Otherness. Calvera is fundamentally self-serving, oppressive, mobile, violent, despotic.

To the villagers, Calvera's raid on the village was the last straw. Humiliated once again and, what is more, left with hardly any resources to survive the coming winter, the village community debates what to do. Ultimately, the villagers decide that the time has come to fight back. As they themselves lack the necessary combat skills however, the farmers travel North to the United States to hire American gunmen to fight on their behalf. Incidentally, the first thing they encounter upon their arrival is a seemingly routine demonstration of U.S. American professionalism and skilled violence – a demonstration that naturally does not fail to highlight

[394] Corkin has illustrated that the film consistently makes use of visual arrangements that connote a power disparity between the Mexican villagers and Calvera/the American gunfighters. He explains: "The film marks such disparity by almost always shooting the Mexican peasants in a way that accentuates their lesser physical stature, either employing high-angle shots or framing them with much larger gringos. This strategy results in a decrease in social gravity and significance. When the white men sit, the Mexicans sit lower. When the whites stand, the Mexicans squat" (181). The same dynamics apply, however, in the juxtaposition of Calvera and the Mexican villagers.

the protagonists' chivalric nature (cf. Carroll, "The Professional Western" 52). Chris (Yul Brynner) and Vin (Steve McQueen), the two professional gunfighters in question, pique the villagers' interest. After some exchange of information, Chris and Steve agree to help, first, by recruiting more likeminded professionals to fight at their side. Once recruitment is completed, a group of seven American gunfighters, who combine more or less eclectic backgrounds, motives and talents, will travel South to defend the Mexican village and fight as the champions of its people.

Looking at these sequences (festival sequence and exposition), two aspects become clear. First, the film's depiction of Otherness relies heavily on the reproduction of stereotypes. The Mexican characters – with the likely exception of Calvera – are hardly individuated. Whereas the American gunfighters all receive unique characteristics that at once respects their individuality and makes them ideal members of a utopian collective (cf. McGee 146), the Mexican villagers and bandits appear overwhelmingly nondescript. Except for "the wise Old Man, the brave peasant leader Hilario, and the tavern-keeper Sotero" (ibid. 144), and, of course, Calvera, the Mexican characters constitute a mostly uniform collective to which certain characteristics are attributed, none of which create discoursive knowledge about the ethnic Other that challenges what is *a priori* assumed or beside what is mere visual décor. Since Mexicanness is primarily characterized by its excessiveness, members of this ethnic group are either overly submissive or maniacally oppressive. They are helpless pacifists or belligerent tyrants – there seems to be no middle ground.[395] Americanness, by contrast, is essentially informed by exactly that middle ground: compared to the extremes represented by the villagers and Calvera, the Americans are moderates, perpetually meandering between excessive passivism and excessive aggression. Already, this element of Self-exploration – an American Self navigating a conflict between two seemingly antithetical representations of Otherness – resembles closely America's anxieties about the nation's position during the precarious times of the dawning Cold War.

Second, it becomes clear that Self and Other form a strange double bind. In both scenes, the narrative and visual intention lies entirely on articulating the superior nature of the American gunfighters. Consequently, the scenes that display Otherness serve only as visual spectacle or narrative backdrop for the Americans' assertion of dominance. And yet, the construction of the Other is indispensable, since without it the construction of the Self would not check out. The Americans are more powerful physically, they are more skilled, they are more professional, they are wiser only *in relation* to the villagers. Likewise, they are morally superior only *in relation* to Calvera, who might match them in his display of skilled violence and

[395] At the same time, these "mixed modes of representation" – imagining the Mexican Other both as obedient servants and savage rebels and tyrants – are indicative of the "contradictions and anxieties" of colonial discourse and specifically of the "affective ambivalence on the part of the colonizer" (Moore-Gilbert 118).

professionalism but fundamentally lacks the altruism and valor of the Americans. THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN approaches its conceptualization of the Self *ex negativo*. It constructs the identity of the Self on the basis of an allegedly natural *difference* from the Other.

Yet the conditional reliance of the Self on the Other in order to make sense of itself (cf. Castro Varela & Dhawan 225), "the unexpected dependency of the master on the slave in order to establish his own identity through reflection" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 60),[396] has an interesting side-effect. Bhabha has introduced the idea of questioning the nature of stereotypical representations as based on precisely this observation. In "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" he investigates the "paradoxical mode of representation" that informs the stereotype, describing it as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (94-95). Seen in this light, it means that the film's stereotypical representation of Mexicanness not only conveys U.S. American hegemony – in its power to condense Mexican cultural/ethnic identity into a stereotypical Other-representation and subjugate it to a representation of an American Self – but also that the Self's "dependency" (Dyer, "White" 737) on this mode of representing allows for strategies of destabilization, deconstruction and subversion (cf. Moore-Gilbert 117; Castro Varela & Dhawan 225).

In the ability to conjure up stereotypes, and in the access to controlling the means of how an audience perceives said stereotypes, lies power; equally though, in the dependence on these stereotypes to prove and exert said power, and in the need to employ stereotypes to organize the conflicting ontologies of colonial interaction and identity formation, lies a lack of power. Without the Mexicans, the Americans are not American.

Ambivalence and Mimicry

In postcolonial theory, this dual function or dual representation of ethnic Otherness has been described by Bhabha as "the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse – that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of *difference* contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (96; emphasis in original). Constructing and perpetuating stereotypes of ethnic *difference* connects colonizers and colonized in an economy that defies the colonizer's claim for totality of power over the colonized and that reflects the colonizer's anxieties about the stability of their own identity (cf. do Mar Castro Varela & Dhawan 228-9). Inspired by Frantz Fanon and Jacques Lacan (Castro Varela & Dhawan 229), Bhabha develops the concept of *mimicry* in order to identify those points and instances in which the colonizer's anxieties and, correspondingly, the subversive potential of

[396] Butler refers to her own investigation of "Lacan's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic of master and slave" in *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (*Gender Trouble* 60n14).

the colonized crystallizes. As *colonial mimicry* Bhabha understands such performances of the colonized subjects that imitate the colonizer's culture, as imagined by the colonizers.

Rather than unilaterally interpreting it as a strategy of asserting the Self's dominance, Bhabha regards *colonial mimicry* also as palpable manifestations of the Self's inherent fragility. He writes that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (122; emphasis in original), meaning that the colonizer's desire to shape an abject in the colonizer's image is always at odds with the colonizer's claim for originality (or naturality, for that matter). In other words, the legitimacy of colonial rule is predicated on the notion of a natural *difference* between colonizer and colonized, between original and copy – a relation that effectuates and seeks to originate a disparity of power. *Colonial mimicry*, or the practice of copying the original, however, is an act of cultural construction, solidified through repeated and ritualized performances, a notion that collides with the idea of naturality, thus undermining the tenets on which colonial rule and ethnic superiority are based (cf. Castro Varela & Dhawan 231, 235). If the original can be copied, then what exactly is the original (cf. Moore-Gilbert 119-20)?[397]

Applied to THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, Bhabha's theoretical deliberations are helpful to challenge and undermine the understanding of a certain self-evidence or fixity with regards to the film's portrayal of American superiority in relation to the film's construction of Otherness. To illustrate: In preparation for the villagers' fight for independence from Calvera's oppression, the Seven teach the villagers how to fire guns. Some of the villagers turn out to be rather viable shots. Others fail miserably. One of the villagers named Miguel (John A. Alonzo), for instance, shoots wide repeatedly because he fails to implement Bernardo's instructions: Miguel does not squeeze the trigger; instead, he gets "excited" and pulls too hard too soon. Surprised by the rifle's recoil, Miguel misses again and again. Frustrated with Miguel's results, Bernardo eventually tells him to stop shooting and use the rifle as a club instead. Miguel thanks his instructors and obediently promises to do just that as he leaves the scene (01:02:54 – 01:03:31).

[397] This idea has similarly been explored by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, which already indicates the concept's kinship to theories of gender and sexuality, and thus the comprehensive applicability of its underlying dynamic to intersectional analyses. Butler writes: "The 'presence' of so-called heterosexual conventions within homosexual contexts as well as the proliferation of specifically gay discourses of sexual difference, as in the case of 'butch' and 'femme' as historical identifies of sexual style, cannot be explained as chimerical representations of originally heterosexual identities. And neither can they be understood as the pernicious insistence of heterosexist constructs within gay sexuality and identity. The repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories. The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy. The parodic repetition of 'the original' […] reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original" (43, emphases in original).

I propose to read the scene as a visual representation of *colonial mimicry*. As such, several aspects can be noted. First, the scene's construction of ethnic identity as based on 'natural' *difference*. The ineptitude of the villagers regarding guns having already been established, the scene illustrates the passing on of allegedly essential, culturally specific knowledge from American teachers to their Mexican students. Entailed in this relation is a clear hierarchy of power, that of master and apprentice. This aspect is also embedded in the scene's visuals, with the American instructors squatting or standing and the Mexican students sitting or lying on the ground. Likewise, the Mexicans' plain white outfits (without hats) differ markedly from the Americans' individuated denim and khaki attire (with hats) (Fig. 64).

Fig. 64. Source: THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, John Sturges (1960). MGM. DVD. 01:03:08.

Second, the scene's immanent potential for subversion by means of deconstructing *difference*: Underlying the scene is the assumption that the Americans are better shots than the Mexican villagers because of their ethnic/cultural background, that the practice of expertly shooting a gun condenses and expresses power and thus fortifies cultural and ethnic *difference* upon which the legitimation of that power rests (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 476). Yet the scene is also informed by a subliminal threat: though authorized by their American teachers, the Mexicans acquire the knowledge and the tools of how to perform a quintessentially American practice. And since good teachers make good students – and here the teachers are magnificent – we expect the Mexicans to eventually excel at shooting, or else we must call into question the magnificence of the American instructors. In their successful imitation of the white Americans' instructions, however, dwells the threat of them *becoming*

white Americans, of appropriating Americanness – which is always already codified as Whiteness – and of denaturalizing the legitimacy of white American dominance. If anyone can learn how to fire a gun expertly, then anyone can learn how to *become* an American, how to *become* white, regardless of their ethnicity (cf. Moore-Gilbert 119-20).

What is more, the threat of the Mexicans' appropriation of the gun-firing practice calls into question the premise of the previously established *difference*: the allegedly natural marriage of white American identity and gunfighting expertise. If the Mexicans (the copy) were to perform Americanness on par with Americans (the original), then how original is original? If the Mexicans were to excel at gunfighting, their success would lay bare cultural identity as culturally constructed, effectively exposing the premise of naturality as an ideological pretext to justify colonial rule and white hegemony.

Inextricably tied to the scene's assertion of dominance is the anxiety that such dominance might vanish. Although we see most Mexicans become moderately proficient with a firearm eventually, the film insists that a certain degree of *difference* is retained. This *difference* precludes the Mexicans from becoming as professional as the Americans, which signifies THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's attempt to dispel this anxiety and camouflage its cultural construction of *difference* as natural after all. They become "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). Hence, Bernardo sends Miguel away: The comic relief the scene provides, contained in the ineptitude of one Mexican villager who is unable to fully emulate the Americans' habitus, reflects the film's attempt to alleviate the conflicting dynamics of intercultural contact; that is, of the paradox between simultaneous assertion of and challenge towards the Self's conceptualization of ethnic superiority. THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN concludes that, ultimately, the Mexicans cannot transgress the ethnic divide. They become Americanized, not Americans. They do not become white. *Difference* remains and hence, a discrepancy of power is retained.

Yet the dynamics of the scene reveal that this power disparity is carefully policed and certainly not self-evident or invisible (cf. Bernardi 106-7; cf. Dyer, "White"). Quite the contrary: Whiteness and non-Whiteness are constructed and reconstructed in perpetuity, and the film's strategies of naturalization function only to justify as natural that which is inadvertently acknowledged as culturally constructed. This is essentially the film's conundrum: in scenes like this one, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN debunks itself as being knowingly trapped between being engaged in the process of *constructing* Whiteness as the basis of American superiority and *naturalizing* it, regardless.

There are certain elements in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN that point towards the film's awareness about trying to resolve a seemingly indissoluble conundrum: the film endeavors to naturalize American superiority while at the same time the film relies on performance to substantiate that claim. I have proposed to read the resulting frictions of these conflicting

dynamics as leverage points for a deconstructive analysis. Additionally, I have introduced the idea of Self-exploration as a theme to guide my analysis, because it prioritizes the conflicting dynamics over the eventual claim of American superiority, thus inhabiting a less biased vantage point for discussion. While my earlier elaborations were meant to illuminate the film's Self-exploration of ethnicity, the following section will center the film's negotiation of gender and investigate structural analogies between THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's exploration of both concepts.

Hybridity

Like DODGE CITY did in 1939 and THE NAKED SPUR did in 1953, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, too, negotiates gender by contrasting its focal male characters and representations of idealized masculinity – Yul Brynner's Chris and Steve McQueen's Vin – with several, inherently flawed sidekicks.[398] The sidekicks – Lee (Robert Vaughn), Harry (Brad Dexter), Britt (James Coburn), Chico (Horst Buchholz), and Bernardo (Charles Bronson) – subsequently function as compartmentalized extensions to the heroic Self and explore aspects of gender that cannot be reconciled with the heroes' representations of white masculinity. They repeatedly transgress the boundaries of conventional masculinity to measure their violations against the gender norm represented by Chris and Vin, only to fortify said boundaries and cement the gender norm. Seen in this light, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN employs processes of negotiating gender that are very much in keeping with my earlier analyses of hegemonic masculinity in the American Western. What is more, these processes indicate that the film's negotiation of gender is not dissimilar to its negotiation of ethnicity.[399] In the film's pluralistic and relational approach to representing gender lies a clear schematic similarity that connects the constructions of male

---

[398] The way THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN portrays these flaws is greatly informed by Christian symbolism, as they are all reminiscent of the seven deadly sins: Lee shows spells of *hysteria* not unlike those suffered by James Stewart in Anthony Mann's Westerns. He is particular about his appearance (which also puts him in proximity to the dandy-character that denotes an explicitly homophobic variant of male degeneracy in Western genre tradition) (cf. Pumphrey, "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath?" 55; Bayer 152, 163). He suffers from alcoholism and generally shows tendencies of over-indulgence (gluttony). Harry (full name: Harry Luck) is a character who lives in denial. Driven by an unhealthy lust for gold, he refuses to accept that Chris has assembled this troop of mercenaries for chivalric reasons alone (greed). Britt is a character solely motivated by the narcissistic desire to perfect his skills. Killing, to him, is a craft that must be optimized and put on display (pride).

[399] Both rely on relationality and reciprocity. Both evince a norm by having abject representations repeatedly transgress boundaries through performances of excess. This structural parallel between discourses of negotiating gender and ethnicity has been at the heart of a number of studies (for instance, cf. Said 206-7). With regards to studies that investigate specifically the intersection of such discourses in the Western, Amy S. Greenberg has shown, for instance, that such patterns of feminizing ethnic Otherness (in order to contrast that Other with a complementary masculinist Self) are deeply embedded in the historical narratives of American territorial expansionism, dating back as early as the years following the Revolutionary War against the British (cf. 103-21). Similarly, accounts like Thomas Klein's chapter "Postkolonialismus" in his recent study *Geschichte – Mythos - Identität*, have confirmed the ontological kinship of American territorial expansionism and discourses of gender (cf. 52-62).

and ethnic hegemony, that compounds the epistemes of my theoretical framework and Bhabha's deliberations about the tenets of colonialism.

But to reduce THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's negotiation of gender to a confident assertion of white male hegemony qua established generic conventions is to dismiss the wealth of discourses the film addresses, and the sensibility and awareness with which it engages in them.[400] In fact, an earlier (very brief but poignant) assessment of the film by Joan Mellen hints at the complexities THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN touches on with regards to negotiations of gender, specifically white masculinity. Mellen writes:

> That THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN finds the attempt to resurrect the most outworn worship of the male body, masculine strength, and manly fortitude no longer possible, while continuing to insist that these alone make life worth living, is a measure both of despair and desperation in the Hollywood of the sixties over the profound disaffection with these very values in the nation. (258)[401]

I wish to illustrate this point by discussing in depth the role of Chico (played by German newcomer Horst Buchholz). In particular, I will shed some light on the character's hybrid identity as a tool the film employs to explore the overlapping boundaries of Self and Other, of subject and abject (both male and American). I propose that THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN uses

[400] THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN contains several scenes in which the tenets of white male hegemony are challenged. Slotkin, for instance, has shown that Calvera's utterance towards Chris and the Americans that they are essentially "in the same business" (01:10:15-01:10:17) dramatically troubles the assumed self-evidence of the legitimacy and righteousness of American intervention (*Gunfighter Nation* 478-9). The utterance creates proximity, or a certain sameness/semblance between Calvera's and Chris' representation of white masculinity – they are equally professional, they are equally violent, they are equally dominant. But at the same time, because the discourses of negotiating gender and ethnicity are so deeply interwoven, the utterance troubles the *difference* between both characters as previously established on the grounds of ethnicity – American restraint, Mexican excess. Likewise, the Seven's discussion about the perks and faults of being a professional gunslinger – "Home: none. Wife: none. Kids: none. Prospects: zero" (01:24:44-01:24:53) – challenges the conceptualization of rugged individualism as a defining virtue of heroic white masculinity, especially as they are juxtaposed with the idea of living a quiet domestic life like the Mexican villagers. Slotkin observes: "Although the litany is meant to underline the ideological premise that the solid family life and working-class virtues of the Mexicans are morally superior to gunfighting, it becomes a paean to rugged individualism. […] Thus the film's visual and stylistic apparatus valorize the hunter/gunfighter ethic of violence, mobility, and individualism at the expense of the farmer-values, the peon-values" (ibid. 478). What is more, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN again conflates discourses of gender and ethnicity: The hollow objective of establishing proximity/sameness/semblance between the Americans and Mexicans as the individualists ostensibly sympathize with the romantic vision of domesticity troubles the *difference* between them as previously established on the grounds of gender. Hence, the scene ends with an overly emphatic reinforcement of white male dominance (as contained in the image of the gunslinger individualist) that coincides with the redrawing of a distinct ethnic boundary: "Enemies: none." – "No enemies?" – Alive." (01:25:11-01:25:21).

[401] Mellen opens her discussion of Hollywood's representations of masculinities in the sixties with THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN as she regards the film an early reflection of the "mood of nostalgia" that permeated U.S. culture in that decade (257). Though I contend that THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, with its complex negotiation of individualism and domesticity embedded in a narrative of containment, is rather reflective of the fifties and perhaps foreshadowing of the sixties, I find that her reading and chronological classification of the film is still equally valid.

Chico's hybrid identity to challenge societal norms of gender (and ethnicity) through repeated acts of transgression and convergence. Again, I wish to discuss these norms in terms of the socio-cultural and political hyper-narratives of individualism and domesticity; likewise, I will show that the film's final resolution reflects the prevalent U.S. American doctrine of containment.

When the viewer first meets Chico, he is introduced as one of the keen observers of Chris and Vin's display of masculine authority. A set-piece scenario requires Chris and Vin to do a job that nobody else could have done: to drive a hearse carrying the body of a Native American to a cemetery against the opposition of a racist town. Chico admires their bravado and shortly after requests he be allowed to join Chris' mercenary group. Chris however, in a contest seemingly intended to test Chico's quickness with a gun, deems him unfit. Mortified, Chico leaves the scene, apparently abandoning his plan to team up with Chris. When he returns drunk, he throws a wild tantrum about the injustices committed to him, thus publicly humiliating himself once more and further minimizing his chances to be hired by Chris.[402]

But Chico does not give up that easily. He secretly follows the forming mercenary group. In a montage sequence that chronicles the gunfighters' southward journey, the film repeatedly intersperses images of or references to Chico. At one point, the group finds him casually sitting by a campfire. He has prepared food for the group. Apparently, he has placed himself there to be looked at. We conclude that he must have overtaken them, thus changing his position from follower to leader. The notion of Chico's persistence and his display of restraint and leadership apparently convinces Chris that Chico is, after all, of the material he is looking for: With a swooping hand gesture, Chris invites him to join the group. However, Chico stays put at his campfire. Without looking up, his hat drawn deeply in his face, he merely imitates Chris' gesture. Chico invites the group to *join him*. The sequence ends ambiguously: on the one hand capturing the characters' jovial and amicable reactions to Chico's gesture, on the other hand never giving the viewer visual evidence of whether the group actually does join him, and, therefore, whether Chico has completed this rite of passage.[403]

As if to clarify, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN continues with a scene that adds to the ambiguities of the previous montage sequence. In this scene, the film reveals most clearly its awareness about the conflicting discourses it engenders and foreshadows their eventual resolution. About forty-four minutes into the film, the gunslingers arrive at the Mexican village. Despite their agreement to protect and liberate the villagers, they enjoy a lukewarm reception from their hosts-cum-employers. The villagers hide timidly inside their houses. Suddenly the

[402] In Chico's bursts of unrestraint emotions, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN reveals a striking parallel to THE NAKED SPUR and Howie Kemp's spells of *hysteria* (see 4.5.1.). Chico's frantic meltdowns, too, make visible the impossibility of conforming with a gender norm imposed by hegemonic masculinity.

[403] Aptly, the sequence occurs en route of the Seven, immediately after a river crossing, which substantiates the transitional character of the events.

church bells ring. Expecting an alarm, the villagers hastily leave their houses and gather in the village plaza (Fig. 65). "Who sounded the alarm?" (00:44:52-00:45:00), one villager, named Sotero (Rico Alaniz), inquires. The camera cuts to a low angle-shot of the belfry as Chico steps out and confidently declares that it was him who sounded the alarm (Fig. 66). After two shots showing the gunfighters' puzzled reactions (Fig. 67), the camera cuts back to a long shot framing most of the village and its inhabitants (who are facing the church gate). Chico steps out of the church (Fig. 68),[404] parading towards the center of the space as he hops onto the village well, all the while addressing the villagers in a pathos-laden speech that at once accuses them of ungratefulness and promises the gunslingers' devotion to the village's fight for freedom regardless of the villagers' own cowardice (Fig. 69-70).

Throughout the scene, the camera repeatedly cuts back and forth to present to the viewer the mostly enigmatic reactions of the characters to Chico's exuberant speech. It seems like nobody really knows what to make of such a display. They seem flattered and bemused, but equally puzzled. Eventually, the scene culminates with Chico looking back over his shoulder in the direction of Chris, apparently seeking approval for his demonstration (Fig. 71). Smilingly, Chris validates Chico's act, sealing it with a verdict that accepts him as a member of the group: "Now we're seven" (Fig. 72) (00:46:41-00:46:42).

Fig. 65. 00:44:24.

Fig. 66. 00:44:29.

Fig. 67. 00:44:36.

Fig. 68. 00:44:51.

[404] The belfry as vestige of Mexico's Spanish colonial past sets the stage for the ensuing gender performance. Thus, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN again intertwines discourses of gender and cultural/ethnic identity.

Fig. 69. 00:45:05.

Fig. 70. 00:45:23.

Fig. 71. 00:45:53.

Fig. 72. 00:45:58.

Source: THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, John Sturges (1960). MGM. DVD.

There are several aspects I would like to discuss here. First, the gender dynamics at play in these scenes are generally consistent with those I have outlined above in my discussion of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN's negotiation of ethnicity. That is, the film begins by establishing an allegedly natural *difference* between Chris and Chico's representation of gender. Chris (and Vin) actively drives the hearse to the cemetery; Chico passively observes (and imitates the viewer's perception of Chris and Vin's display). Chris controls and organizes space; Chico reacts to the spatial dispositions imposed on him. Chris dictates the rules to a test of skills; Chico obeys and fails the challenge. Chris assumes the authority of a gatekeeper to an elite group; Chico is desperate to join but is denied access. Chris hardly talks, he communicates efficiently with minimal use of words and gestures; Chico frequently erupts with emotional outbursts and wordy, passionate soliloquies. Chris can hold his liquor and practice restraint; Chico cannot and succumbs to spells of unrestraint, excessive emotions. These are all familiar, stereotypical Western tropes of negotiating masculine dominance (cf. Meeuf 152-77, cf. Berkenkamp 53-56, 65; cf. Tompkins 56) via seemingly causal connections of attributes and the male bodies that perform them. In this scenario, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN plays on them to establish *difference* between Chris and Chico; the lessons being, that, one, Chris represents a gender norm that Chico repeatedly transgresses, and that, two, no matter how hard Chico

tries, he will never be able to emulate that norm. We infer that Chris simply embodies by genetic design what Chico tries so desperately to appropriate through *masquerade*.

Yet these dynamics take an interesting turn in the subsequent two scenes. The campfire scene and the village center scene, in which Chico is granted preliminary, then permanent rights to join the group, offers a fresh perspective – quite literally. Because, most strikingly, it is in these scenes that Chico shifts from being the focal character through whose eyes we admire the display of Chris and Vin's bravado to being the object whose actions and performances we experience through the eyes of Chris and Vin. In these scenes, we learn that Chico actively positions himself to control and attract the gaze (of Chris, the group, the villagers, the viewer); Chris becomes the observer. Chico now controls and commands space; Chris merely reacts to a prefigured environment. Chico now dictates the rules of engagement; Chris and the group are forced to respond to the situation. In many ways then, the montage sequence and especially the scene at the village center – which in both design and effect resembles Michel Foucault's theorizations of the Panopticon[405] – imagine a reversal of roles, or a shift in power, and therefore, a fluidity of power. In both scenes, the hitherto subordinated Chico is shown to be in control and to exert agency because he has understood how to don the mask of hegemonic masculinity. He imitates one of Chris' gestures, he assumes the role he imagines Chris has in the microcosm of the group and in the macrocosm of society, he tries to incorporate the gender norms set by Chris and appropriate his habitus, and, most importantly, the viewer experiences this metamorphosis through a transformation of perspective. Chico not only emulates hegemonic masculinity. He also assumes the cinematic codes and conventions by which the white male hero is to be represented.

On the one hand, therefore, Chico's mimicry of Chris' habitus stabilizes hegemonic masculinity as a cultural ideal of gender – as a representation of gender that is desirable, encourages imitation, and is thus normalizing and normativizing. On the other hand, Chico's

[405] The figure of the panopticon is particularly interesting here because it connects (the fluidity of) power relations and architecture, or, more broadly speaking, space. Foucault describes with reference to Jeremy Bentham the panopticon as, first, an "architectural figure" that "arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately," so that "in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (*Discipline and Punish* 200-2). Second, in its effect, the panopticon "induce[s] […] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (ibid. 201). More than that, "as a kind of laboratory of power" (ibid. 204), the panopticon engages both those occupying the cells of the peripheric ring and those occupying the tower in a simultaneously "visible and unverifiable" (ibid. 201) economy of power. Transferred to THE MAGINIFICENT SEVEN, Chico's positioning in relation to the villagers resembles that of the central tower in relation to the peripheric ring, with the distinction that Chico's spatial position of power is not at all disindividualized or concealed (cf. ibid. 202). In its effect, Chico's appropriation of that space in tandem with the gaze construction this entails unquestionably signifies an appropriation of power over the villagers, as he assumes a position from which he can see everyone and everything. This position, however, ultimately includes the American gunslingers who also sit or stand at various peripheral points. Therefore, through the back and forth of looks between Chico and Chris, through the multiplication of internal gaze constructions, the film introduces multiple, fluid power relations that share the structure that they are conveyed through space and gaze.

mimicry destabilizes hegemonic masculinity in that it inevitably discloses the paradoxical structure by which this normative cultural ideal is formed: Chico reconstructs what is allegedly natural; that is, his *mimicry* is unequivocally staged as *masquerade*, as performance. As Chico looks back over his shoulder to assure himself that Chris and the rest of his 'audience' have been avidly watching his display, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN unmistakably shows awareness of the conflicting discourses it is operating within. The film makes it painstakingly obvious that masculinity is a show, an act – and what is more – it validates the theatrical performance as legitimate. This begs the question: If Chico, the hybrid who has no 'natural' claim to hegemonic masculinity, can successfully perform and emulate it, does that mean that THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN breaks with the idea of natural *difference*, hence with the notion of white male dominance as preordained by nature and inscribed into particular bodies?[406]

A closer look into how THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN resolves these tensions provides an answer. When the battle for the villagers' independence is won, most of the Seven have died. Chris, Vin, and Chico survive. They are now faced with a choice: stay within the safe, liberated village community and become one of them, or leave and continue to lead the dangerous lives of gunslingers. For Chico, the predicament seems even more profound, as he has previously fallen in love with one of the village's women, Petra (Rosenda Monteros). Chico and the others must decide whether they want to become part of the uniformly clad Mexican village that so powerfully reflects domestic conformity or retain the individualism of the American cowboy hero.[407] Ultimately, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN ends with the verdict that Chris and Vin must leave. They cannot stay with the villagers, settle, become farmers, and succumb to domestic conformity. They must retain their individualism. They ride out to new horizons, "¡vaya con Dios!" (02:00:30-02:00:32), as the Old Man says.

Chico, however, must stay. At first, he rides out with Chris and Vin. But only a few yards outside the village, they suddenly stop. Chris looks at Chico, and, ever the taciturn, benign paternalist, implores Chico to stay. More precisely, he seems to articulate a subconscious decision Chico up until now never knew he had made: "Adios!" (02:01:18; note the Spanish, establishing *difference*). Apparently relieved that his secret, repressed desire for a domestic

---

[406] Again, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN conflates discourses of gender and ethnicity in that it consciously coalesces subtext – Chico's attempt to perform in accordance with the norms of hegemonic masculinity – and text – Chico's pathos-laden speech that addresses the issues of the Mexican villagers, only to draw a line between his ethnic identity and theirs. His attempt to approximate the symbolic male body (creating sameness) coincides with his attempt to distance himself from the stereotyped Mexican body (creating *difference*).

[407] Another, more outspokenly imperialistic Western of the same year, John Wayne's monumental epic THE ALAMO (1960), contains a similar scenario: At one point before the inevitable battle against the Spanish army commences, Richard Widmark's character, Col. Jim Bowie, muses and deliberates about the attractions of leaving the gunslinging path behind for a domestic life in Mexico, preferably with one of Mexico's beautiful women. Here, too, the narrative purports a connection between domesticity, Mexican cultural identity, and femininity.

life is recognized and authorized, Chico replies in fashion: “Adios” (02:01:26; voiced in Spanish, Chico confirms *difference*). He swings his horse around, rides back into the village, stops, lays down his guns and joins Petra, his Mexican inamorata, who is threshing corn. In a powerful final gesture, he relinquishes his guns, the insignia of his share of the individualist fantasy, and joins her in her domestic chores. Given the choice between individualism and domesticity, Chico opts for domesticity – that is, he is strongly encouraged to do so.

It is here that the structural parallels between the Western’s negotiation of gender and ethnicity could not be clearer: As the remaining gunslingers find themselves in the same conundrum between domesticity and individualism that Howie Kemp found himself in in THE NAKED SPUR, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN gives both the stereotyped Mexican collective and the particular body of Petra the same symbolic treatment that THE NAKED SPUR had given Lina. In its equation of hegemonic masculinity with (excessive) individualism, THE NAKED SPUR projected everything that could not be aligned with it onto the gendered Other: a settled life, the promise of home, family, monogamous heterosexuality – in short: domestic conformity. THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN replicates this structure, except that it associates the same attributes with Mexicanness and, through Petra, further stresses the conceptual kinship with representations of femininity. As representations of Otherness, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN applies femininity and non-white ethnicity as interchangeable concepts.

Whereas THE NAKED SPUR ended without closure, emphasizing the burden of this irreconcilable conflict, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN finds closure in homogenization and containment, which plays out as a vehement re-establishment of *difference*, a rigorous reinforcement of naturalization, and a superficial undoing of its flirtations with performativity and cultural construction.

In the hybrid Chico, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN entertains the idea whether the U.S. American cultural ideal of the gunslinger can be appropriated. Can Chico transcend his pathology and perform in accordance with the cultural ideal to the extent that he is accepted as one? Phrased differently: Can the American Self – an idealized image of masculinity and Whiteness – incorporate the Other to the point where they form a coherent, harmonious whole?

The answer THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN provides is no. After all, Chico’s attempts have been futile. There is no way his identity can be reconciled with the American cultural ideal.[408]

---

[408] Adding to his brief description of Chico, Slotkin observes: “This theme [of Chico’s attempted Americanization; T.S.] is emphasized by the role of Bernardo Riley (Bronson), the child of a Mexican mother and an Irish father, whose identity is split between pride in his status as American killer-professional and nostalgia for the material and familial values represented by Mexico” (*Gunfighter Nation* 477). As with Chico, this *hybridization* experiment is destined to fail. Individualism and domesticity remain irreconcilable. Bernardo dies in a scene that symbolically encapsulates the incompatibility of both spheres: Engaged in a gunfight, a group of Mexican boys who have been hero-worshiping Bernardo appear out of nowhere. Trying to protect the children and eliminate his enemies, he accidentally reveals his cover and is shot dead.

They must not ride towards new horizons together. *Difference* must be retained (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 485).

It is also crucial to mention that THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN imagines this reestablishment of ethnic and gendered boundaries as an act of self-subjugation: In that the film portrays this denouement as a realization to which Chico must be prompted by Chris although he felt its necessity and legitimacy deep down all the time, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN recodifies Chico's aspirations. Suddenly, his attempts to become Americanized not only read as persistent-yet-futile trials to move up in terms of his gender/ethnic status (cf. ibid. 477), but also as acts of denials of his allegedly natural place of belonging: In the logic of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, Americanness and hegemonic masculinity are the properties of purely white American men. An intermediary, upward mobility is impossible for Chico. The cultural ideal of white male hegemony must be sanitized: internal transgressions must be eliminated (Bernardo, Lee, Britt, and Harry die); external threats must be vanquished (Calvera, the villagers, and Chico remain inferior). Subversion must be contained.

But this is only one part of a bigger picture: A crucial aspect I have not yet mentioned in detail is Chico's age in relation to the others (he is also frequently given the moniker "The Kid"). Chico's youth in comparison to the mature gunslingers he tries to emulate, on the one hand fuels a great deal of his character's motivation to become like his idolized elders. Symbolically, on the other hand, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN again utilizes the hybrid propensities of the character to negotiate generational *difference*. Chico represents a generation of youths who grew up with fathers – actual or symbolical – who had been stylized to represent invincible, immaculate – yes, magnificent – ambassadors of America's collective Self (in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.). Yet, as the film clearly addresses in the many flaws and deep-rooted traumas of its compartmentalized representations of Self, these men are not actually that magnificent. Their magnificence lies in the fact that they retain *the image* of magnificence to inspire others. They perform magnificence; that is, hegemonic masculinity, making it seem natural. They do not actually occupy that space, because that space is fantasy, a dreamscape. They too don a mask.

That is also why Chico must not ride out with Chris and Vin to new horizons in the end: to protect the dreamers and preserve the dreamscape. As I have illustrated, conceptualizations of white male hegemony inform this final act of segregation. But equally, the scene must be understood as an act of paternalistic protectionism. Of an elderly male generation who has walked the path of war and who has practiced the law of the gun warning the next generation of now adolescent men to not follow in the footsteps of their fathers. To demobilize, to contain, to abstain from violence and lay down their guns, to settle for a quiet, domestic life in peace. These young men have their whole life in front of them. And while they are capable – to an extent – of emulating hegemonic masculinity, if need be (as the hybrid Chico demonstrates in

his becoming *like* one of the Seven), right now their place should be at home. Theirs is the second dreamscape the film imagines: domesticity. It is a safe space that defies the troublesome conflicts of 'the world' outside, and it is one that will never belong to Chris and Vin. Their individualist freedom is both a blessing and a curse, as is Chico's life in domestic security.

To conclude: I have offered an analysis to two Western films of the fifties that I consider to be paradigmatic examples of the time, in the sense that they perfectly reflect and encapsulate the era's socio-political currents. Using the hyper-narratives of domesticity, individualism, and containment, I have demonstrated that these films are characterized by serious, sophisticated negotiations of conflicting dynamics that eschew the conventional taglines of Self-affirmation or self-evidence.

Both THE NAKED SPUR and THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN explore the possibility of a societal consensus, of a principle by which to organize society. Before, that is, prior to and during World War II, this consensus was undisputedly the legitimacy of heteronormativity and white male hegemony. As these films openly scrutinize the nature of that consensus in a rapidly changing time, they invariably reveal the fragile and "fragmented" nature of that consensus (Costello 176), thereby continuing the incrementally more critical examination of U.S. American cultural identity through the mythologies of the Western.

Both films dramatize that finding a consensus requires great sacrifice. It is a pyrrhic victory that, in the case of THE NAKED SPUR, demands men let go of the symbolic male body as cultural ideal, or in the case of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, acknowledge that this cultural ideal can only continue to exist in the dreamscape of a never-ending frontier. As Patrick McGee has argued about THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, the film's ending emits a strong sense of apocalyptic transition, of futility and defeat, of inevitable death (cf. 149). THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN draws most of its appeal from glorifying its heroes' 'natural' magnificence and their death-defying commitment to individualism, and yet the film unveils this as an illusion; more, delusion. Like the Old Man elegiacally says, "Only the farmers have won. They remain forever. They are like the land itself. […] You are like the wind, blowing over the land and passing on" (01:59:33-02:00:00). In other words, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, as was THE NAKED SPUR, is aware of the changing times, and that the individualist ideal must eventually give way for a new, domestic, more sustainable and less ephemeral, if by no means less complex ideal – Chico's, for instance.

And yet, while both film's address the necessity to adapt to changing times, they equally still gravitate towards heteronormativity and white male hegemony, as if in anachronistic denial. In doing so, THE NAKED SPUR and THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN usher in the end of the classic Western's general espousal of heteronormativity and white male hegemony as principles by which to organize society, while still putting on a pedestal the individualist gunfighter hero as

the epitome of white male hegemony. Where THE NAKED SPUR was lachrymose and maudlin in its mourning about the necessary and inevitable disappearance of the individualist Western hero, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is belligerent and pugnacious in its creation and defense of a dreamscape wherein magnificent heroes shall forevermore remain magnificent. And yet, both films evince the perilous fragility of the system that they so vehemently defend: THE NAKED SPUR by dramatizing the compulsive effect of heteronormativity onto a male subject who is refused a stable identity whether he embraces or denies conventional masculinity as confirmed through practices of heterosexuality; THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN by divulging that its only means to retain the myth of white male originality/naturality (and its concomitant power structures) is to sequester it to a captivating, equally paradoxical dreamscape.

Incidentally, both films are deeply entrenched in the ambiguities of *nostalgia*. This trope will resonate strongly throughout my following analysis of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE and THE WILD BUNCH.

4.6. Liberation (1962-1969)

4.6.1. Nostalgia: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962)

It has been a central goal of this study to acknowledge the Western's arguably inherent proclivity to explore ambiguity and reveal contingency. Though, more often than not, Westerns fail to control and attempt to conceal these elements, there have also been those films that have evidently drawn their appeal from practicing revisionism, self-reflection, and ideological criticism. Especially with regards to conceptualizations of gender identity, the Western has proved to be a popular vehicle for such critical, self-reflective explorations and negotiations. That said, most of the films I have discussed so far confirmed the status quo in the end, that is, the ideological pattern that invariably informed their representations of gender: a heteronormative order governed by white male hegemony. As I reach the final decade of filmmaking that is subject to my analysis, I wonder whether this structural consistency will stretch to the sixties, prominently known as "a decade that shook the world" (Heale 1) with a myriad of events predicated on protest, resistance, rebellion, empowerment, and liberation. In other words, I wonder, with the emergence of a powerful Civil Rights Movement and the resurgence of a reformed, more widespread feminism, whether Western films of the sixties could produce narratives and images equipped to formulate a consistent social commentary that reflected the emancipatory atmosphere of its time and rescinded white male hegemony.

Admittedly, John Ford's 1962 feature THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, starring John Wayne as Tom Doniphon, James Stewart as Ransom Stoddard, Lee Marvin as Liberty Valance, and Vera Miles as Hallie Stoddard, might be a strange place to start such an

investigation, seeing that Ford throughout his career endorsed rather than challenged the disbanding of ambiguities (with notable exceptions like STAGECOACH),[409] and given that the one element film criticism and scholarly discourse has repeatedly characterized it by is *nostalgia*.[410] Such readings of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE see the film as a wistful testament of an aging director to a bygone era, lamenting the loss of something irretrievable, something that cannot be restored in the present. Alternately, this 'something' has been discerned as "lost machismo" (Mellen 258) or an "out-of-date masculinity yearned for by those in the present" (Meeuf 178).[411]

At the same time, film criticism has pointed out the "corrosive revisionism" (Coursen 238) that THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE seems imbued with, even considering the film "as the most important American film of the 1960s" because of its "profoundly skeptical reexamination of American history and mythology" (McBride 623). Such readings equally recognize the film's at times heavy-hearted yearning for the past. But they situate this element of the film within its larger, multifaceted scenario, emphasizing THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE's "post-modern complexity" (Kitses, *Horizons West* 118). Indeed, Jim Kitses' reading of the film is still one of the most insightful and comprehensive accounts to date. Describing THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE as "at once nostalgic and critical, a celebration of myth and its deconstruction, a radical recycling" (ibid. 118), Kitses identifies the film's complicating, seemingly paradoxical qualities. Yet the way he phrases his perfectly convincing argument suggests that he, too, considers *nostalgia* and *criticism* somewhat separate, opposing ideas.[412]

However, recent scholarship of *nostalgia* has demonstrated the inherently critical dimensions of the concept (cf. Sprengler 1-9). Originally defined by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer as "a familiar, if not especially frequent, condition of extreme homesickness" (Davis 1), *nostalgia* acquired its common meaning in the 18th century as "the impossible desire to return

[409] Expressing a similar point that nicely ties into an overall theme of both this study and this particular film, Michael Dempsey, writing for *Film Quarterly* in 1975, noted about the director: "Many have compared Ford to Whitman, but the comparison does not favor Ford. It is one thing to say they both sought less the literal truth than the truth of myth, but on most occasions Ford shows far less ability than Whitman to distinguish between the two. It is one thing for a nineteenth-century poet to enshrine the myth of America's unique nobility but quite another for a twentieth-century film-maker to repeat the process, and on an infinitely more sentimental and commercially bastardized level, as though American history has stood still since the Civil War" (4).
[410] Occasionally, scholars have used the terms "elegy/elegiac" rather than "nostalgia/nostalgic" to describe THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE's tone, either by treating both concepts rather synonymously (cf. Corkin 211) or by using the former to specifically emphasize the tragic element contained in the film's narratological arrangement (cf. Wood, "Shall We Gather at the River" 23).
[411] Arguably, such an understanding of *nostalgia* can be applied to most texts of the genre. Indeed, the Western's record of romanticizing a specific version of the past in contrast to a tumultuous present has been well-documented in Western scholarship since the 1970s (cf. Kitses, "Authorship and Genre" 57; cf. Scheugl 287).
[412] Indeed, Douglas Pye reveals a similar discrimination, as he points out the Western's generally consistent approach of "simultaneously endors[ing] nostalgically valued primitivism and mim[ing] the inevitable eclipse of these values by social forms" (Pye, "Genre and History" 111).

to a lost time, most frequently the time of one's youth" (Smith, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes…" 464). More recently, *nostalgia* has gathered considerable attention in both Sociology and the many domains of Culture Studies, especially those dealing with visual media, as a viable operator to decipher and unravel the often politicized or ideology-laden relations between past and present generations (Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 1979; Stewart, *On Longing*, 2007; Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 2009). For instance, Frederic Jameson has provided an immensely impactful contribution by making accessible *nostalgia* as a practical vantage point for postmodern cultural critique (*The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*), arguing that *nostalgia* is "a form of pastiche symptomatic of the postmodern crisis of historicity" (Grainge 29), and criticizing its ubiquitous usage in visual media as a means of "effacing history" (Sprengler 2), as "we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach" (Jameson 10).

Equally significant and drawing much from Jameson's writing, Paul Grainge has subsumed a selection of previous attempts of theorizing *nostalgia* under his useful distinction between a nostalgic *mode* and *mood*. Grainge suggests that in order to "[account] for the development of nostalgia as a style, […] a culturalist position needs to mediate between the poles of loss and amnesia" (Grainge 29), in other words approach narratives of *nostalgia* in a way that respects both the absolute (the image of loss that is created, the nostalgic *mood*) and the processual (the creation of that image, the nostalgic *mode*).[413] Grainge's distinction is helpful because it both stresses the validity of the nostalgic artifact as memory and simultaneously invites us to challenge that validity by revealing the artifact as a representation that is subject to a regime of conscious and subconscious aesthetic choices. As such, *nostalgia*-as-practice always oscillates between remembering and distorting, remembering and omitting, remembering and forgetting. Scholarship that discusses these blind spots of nostalgic representations can reveal "the cultural and political contexts in which it [*nostalgia*, T.S.] circulates" (Sprengler 1-2), thus opening avenues for ideological-critical research. Accordingly, Debbora Battaglia succinctly summarizes the *nostalgia*'s revisionist, self-critical propensities: "nostalgic practice invites self-problematization" (93).

Conceived of in this way, *nostalgia* congeals different layers of space and time and thus allows for an approach that respects *nostalgia* as criticism, rather than as a counterbalance or antithesis to it.[414] *Nostalgia* "tells us something about our own historical

---

[413] Other approaches of theorizing *nostalgia*, for instance Svetlana Boym's distinction between reflective and restorative *nostalgia* (Boym 49 in McGillis 47) or Christine Sprengler's distinction between "the nostalgic experience (i.e., the longing for an irretrievable ideal) and the nostalgic object (i.e., what one is nostalgic for)" (2), indeed resemble Grainge's distinction very closely.

[414] Accounts like David F. Coursen's, who criticized the inadequacy of the *nostalgia*/elegy concept as a theoretical backdrop to analyses of THE MAN WHO SOT LIBERTY VALANCE because, in his reasoning, "the operative word – 'elegiac' – […]" would "[neglect] as it does Ford's ambivalence towards the past and

consciousness, about the myths we construct and circulate and about our desire to make history meaningful on a personal and collective level" (Sprengler 3). It is the lens that actively zooms in on "an imagined past romanticized through memory and desire" and the mirror that reflects "the deficient present" (Hogan & Pursell 69). And it is the tool through which we can critically revaluate the process of looking as projecting, looking as (re-)imagining, looking as superimposing. *Nostalgia*, by design, shows us the image while making visible its palimpsestic nature.

This way, *nostalgia* seems a perfect concept to approach THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, especially for a gender-critical reading, because it provides an analytical operator equipped to reconcile both the film's yearning sensibilities (as often reduced to be *nostalgia*'s singular register) and, in fact, its revisionist agenda. What is more, it invites criticism of a formal element of the film that appears to be extremely relevant for an analysis of gender: its peculiar narrative situation. The film contains the story of the telling of a story – and a very particular one at that, told from a very particular perspective. Through Ransom Stoddard (James Stewart), THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE recounts the foundational myth of the United States from the perspective of a powerful, white, heterosexual man. Incidentally, in his own narration, he himself takes on the part of the catalyst that ushered in civilization.

This is the element of *nostalgia* the film has mostly been judged by in academic discourse: Through Stoddard, the film "look[s] back upon a time prior to [its] chronological setting and define[s] it as a preferable period of national and personal history" (Corkin 206). According to readings like this one, the emphasis of the film lies in the contrast of the exhilarating fascinations of making civilization happen on the one hand, and the depressing reality of living to witness its concrete manifestations on the other.

However, this first-person account, notably complicated by numerous distortions, omissions and ultimately the revelation of a monstrous lie, is highly subjective. The "flashback structure," as Barry Langford notes, "famously […] foregrounds issues of spectatorial and subject positioning" (30) – a point only few researchers have touched upon in the critical discussions of the film (cf. Gallagher 408; cf. Matheson, "John Ford on the Cold War…" 357-69).[415] Ford embeds this subjective account within a frame narrative, expounded by an

the richness and complexity of his treatment of the post-frontier West" (237) fail to see precisely this point. It is not the operative word that is inadequate. Instead, it seems, it is scholars' often abridged interpretation and application of the concept (cf. Sprengler 1-3).

[415] In her paper "John Ford on the Cold War: Stetsons and Cast Shadows in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962)", Sue Matheson has already formulated a very perceptive commentary of the film's peculiar narrative situation. Matheson concludes: "Thus, despite its elegantly balanced and sophisticated presentation, Stoddard's account of his life rings false. And it is meant to. His story fails to convince, because John Ford 'Germanizes' one of America's foundational myths. His use of expressionist detail undermines the notion that Western iconography is representational – and makes it apparent that the senator's juxtaposition of dime novel opposites is a matter of "smoke and mirrors" designed to divert his listener's attention away from the facts of his story" (367). Matheson's discussion

authorial narrator. As I will demonstrate using *nostalgia*'s affirmative-yet-corrosive propensities, the juxtaposition of frame narrative and first-person account markedly challenges the authority of the first-person character-narrator, thereby inviting the viewer to not only reflect on the story they have been presented with, but also on how it has been told and by whom. This way, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE critically revaluates not only history but also of historiography. Since the characters who most significantly challenge the white man's authority are a white woman and a black man, Ransom's wife Hallie (Vera Miles) and Tom's servant Pompey (Woody Strode), the arrangement appears to be extremely relevant for an (intersectional) gender analysis.

What is more, there are elements in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE that suggest the film is critically assessing its own involvement in the promulgation of the legend that became fact, in the story that Ransom is telling. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE uses *nostalgia* to turn subtext into text, reflecting on behalf of an entire genre its cultural significance and the socio-political discourses both genre and director have inevitably been closely associated with.

"I suppose I'm the only one who can tell it through."

The film begins with an image of the railroad bringing in passengers to Shinbone, among them Senator Ransom Stoddard and his wife Hallie.[416] They are visiting the Arizonian desert town to attend the funeral of a man named Tom Doniphon, a man, as it turns out, who has seemingly been forgotten by most of Shinbone's current residents. They are picked up at the station by an old friend, former town marshal Link Appleyard (Andy Devine), who welcomes them and offers to cordially escort them through town. On their way, however, an eager young newspaperman and his editor stop Ransom and demand he give an interview. While he complies to talk politics with the journalists, Hallie and Link share a moment of quiet and melancholy understanding, based on a long friendship and a mutual past. Together, they ride out into the desert to visit a burnt down cabin and collect a cactus rose, a symbolic prop (cf. Bordwell, *Film Art* 175), the true meaning of which is not revealed to us until later in the film.

---

of the film has been a great inspiration to this part of my analysis, in which I will build on her assessment, specifying the implications of the film's narrative situation for representations of gender.

[416] Anticipating a later aspect of my discussion, it should be noted that Ford's usage of the railroad to frame his film has a deeper significance. As Barry Langford has shown, the railroad is one of the most explicit signifiers of history and historicity in the Western genre (28). In THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE specifically, the train "is really going in a circle, returning whence it came: in the context of the story Ford tells, the film's closing shot, a mirror image of the opening, suggests circularity rather than closure, compulsive repetition rather than resolution. The film's narrative is indeed a scene of compulsive return and perpetual acting-out; there is no working through to be had" (Langford 29). It is an omen of the film's intricate revisionism, albeit one whose true meaning will only unfold in the film's final shot.

Yet already we sense that the rose carries an enormous emotional gravitas, that it symbolizes an enigmatic reference to their past. When they return to town, Ransom finishes his interview with an ominous answer: Asking whose funeral it is that deserves a visit of such a reputable dignitary, he gives the name Tom Doniphon and leaves the editor's office. So, Hallie, Link and Ransom finally make their way to Clute Dumfries (Earle Hodgins), the carpenter-cum-undertaker of Shinbone, where they find the coffin of Tom Doniphon, solemnly guarded by a sole black man, Pompey, Tom's friend and former servant. But before the ceremony can really proceed, the journalists return, insisting that Ransom explain the significance of this mysterious man inside the coffin.

Up to this point, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE presents its story through an authorial narrator and external focalization. We learn of separate events that no single character comprehensively experiences and there are no visual cues that suggest a singular perspective or single focal character. This changes when Ransom gives the interview in the carpenter's workshop. He emphasizes that the story he is about to lay out concerns Link and Pompey just as much as it concerns him, but, he concludes, he is "the only one who can tell it through" (THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, 00:12:40-00:12:49).

He begins his story by recounting his arrival in Shinbone, how he came West as a fiery young attorney, duly licensed to practice law, a pioneer determined to bring civilization (cf. Weidinger 205). Right away though, he is ambushed, almost beaten to death by a sociopathic crook named Liberty Valance, and his gang. Ransom lives because another man, Tom Doniphon, finds him in the desert and returns him to safety. Ransom regains consciousness in Shinbone's social hotspot, the restaurant run by Swedish immigrants Nora (Jeanette Nolan) and Peter Ericson (John Qualen). The restaurant is where most of the film's action takes place, and where Ransom, on this first fateful night, meets Hallie, his future wife.

Upon his arrival in Shinbone, Ransom begins his passionate quest of bringing civilization to the town he makes his own. He tries to encourage the timid marshal to enforce his jurisdiction, he opens a law office at the local newspaper, run by Dutton Peabody (Edmond O'Brien), he founds a school and teaches an eclectic cohort of students anything ranging from their ABCs to the Declaration of Independence. Yet everything he does to enlighten his fellow townspeople is thwarted time and again by the primordial force of wanton violence that is Liberty Valance (or by his law-abiding counterpart, Tom Doniphon). Liberty Valance's intimidating grip is too tight around Marshal Appleyard's neck for him to act on his constituency's behalf; he ransacks the law office/newspaper agency, almost killing Peabody; he scares off the students from class just because rumor has it, he is in town.

On the brink of resignation, Ransom decides to follow the advice once given by Tom Doniphon, who is by his own words the only man West of the Picketwire quick enough to match Liberty Valance's violent skills: pick up a gun and use it. The protective hands of the law have

failed Ransom and the community, so he takes matters into his own hands. Sure enough, against all odds, Ransom kills Liberty Valance in a climactic showdown, thus becoming the idealized image of the United States, the perfect fusion of Eastern law and Western law, of the book and the gun, of civilization and primitive force – in short, he becomes the eponymous man who shot Liberty Valance, epitomizing the fulfillment of preordained conquest. It is this event that ignites Ransom's political career, a story of unimpeded success that ultimately leads him back East to Washington, a highly decorated figure of the public sphere. And it is a story that ultimately wins him the heart of Hallie, who previously seemed on the fence about her devotion to either Tom or Ranse.

But before he concludes his story to the newspapermen, Ransom reveals a delicate truth, something he had carefully kept a secret but which now that he is attending the funeral of Tom Doniphon lies too heavy on his heart: He never shot Liberty Valance. It was Tom Doniphon, hiding behind a corner, selflessly killing Liberty Valance in cold blood so that Ransom, no match for Liberty Valance, would live. Doniphon had disclosed this to Ransom years ago, before he started his political ascension. Ransom subsequently lived a lie – a lie that granted him access to the highest echelons of power –, while Doniphon died forsaken and alone knowing the truth. Thus, his story culminates in a confession: everything he represents has been based on a tall tale that he had never before dared to rectify.

Looking at the sequence in which Ransom begins to tell his story to the newspapermen and how it relates to the flashback narration that follows, one cannot fail but notice a significant incongruency in its narrative situation: On the one hand, Ransom proclaims that his account is exclusively his; on the other hand, it includes multiple elements that exceed his knowledge, that are not exclusively his. What is more, the film explicitly marks the subjectivity of his account: stylistically, in visualizing his story in a manner reminiscent of German Expressionism (cf. Matheson, "John Ford on the Cold War…" 363-4), as well as narratively, in having him state that Link and Pompey were just as much a part of his story as him (cf. Horne 23).

The point being that he follows up this observation unwaveringly with "I suppose I'm the only one who can tell it through," thus assuming narrative authority over a story and a past he knows is not exclusively his to tell. The resulting incongruency between what Ransom claims to do and what he does is the key to understanding the complexity of John Ford's film. I believe that *nostalgia* is a perfect tool to unravel these intricate and conflicting narrative strands. In the following, I will demonstrate in the film's usage of a stagecoach how THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE purposely distorts and challenges the narrative authority that the film awards its arguably central character: Ransom Stoddard.

A Stagecoach

Ransom's account is prompted by the image of a stagecoach, ostensibly rekindling his memory and triggering a first-person account. Yet as the story subsequently unfolds, it does not differ all that much from the narrative situation we had been presented in the preface; that is, though the sequence of Ransom beginning his account purports a shift from authorial to first-person narrator, formally the position of an authorial narrator is retained.

Ransom's interaction with the stagecoach is brief but carefully orchestrated and extremely impactful. He is in the front room of Clute's workshop, the disused stagecoach is propped up on trestles, wheels detached, "covered in thick layers of dust and cobwebs, forgotten and useless" (Anderson 17), immobilized, a relic of the past, a memento. As he prefaces his story, Ransom steps closer, recognizing the stagecoach for possibly the very same one that first brought him to Shinbone. As he touches it, a solemn extra-diegetic music begins to play (Fig. 73). "I was just a youngster," he says, "fresh out of law school, a bag full of law books and my father's gold watch, fourteen dollars and eighty cents in cash" (00:13:35-00:13:46). When he exits the frame, the camera for a few seconds rests on the image of the stagecoach, inviting us to ponder what this artifact might mean to Ransom or to us (Fig. 74).

The image blends into the next, a different scenery: a stagecoach coming around a bend, as James Stewart's voice continues to speak, accompanying the transition, again marking the events to follow as *his* memories by preceding his next impassioned invocation with the pronoun "I" (Fig. 75). He speaks: "I had taken Horace Greeley's advice literally: 'Go West, young man! Go West, and seek fame, fortune, adventure'" (00:13:47-00:14:00),[417] as a man emerges on the right side of the screen, firing a warning shot that halts the stagecoach, spooks the horses, and abruptly ends Ransom's introduction (Fig. 76). We are now spectators to the images of Ransom's memory.

[417] Ransom's invocation of Horace Greeley subtly but peculiarly misquotes the famous pioneer journalist, constituting an early indicator of Ransom's subsequent misrepresentation of history (incidentally, THE PLAINSMAN had done it right). A similar, though deliberately ironic misquotation reprises later in the film when Dutton Peabody, visibly inebriated, invokes Greeley as he "staggers off for more bottled courage," as Sue Matheson has shown ("John Ford on the Cold War…" 366). The film thereby cleverly aligns Stoddard and Peabody in their (sub-)conscious acts of falsifying history, and moreover, awards these acts with an actual historical referent. In portraying Stoddard, Peabody, and Horace Greeley as likeminded accomplices to the falsification of American historiography, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE adumbrates its overtly ideological-critical agenda.

Fig. 73. 00:13:24.

Fig. 74. 00:13:43.

Fig. 75. 00:13:49.

Fig. 76. 00:13:59.

Source: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, John Ford (1962). Paramount. DVD.

The stagecoach is the object that links past and present, and the catalyst to Ransom's flashback. It is the nexus that links both layers of time, a metonymy for the story Ransom is going to divulge, as well as a clichéd, discrediting marker that foreshadows the falsifications that Ransom's account will entail (cf. Matheson, "John Ford on the Cold War…" 361). The stagecoach that, in the present, stands in a corner – static, decrepit, purposeless, aimless – becomes alive again upon sparking Ransom's memory. Suddenly, in the subsequent shots, the stagecoach appears to us as mobile, exciting, active, and equipped with an unswerving sense of purpose: to make accessible uncharted territory, to carry forth those passengers that will bring civilization to the desert. As its appearance coincides with Ransom's voice-over invocation of Horace Greeley, the stagecoach resembles a harbinger of *Manifest Destiny*.[418]

The stagecoach, and how Ford presents it to us, invites us to reflect its object qualities by comparing its past and present state, and it simultaneously makes visible the subjective journey we are about to embark on: dead in the present, alive in the past, Ransom reanimates the stagecoach through his looking back. In other words, its salient placement draws attention

[418] The stagecoach functions as a material reference that epitomizes the myth-become-history of the West that is entailed in the idea of *Manifest Destiny*: the exploration of and advancement across a frontier that, once conquered and settled, inevitably signalled its own obsolescence. The stagecoach gives emphasis to the excitement of the journey, of the process of conquering the frontier, over the inevitable arrival of civilization.

not only to its object propensities but also to the process that emblematically reflects the film's narrative style: As Ransom is looking back, we as his audience as well as his internal audience, the newspapermen, follow his gaze (cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 118).

As Sue Matheson has shown in her paper "John Ford on the Cold War: Stetsons and Cast Shadows in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE", however, we must not forget that the stagecoach as a symbolic artifact most significantly also reflects the discrepancy between myth and history (cf. 358-9). As Stoddard touches the stagecoach to recount history when, in fact, he is recounting myth, Ford deliberately deploys the stagecoach as a marker to signify myth taking precedence over history. What is more, he reflects his own involvement as the genre's most prominent ambassador in the shaping of that myth that became history, of that legend that became fact.[419] Therefore, the stagecoach efficiently combines the narrative function of triggering Ransom's flashback, the inherent critique of American historiography as entailed in its metonymical aura, and thus the underlying challenge towards Ransom's narrative authority that encourages the viewer to not take for granted the veracity of Stoddard's subsequent account of his story.

As Sue Matheson succinctly points out: "we are only told what Stoddard wants us to believe" ("John Ford on the Cold War…" 365). Through the image of the stagecoach as a catalyst to Ransom's memory, we experience its processual qualities that are necessarily prone to omission, reduction, falsification, and thus should make us question the validity of the representation. Seen in this light, the stagecoach is truly *nostalgic*.

The story that is explicitly marked as a first-person account subsequently contains elements that the first-person narrator can have no knowledge of and that assumes the (or resumes in) style of an authorial narrator. Consequently, the film presents Ransom Stoddard as an unreliable narrator who is, contrary to his initial declaration, ill-equipped "to tell it through."

[419] Of course, in concept and name Ford most explicitly references STAGECOACH (1939) (cf. Gallagher 388; cf. Anderson 17-18), one of Ford's most significant contributions to the genre and arguably the film that epitomizes most vividly the mythification of the history of the West. In fact, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE abounds with examples that illustrate how John Ford is referencing his previous works to that effect, as has been observed by numerous commentators: Andy Devine plays another affable but ridiculous buffoon, happening to be head of a big Mexican family just like in STAGECOACH (cf. Weidinger 219n98); Ransom Stoddard's bewildered question "What kind of a community have I come to here?" (00:24:13-00:24:15) closely resembles the incredulous "What kind of a town is this?" (00:08:32-00:08:35; 00:09:06-00:09:08) of Henry Fonda's Wyatt Earp in MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (cf. Gallagher 392); Joseph McBride has shown that "[…] the names of Floyd and Reese [two of Liberty Valance's henchman, T.S.] are borrowed from two of the Clegg brothers in WAGON MASTER" (629); Gallagher has described how Hallie's yearning gaze into the darkness "standing outside the back door, lit white midst surrounding blackness, watching, staring out into the distance alone" constitutes "a reprise of a typical Fordian moment" (397), considering similar scenes from DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK or THE SEARCHERS; and multiple scholars have pointed out the repeated use of Ann Rutledge's theme from YOUNG MR LINCOLN that reprises in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE to characterize Ransom's vision of Hallie's relation to Tom Doniphon (cf. Gallagher 387; cf. Coursen 240, cf. Matheson, "John Ford on the Cold War…" 365; cf. Anderson 12-13). Finally, as the film begins with the image of a train arriving at its destination, arguably so did Ford's career within the Western genre, considering his first major success, THE IRON HORSE.

This is the first aspect of a trenchant review that THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE is going to articulate: the white, authoritative, hegemonic male is ill-equipped to give a comprehensive, factual, true account. Instead of history, he will offer us his story: a stereotypical reiteration of the myth the American people have come to embrace as historical truth, even despite better knowledge. More to the point, in one sounding blow, Ford exposes the blind spots in American history, the gaping misconducts of historiography, as well as the involvement of his own profession in the process. As I have shown in the example of the stagecoach, using *nostalgia* as a tool for deconstructive analysis is helpful to reveal slippages in the film; that is, instances in which incongruencies between text and subtext, form and style, representation and meaning, signifier and signified become visible. In the following, I will use *nostalgia* to reveal similar slippages in the film's representation of gender.

As THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE challenges the authority of its alleged narrator, it also undermines the validity of his representation of gender and questions the legitimacy of its position in the gender order. The film presents to us a profoundly complicated variation of the individualism-domesticity dyad, producing no hero in the conventional sense (as in white, heterosexual, male). The film thus continues the exploration of gender of the fifties, mapping out the impossible task for white American men to reconcile coherently domesticity with individualism. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE finds innovative ways of (un)resolving these seemingly mutually exclusive currents in identity formation, extending its critique of white male hegemony from representations to the process of representing.

"Nobody fights my battles!"

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE deals with negotiations of masculinity (cf. Horne 23; cf. Meeuf 178-86). The constellation that has attracted the most extensive academic commentary on the matter is the triangular conflict between Ransom Stoddard, Tom Doniphon and Liberty Valance (cf. Bordwell, "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" 19; cf. Meeuf 181-2; cf. Corkin 225). However, few commentators have considered the peculiar narrative situation in which this negotiation of conventional hegemonic masculinity takes place, and even fewer have noted how this trio of essentially flawed masculinities is measured against two marginalized representations of gender. As Ford recalibrates the center of virtue and morality toward a woman and a black man, who, each in their own way, function to undermine the authority of what one would have expected to be the film's center of said values, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE issues a wholesale indictment of white, male hegemony.

To begin my analysis, however, I would like to illustrate the dynamics THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE employs in the flashback narrative to depict and negotiate white masculinity. The scene I will discuss in the following identifies Liberty Valance and Tom

Doniphon as representations of a conventional image of masculinity that is based on the individualist ideal and contrasts their representations of gender with Ransom's. Crucially, though the film from Ransom's perspective emphasizes that his representation of gender deviates from the norm set by Liberty Valance and Tom Doniphon, the film shows Ransom to be nonetheless compelled to explore and negotiate his own gender along the same dynamics and practices that inform the identities of his alleged counterparts. Liberty Valance, Tom Doniphon, and Ransom Stoddard are each driven to relate to hegemonic masculinity in one way or another. In that they all fail, in one way or another, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE reveals hegemonic masculinity as a detriment to men and society at large.

The scene I wish to discuss takes place in the kitchen of Shinbone's social hotspot, the restaurant run by Swedish immigrants Peter and Nora Ericson. We see Ransom washing dishes and wearing an apron, traditionally the insignia of domesticity and femininity. When Peter asks him to help Hallie wait the tables, even the women seem a little uncomfortable with Ransom confidently displaying such unmanly conduct. Even though this may superficially trouble Ransom's gender identity, this is not how the film debunks Ransom's conduct as gender failure. After all, this is Ransom's story, and in his story, he clearly displays heroic behavior above all. So, he agrees to wait the tables without further ado.

But before he can service the first table, we see Liberty Valance and his henchmen enter the restaurant, disrupting the joyous atmosphere in the crowded place as they bully a group of men into leaving their table and abandoning their food. As Liberty and his men occupy the table, Ransom enters from the kitchen carrying a sizable tray filled with food (Fig. 77). He is about to serve Tom Doniphon, who has sat silently in the corner of the room, observing Liberty Valance's assault without intervening.[420] We first see Ransom step inside the restaurant, then, in a reverse shot we see a close-up of Liberty Valance's whip, which he thuds to the tabletop. He twists his thumb and presses it hard to the surface of the table as if to symbolically underscore his (gendered) display of dominance (Fig. 78). Then, the camera

[420] This is a recurring pattern through which the film, in Ransom's flashback narrative, characterizes Tom as, above all, self-centered and complacent. Kitses observes: "[…] Doniphon is also critiqued. […] LIBERTY VALANCE is Ford's profound indictment of that fundamental American virtue; held as an absolute, self-reliance is seen as destructive and ultimately self-defeating" (*Horizons West* 119). In other words, Doniphon, too, represents a vision of masculinity that is predicated on excessive individualism. Only that this individualism, paradoxically, manifests itself within the narrative as a renunciation of agency, and, more generally, as "an odd passivity" (Eyman 465). He claims to be the only match for Liberty Valance, but apparently he has been fairly ineffectual in containing the threat he represents; he has been courting Hallie for years and years, but other than having built her a cabin she does not know of, giving her presents and making awkward, condescending backhanded compliments he has never done anything about it; he is the first man to be nominated to represent Shinbone in its struggle for statehood, but he refuses to accept the nomination because he has personal business to attend to. Tom Doniphon is flawed because he deviates significantly from an audience's expectations of a typical John Wayne character (cf. Studlar, "Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions…" 63): He only acts when it is almost too late, and even then, his actions are solipsistic (cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 119) and have been prompted by Hallie. Crucially though, this, too, must be reflected as a deliberate distortion resulting from the film's narrative situation: This construction serves to delineate Ransom's character primarily, not Tom's.

dollies back, giving us a full image of Liberty Valance sitting at the table, with one of his henchmen wildly gesturing towards Ranse, trying to hold back his laughter as he prompts Liberty Valance to look at Ranse carrying a tray, wearing an apron, waiting tables (Fig. 79). The camera briefly cuts back to a shot of Ranse standing in the doorway of the restaurant as if petrified, then back to Liberty Valance. He leans back leisurely, turns towards Ranse, presenting the front of his body and condescendingly inspects Ransom's appearance from top to bottom, laughing as he says, "Looky at the new waitress" (00:41:30-00:41:33) (Fig. 80).

The exchange of gazes, the explicit reference to the power dynamics involved in "looking" – Liberty looking, Ransom a "to-be-looked-at", the homosocial internal audience looking at the spectacle that is to unfold in front of their eyes – the posturing of bodies, the symbolic items of clothing and attire – Liberty's whip, Ransom's apron – are all signifiers of an established genre iconography that delineates gender and gender authority through ritualized practices and performances.[421] To be clear though: This is not the film invoking and illustrating the power of hegemonic masculinity to establish a gender order between Liberty and Ransom; this is the film referencing hegemonic masculinity through Ransom's eyes, which show us a caricatured representation of a heavy's surreal hypermasculinity,[422] setting the stage for Ransom to violate and transcend the pattern.

Cut back to Ransom, who braces himself, apparently determined to remain his composure in the face of Liberty Valance's face-threatening acts (Fig. 81). He starts walking towards Tom's table in the back, as the camera cuts to a medium shot of the restaurant and Liberty, with one swooping kick, trips Ransom who falls to the floor, spilling Tom's food everywhere (Fig. 82). Still in the same shot, the camera pans a little to the right: Tom enters the frame, standing tall, positioning himself behind the crawling Ransom, facing Liberty Valance, who promptly rises to his feet reaching for his gun. The following shots, all medium close-ups, track the gazes of the three main men involved, with Tom looking at Liberty, Liberty looking at Tom, Ranse looking at Liberty, Liberty looking at Ranse, then Liberty looking at Tom again – again referencing the compelling power of looking (ironically, of course, this is a power that Ranse holds all along, as he, the narrator, mnemonically directs our gaze), and bodily posture. A symbolical battle for dominance ensues between Tom and Liberty about whom is

---

[421] Throughout the film, Ransom is given various monikers that reflect his pacifist, moralist conviction and thus draw from generic and cultural discourse to destabilize his representation of gender and ostensibly threaten gender intelligibility: pilgrim, dude, dandy, waitress. Again, it must be noted that it is Ransom who has discoursive authority over the story, hence over such attributions.

[422] Liberty Valance is given the hysterical, overly passionate "camp sensibilities" (Meeuf 179) that by its violation of discoursive heteronormativity is codified as the devil incarnate. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE uses queerphobic iconography to demonize Liberty Valance: the fetishized treatment of the whip – a weapon that implies a frantic, excessive exertion of a master-slave relation, the most primitive form of power relations –, Liberty's repeated violations of the gaze taboo, his stylized, dandyish outfit. His display of gender and sexuality is depicted as problematic in the same way Ben Vandergroat or Roy Anderson were in THE NAKED SPUR, filled to the brim with narrative and visual signifiers that trouble their sexual (and thus, moral) integrity.

to pick up Tom's steak from the restaurant floor. "Facing each other over the fallen steaks, they are like mirror images of overbearing authority and aggressive manhood" (Kitses, *Horizons West* 123). Tom, too, is presented to know and exercise the rules of hegemonic masculinity.

Tom steps forward, facing Liberty directly, prompting Liberty to pick up his steak that fell to the floor (Fig. 83). It is a proxy fight for manly dominance along the lines of "You pick it up" – "No, you pick it up," at once a childish exchange and a tremendously tense conflict between two alleged alpha males, counterparts to each other, a showdown about nothing and everything that we expect can only culminate in and be resolved through violence.[423] But then suddenly Ranse, who had been crouching on the floor during the other men's quarrel, angrily arises and intervenes when nobody else in the restaurant dares, bringing the conflict to a halt by picking up the steak the two rivalling men have been fighting over (Fig. 84).[424] Ransom, the lighthouse of civilization, reveals the dark ages-mentality of Tom and Liberty, and debunks their tenacious competition about masculine dominance as trivial, pointless, antiquated. Hegemonic masculinity, the lesson Ranse seems to be teaching, heralds only death and disaster.

Fig. 77. 00:41:16.

Fig. 78. 00:41:21.

[423] Gallagher has noted the "(probably) unintentional pun" of the homophones 'steak' and 'stake', suggesting that the steaks on the floor reflect Doniphon and Liberty's battle over their respective stakes in town (395).

[424] Visually, Ransom is given the familiar formal treatment usually reserved for the female love interest, standing between two rivalling men. Standing in *copula*-like fashion between Liberty and Tom, wearing an apron and speaking out passionately (one could almost say in a spell of *hysteria* reminiscent of Stewart's roles in the Anthony Mann Westerns of the fifties) for a non-violent solution (and pointing out the idiocy of violence for violence's sake), his appearance and positioning seemingly trouble Ransom's gender coherence. This constitutes a marked indicator of the film's investment in cultural constructions of gender; here, potentially in violation of the heteronormative matrix.

Fig. 79. 00:41:25.

Fig. 80. 00:41:34.

Fig. 81. 00:41:38.

Fig. 82. 00:41:42.

Fig. 83. 00:41:49.

Fig. 84. 00:42:38.

Source: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, John Ford (1962). Paramount. DVD.

Eventually, the threat of Pompey's rifle, pointed directly at Liberty, scares the bad guys off. After Liberty and his henchmen have left the scene – not without exerting a dose of surrogate violence on the town and its architecture by firing their guns wildly in the air and throwing a bottle through the restaurant window, as if to desperately restore their faces in an act of sexualized proxy release (masturbation instead of intercourse) – the atmosphere in the restaurant returns back to normality, with Tom and Dutton Peabody, the editor of the Shinbone Star, the town's newspaper, mocking Ransom for his allegedly futile display of defiance and resistance, weighing the power of the gun against the power of the law; that is – measuring Ransom's gendered authority against Tom's.

Tom: Now, I wonder what scared him off.

Peabody: You know what scared him! The spectacle of law and order here, rising up out of the gravy and the mashed potatoes.

Ransom: Alright, alright. You made your point. It was the gun that scared him off. Pompey's gun. Your gun, Tom. What right did you have to interfere? It was me he tripped!

Tom: My steak.

Ransom: And you would have killed him for it. Or he would have killed you over one measly steak. That's why I picked it up.

Tom: Well, thanks for saving my life, pilgrim.

Ransom: That isn't why I did it! Nobody fights my battles!

Source: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, John Ford (1962). Paramount. DVD. 00:44:09-00:44:48.

In many ways, the film deliberately plays with generic conventions. Most obviously, the film deploys visual and narrative strategies that associate Ransom's representation of gender with dominant images of white femininity, thus seemingly troubling his gender coherence (cf. Horne 8) in relation to the two more conventional representations of white masculinity. Put differently, in Ransom's conflation of differently gendered items and character traits, he most powerfully demonstrates the cultural construction of gender and its contingency, while especially Tom initially functions to sustain the illusion of a stable masculinity naturally, causally, and coherently resulting from a male body.

Crucially though, in the scene of Ransom's intervention, the film ostensibly challenges the legitimacy of the latter's hegemonic status. As Ransom exclaims "[…] you would have killed him or he would have killed you over one measly steak," THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE through the first-person narrator, for one thing, lays bare the detriment of the autotelic nature of inter-male competition. For another, Ransom attacks the notion that there was a veritable, natural origin onto which excessively masculine gender performance was based (a credible steak/stake to the men's compulsion to kill each other for their respective access to, or possession of it), thereby emphatically declaring that both Tom and Liberty's attempts to naturalize their gender performances are acts of disguise, and socially obsolete.

Yet there is a twist to this: In Ransom's flashback narrative, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE engenders a fantasy (cf. Kimmel 253): that of the civilized, modern man besting the representatives of the formerly established masculine ideals of rugged individualism at their game. To Ransom, the crucial point is not that he wears an apron or that he is waiting tables, or that it is Pompey's cocked rifle that eventually dispels the bad guys. The crucial point is that he stands up for what he firmly believes in. He faces his adversaries, stares death in the eye and puts his foot down as he declares emphatically: "Nobody fights my battles!". Despite his

superficial association with domesticity and white femininity, despite his overt demonstration of the cultural construction and contingency of gender, Ransom shows the viewer that individualism, 'to do what a man has to do,' is what ultimately informs his identity, thereby concealing his non-normative display of gender by assertively implying its natural origin. Ransom retroactively stabilizes his gender identity by codifying his gender performance as intelligibly masculine, by showing his version of masculinity to excel against outdated ideals.

Though the attributes that are seemingly causally inscribed into his body – displaying himself as a man of intellect, culture, reason, the school, the kitchen, the domestic – these attributes are re-codified as distinctly masculine virtues as he, by his own account, proves them to be superior in relation to the conventional representations of masculinity – most importantly, the Western hero image inextricably tied to the body of John Wayne (cf. Thomas 75). Yet he delineates this superiority qua the same structural pattern that has delineated the conventional masculine ideal: the negotiation of a gender order through inter-male competition, except that his way – initially – is not with six-guns but with words (cf. Gallagher 392). Ransom, too, tries to emulate hegemonic masculinity. Except he portrays hegemonic masculinity to have taken on other attributes to match the representation of a more refined, essentially modern man – cultured, learned, civilized, firmly footed in the domestic sphere –, to at least superficially indicate an ideological shift that resonates with the image of manhood during the fifties and sixties. Yet even though he claims to represent a reformed image of masculinity, the *libido dominandi* is still the engine that drives its creation.

Ransom shows himself to combine in a perfect fusion the best of both spheres: the moral superiority of the domestic with the strength and authority of the individualist.[425] Therefore, in many ways the dynamics between Ransom Stoddard and Tom Doniphon are but another reiteration of the Western's attempt to reconcile into a singular coherent identity both the desire for domesticity and men's continued fascination with individualism. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, as Douglas Pye has elaborated, plays with the notion that Ransom

[425] Dutton Peabody's eloquent oratory, his nomination speech for Ransom Stoddard as the territory's delegate in Washington, sums up nicely the film's representation of a general public venerating the achievement of fusing individualism and domesticity into one coherent, seemingly stable identity. After a succinct, populist recapitulation of America's violent westward expansion, Peabody declares: "Now, today, have come the railroads and the people, the steady, hard-working citizens, the homesteader, the shopkeeper, the builder of cities. We need roads to join those cities, dams to store up the water of the Picketwire, and we need statehood to protect the rights of every man and woman, however humble. [Applause]. How do we get it? I tell you how: We get it by placing our vote behind one man, one man! And we have that man with us here. He is a man who came to us not packing a gun but carrying instead a bag of lawbooks. [Camera cuts to Ransom, surrounded by other people] Yes, he is a lawyer and a teacher, the first West of the Rosy Buttes. But more important, he is a man who has come to be known throughout this territory in the last few weeks as a great champion of law and order. Ladies and gentlemen, I nominate as your delegate and mine to the Congress at Washington the honorable Ransom Stoddard" (01:46:29 – 01:47:52). But even then, in this scene, through repeated cuts that reveal Ransom's discomfort with the elevating myth that is being created about his alleged killing of Liberty Valance, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE foreshadows its ultimate verdict: that Ransom does not unite both elements into a single ideal. Gender is not a stable category.

Stoddard finally is the man who manages to reconcile these seemingly antithetical energies and who succeeds in cutting the Gordian knot of the aporia of heteronormativity.

> We see Ranse kill Liberty and, together with the audience within the drama, accept an impossibility. […] Fusing in a single individual the Easterner and the man with the gun while retaining the dominant Eastern persona is, from the point of view of the emerging civilisation, an ideological triumph. […] The gunfight *as it is seen* and passed down to the future results in the creation of a transcendent figure, 'the man who shot Liberty Valance', who unites book and gun, East and West – like Leatherstocking, a figure capable of resolving contradictions, of binding together antinomies. (122)

Except he does not actually kill Liberty Valance. As Stoddard eventually reveals that he never did the deed, he inevitably retains the irreconcilable binarism of individualism and domesticity (cf. Pye 122), and, more importantly, reveals his strategy of naturalizing gender as just as contrived and flawed as the formerly hegemonic cultural constructions of gender he derided earlier. Not only does his revelation render him a liar and a hypocrite. It also seals his display of gender, which has been equally fueled by the attempt to attain and defend hegemonic masculinity, as a cultural construct from which he, above everybody else, has illegitimately benefited by perpetuating a myth and concealing it as truth.

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE offers us a triangular relation of three male characters violently and compellingly negotiating hegemonic masculinity. Yet the film's strongest point of criticism of the three images of white masculinity is not that they all fail or deliberately decide against for one reason or another to emulate a vision of normative white masculinity the film would – by confirming its normative status – uphold as an ideal, nonetheless (as I have illustrated to be the case in, for instance, PURSUED; see 4.4.3.). Quite the contrary, the film manages to extend its criticism beyond individual representations to precisely the process that informs them: hegemonic masculinity as social practice and organizing principle. Recalling my earlier elaborations about *nostalgia*, contained in Ransom's flashback are not only different representations of masculinity that we perceive as problematic in and of itself; rather, *nostalgia* allows us to also critically reflect the process of looking back, the process of imagining white masculinity the way Ransom does. In other words, not only does THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE criticize various (re-)constructions of masculinity. The film also identifies and brings to the fore the process of (re-)construction. In the following, I will clarify this point by taking a closer look at two seemingly marginalized, peripheral-yet-central characters of the film.

Margins as Center

In his essay “The Margin as Center: The Multicultural Dynamics of John Ford’s Westerns”, Charles Ramírez Berg has demonstrated an interesting characteristic of Ford’s Westerns: moving the historically disenfranchised to the center to address “questions of inequalities of power” (75-76; see also 4.3.1. and 4.3.2.). THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE is no exception to that paradigm. Here, Hallie and Pompey are two of Ford’s most vibrant marginalized characters, who by their relation to power – that is, by their relation to the film’s representations of white, male hegemony, Ransom and Tom – make visible the inequality, arbitrariness, and contingency of that power.

I wish to begin my discussion with Hallie. Played by Vera Miles, her character has already attracted intensive academic scrutiny, in particular her function within the flashback narrative, in which she mainly serves as a *copula* between Ransom and Tom (cf. Corkin 225; cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 122-4; cf. Williams 107-8).[426] Others have commented on the tremendous level of agency that is awarded to her, as she ultimately chooses Ransom over Tom as her husband (cf. Weidinger 216-7; cf. McBride 628).

However, when taking into account the narrative situation of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, this seemingly high level of agency actually unfolds as a conventional narrative strategy that the film associates with its first-person narrator, Ransom Stoddard, as he delineates his gendered superiority over Tom qua Hallie, as in: not only does Ransom ‘get the girl,’ he as first-person narrator authorizes her to actively choose him, thereby increasing the dramatic impact and level of masculine superiority that Ransom awards himself with. What is more, taking a closer look at how Ransom recounts his relationship with Hallie, one cannot fail but notice his consistent attempts to ‘improve’ Hallie. According to his way of telling the story, he benignly tutors and thus facilitates Hallie’s development. He is the catalyst to her

[426] In his article “Pilgrims and the Promised Land: A Genealogy of the Western”, Doug Williams has outlined the peculiar gender coding of the film, deliberately playing as it does on the common trope of a feminized East and a masculine West, a “genre logic” that “requires the marriage of the Eastern woman and the frontiersman, […] a union of culture and wilderness skills” (Kitses, *Horizons West* 124). Williams observes: “In THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, Ransom, the stubborn idealistic Eastern lawyer, marries Hallie. But Hallie is a Western woman. She can become cultivated, just as the territory can become a state, but civilization is not immanent in her. Hallie, not Ransom, is the one who needs to be instructed in all points of civilization. […] But neither Tom nor Hallie are carriers of civilization; for them to marry is not progress, but stagnation. Tom and Ransom would be the ideal Western couple – but while the frontier in the Western has a tradition of same-sex couples […], to found a civilization on such a couple was not part of the myth in the early Sixties” (Williams 107-8). Kitses concludes from William’s observations that Ranse and Hallie’s union is only possible – that is, only reconcilable with the genre formula – because of Tom’s clandestine intervention. According to Kitses’s argument, Ranse is not ‘man enough’ and Hallie is not ‘woman enough’ to be together and “sustain the community” (*Horizons West* 124). In the minds of Kitses and Williams, Ransom’s wearing an apron feminizes him, while Hallie’s Western heritage and lack of culture masculinizes her. However, especially considering the idiosyncratic narration of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, I contend that there is more to this arrangement than the inversion of binary gender stereotypes that the authors describe.

emancipation. He molds the malleable clay that is Hallie in an act of *Pygmalion*-esque transformation, “from an illiterate waitress to a senator’s wife” (Corkin 225). Not only does their eventual union confirm the intelligibility of their genders through this most ritualized and institutionalized performance of heterosexuality, but her ‘emancipation’ – her freedom to choose *him* – also functions to signify and augment his male authority. In his narrative, Hallie ends up as a commodified, symbolic token of his dominance over Tom. Kitses concludes: “She becomes Stoddard’s prize pupil, helping to run the class and to mother the small ones. But the film is silent about the lack of issue from their union. She will help to birth America instead” (*Horizons West*, 123).

Outside the flashback narrative, however, Hallie does have a tremendous impact on challenging precisely the patriarchal and paternalist constraint that Ransom in his version of the story ties her down with while claiming to liberate her from them. Hallie constitutes a typically atypical Fordian Western woman, as Gaylin Studlar has shown his female character frequently to be: “In spite of female characters’ stereotyped origins, their narrative function is often complex rather than simple, as are the qualities they represent in relation to expected generic norms of sexual difference” (“Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions…” 45).

Elsewhere, in her article on STAGECOACH, Studlar has pointed out that “the hero […] is judged as to how he treats women” (“‘Be A Proud, Glorified Dreg’…” 147), implying a representational pattern that replicates the conventional active/male versus passive/female divide (cf. Bourdieu, *Die Männliche Herrschaft* 24; 35-36). Earlier, I have elaborated how the applicability of this observation is not limited to STAGECOACH or, as I have shown in the example of DODGE CITY, even exclusive to the works of John Ford (see 4.3.1.). A case in point, Ford employs a similar dynamic twenty-three years after STAGECOACH in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, albeit in a substantial variation that enables him to formulate a consistent critique of heteronormativity and white male hegemony as society’s organizing principles. That is, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE inverts the active/male passive/female pattern and has us perceive Hallie as the central character of the frame narrative. We judge the male characters by how Hallie treats them. As Ford violates the classic disposition of character representation, he challenges not only Ransom’s narrative authority during the flashback but also Hollywood’s conventions of representing gender.[427] Most importantly though, it is through Hallie’s eyes that Ransom’s futile attempts to conceal the constructedness of gender become visible to us.

[427] A reprise of this violation of Hollywood stylistic conventions, Ford later on complicates the sanctity of the shot-reverse shot paradigm, revealing his first composition of Ransom’s shooting of Liberty Valance to be an inchoate representation of the events (cf. Ray, *A Certain Tendency of Hollywood Cinema*, 229-33). On the matter, Robert B. Ray writes: “In demonstrating that crucial narrative developments could take place outside the seam established by such a classically rigorous sequence, Doniphon’s confession undermined the invisible style itself, exposing the guarantee on which its most fundamental figure rested as a mere cinematic convention” (233).

Through Hallie, we learn that Tom was more than an epitome of rugged individualism or an anachronistic force, more than "granite strength" or "a sexual threat" (Gallagher 394); but that he was above all human, a mortal soul who tragically and selflessly denied himself of transcendence (cf. Studlar, "Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions…" 63) because he, too, felt compelled to abide by the unspoken law of Western code.[428] Through her view, the ambiguity of which is sonically amplified by the recurrent use of the Ann Rutledge-theme from Ford's 1939 film YOUNG MR LINCOLN (cf. Stowell, *John Ford* 119 in Anderson 13), we experience Tom Doniphon as more than an antagonist, and Stoddard less of a protagonist. In Hallie's look back, Tom and what he stood for is best symbolized by a cactus rose: scruffy, thorny, and yet beautiful and venerable.[429]

---

[428] Tom's selfless sacrifice, of course, is that he shoots the villain Liberty Valance but subsequently renunciates the heterosexual romantic union with which the Western conventionally awards its heroes. Instead, he attempts suicide: "Rather than being a transcendent hero who mediates between the past and the future, wilderness and civilization, by defying the woman's civilizing influence, Tom Doniphon acts (violently) on the wishes of the woman he loves and, in doing so, destroys his own future" (Studlar, "Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions…" 63). Western code – that is, Western generic conventions – dictate that "[t]he Cowboy does not brag about his celebrated past because his reputation rests on the stories that other [sic] tell about him" (Verstraten, *Film Narratology* 182). Catherine Ingrassia speaks of a discoursive economy, in which "[t]he man of action, no matter how powerful, has limited cultural currency if he is unable to circulate in this textually constructed world" (5). As the character Tom Doniphon in the first-person narrative of Ransom Stoddard, the unreliable narrator prone to efficacy and distortion, actively chooses to abide by this code even if it means that he must kill himself (or disappear), THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE makes visible the "structural impossibility" of giving the cowboy hero narrative agency over his own story that has plagued the genre since its inception. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE implies that the cowboy hero has been consecrated and canonized by society as a superhuman, transcendental figure because he represented everything people (represented by myriads of internal audiences) expected of him; and he acted accordingly (cf. Verstraten, *Film Narratology* 181-2). Never did he have a say in it, never did we get a glimpse of his inner thoughts. As soon as Tom violates this dogma, he can no longer be a hero. However, because of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE's peculiar narrative situation that eventually reveals Hallie's longing and the tragedy of Tom's unrequited love, he becomes a hero after all, albeit a decidedly human one, because refusing heroism and eschewing its paradigms is exactly what makes him heroic.

[429] It must be noted that John Wayne's presence and his character's role in the film are of great import to the meaning of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE. Incidentally, this meaning – cyphered in the cactus rose, yet even more overtly invoked by the film's distillation, or reduction, of Wayne's mythological and mythographical significance to a pair of worn-out boots, spurs, and a gun –, can be unravelled with the help of *nostalgia*, as has been convincingly demonstrated by Russell Meeuf in his study *John Wayne's World*, which is worth quoting at some length: "The film's critique of mythmaking and government produces nostalgia for Tom Doniphon and the rugged, individualist masculinity of John Wayne. Rather than celebrating the processes of modernity and the building of nation-states, the film looks fondly back on the days when Doniphon's powerful but responsible masculinity ruled the territory. […] [N]ostlagia for Wayne's Doniphon explores the cultural yearning for the seemingly simpler era of U.S. imperialism before the weight of Vietnam and the cultural turmoil of the 1960s burdened the U.S. cultural imagination. […] LIBERTY VALANCE explores as well a nostalgia regarding masculinity and individualism in the face of nation building and modernization. This is not to say that the nostalgia for Wayne was somehow nostalgia for premodern social organizations, a yearning for a time before modernization and capitalism had transformed the landscape. Rather, nostalgia for Wayne that began with LIBERTY VALANCE and continued throughout the rest of his career indicated a yearning for the pleasures and spectacle of an uneven modernization full of optimism and a sense of possibility about borderlessness and entrepreneurship. […] LIBERTY VALANCE is nostalgic for a world of individualism and intense competition – nostalgia based on our identification with characters like Doniphon and a masculinity such as Wayne's" (182-3). Considering the specific understanding of *nostalgia* that I have mapped out earlier in this section, I would like to add to Meeuf's observations that Wayne's Tom

As such, we must revaluate Tom's display of gender as contingent rather than consistent with established generic patterns.[430]

In keeping with the dual nature of *nostalgia*, not only does her looking back complicate our perception of Tom Doniphon and Ransom as previously given by Ransom (the absolute, the representation), it also challenges his self-imposed authority of telling the story (the processual, the act of representing). As she sits next to him in the train, leaving Shinbone for Washington again, Hallie looks out of the window, sighing as she addresses her husband: "Look at it: it was once a wilderness. Now it's a garden. Aren't you proud?" (01:56:40-01:56:46). Not only does her remark intertextually reference the quintessential paradigm first laid out by Henry Nash Smith in his seminal critical investigation of the frontier, *Virgin Land* (1950), thereby dictating the challenging tone of her question. Even more significantly, her imperative "Look at it" constitutes a call for us to reflect the transformational process she subsequently invokes – from wilderness to garden, the process that we have just re-experienced through Ransom's narrative – as well as Ransom's controversial role in it: "Aren't you proud?". Once more, Hallie invites us to question the story we have been presented with, as well as the authority of who presented it to us, by drawing our attention to the fact that we have witnessed a re-construction.

What is more, through her commemoration of Tom with a cactus rose, we learn that there is more than one version of this story, a potentially radically different perspective on his story as history. A story that has been markedly silenced by powerful white men claiming their prerogative "to tell it through." A story that becomes visible only if one reads between the lines and acknowledges her view: an enigma beautifully encapsulated in the mysterious cactus rose. Even more nuanced, the film emblematizes her struggle in the hat box that she always carries with her but the contents of which are never disclosed. Whatever her feelings, whatever her struggle, whatever her side of the story: it remains yet to be told. The metonymical hat box indicates that as of now, hers is a "problem that has no name" (Friedan 9), invoking the burgeoning spirit of Betty Friedan and Second Wave Feminism.

Even more to the point, in the frame narrative, we see Ransom looking at Hallie, asking for her approval – or is it her commission? – to finally divulge his lie to the public, as if to say in a mute but powerful gesture of female 'self'-empowerment: It is time that white patriarchy

---

Doniphon comprises both a certain sentimentalism for the optimism of earlier Westerns (with their heroes often so captivatingly embodied by Wayne) and the clear, self-critical realization of the socio-cultural impact of such representations.

[430] On a similar note, Russell Meeuf acknowledges the deviation from traditional ways of representing gender in John Wayne's performance as Tom Doniphon in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE. He writes: "It is in this film that Wayne's star text begins to chart a new direction, shifting Wayne's articulation of a modern masculinity away from an active celebration of a mobile, capitalist manhood and toward the nostalgic invocation of a rugged individualism incompatible with the changing culture of the 1960s and 1970s" (178-9).

debunks itself. Though Hallie does not get a chance to tell her story beyond implications and symbolic gestures, she also does no longer tolerate his silence.

In a way, this is a structural pattern that allies her with another marginalized character of the film: Pompey. In her inspired paper for *Black Camera*, "The Color of Manhood: Reconsidering Pompey in John Ford's THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE", Abigail Horne has convincingly demonstrated the significance of Pompey for an understanding of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE and its complex, challenging investigation of "masculinity and nation making in conversation with questions of race" (23). Horne's intersectional study shows that the film in its frame narrative develops Pompey as "a version of masculinity that asserts itself through both small and large acts of chivalry and competence" (15). She observes: "Although socially disenfranchised, Pompey quietly bests Tom and Ranse at their own games of manhood" (17), implying that Pompey occupies a position of racial marginalization, the injustice of which is articulated by Ford in the language and iconography of gender and national identity. Horne makes a convincing case illustrating the fluidity with which Pompey oscillates between such instances in the narrative that marginalize him through institutionalized disempowerment, and such that show him quietly, calmly usurp the means of asserting himself as an individual authoritative force in relation to Ransom, Liberty Valance, and Tom Doniphon. She concludes:

> [t]he story in which Pompey plays a part – the story of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE – is not a narrative that affirms the stories (or stereotypes) of the past. Pompey is not only a sturdy vision of masculinity in a film that troubles masculinity at every turn; Pompey is also a sturdy vision of an American in a film that troubles the story of America itself. (21)

Horne reads Pompey as a logical continuation of Ford's socially aware directorial efforts of supporting and endorsing the emancipation of black Americans by honoring their commitment to shaping the United States and providing them with a piece of the myth that became truth, a project that he had begun two years earlier in SERGEANT RUTLEDGE, notably with the same team of screenwriters (James Warner Bellah and Willis Goldbeck) and starring Woody Strode in the leading role (cf. Horne 17-19). In her interpretation of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, Pompey, consequently, represents a truly empowering character.

There is a case to be made, however, that Horne's account does not fully reflect the scope of the ideological implications that are inextricably linked to the representation of Pompey, or Ford's history of racially stereotyping black Americans. Joan Mellen, for instance, writes:

> Representing the oldest and truest impulses of male America, Doniphon even lived with his black attendant Pompey, condescending proof that America was not really racist but protectively paternal. […] It is also part of Hollywood's consistent portrayal of blacks as basically loyal, as if the danger of black disaffection could be thus aborted, especially during the civil rights movement when this film was made. (261).

Earlier, Michael Dempsey charged that "[m]ost of Ford's blacks lack even the cigar stone dignity of the Indians," reminding readers of, for instance, Ford's dehumanizing treatment of Stepin Fetchit in JUDGE PRIEST (1934) or STEAMBOAT ROUND THE BEND (1935), arguing that Woody Strode's Pompey in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE was "[t]he closest that Ford comes to a sympathetic, unstereotyped black," albeit one that never transcends the status of "a soft wax statue of goodness" (6).

I intend to mediate between both positions. Drawing from my elaborations about the specific narrative situation in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, and once more relying on *nostalgia* as an operative tool to approach it, I argue that Pompey's representation in the film is extremely contingent, on the one hand reinforcing the film's indictment of white hegemony, on the other hand undermining parts of the film's indictment of male hegemony. As such, Pompey reveals the gaping problematics of representing black Americans in the Western genre, while at the same time, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE cannot be wholly acquitted from replicating the very problematics it denounces.[431]

As I have shown earlier in the example of the stagecoach and with reference to Matheson's discussion of the film, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE hyperbolizes the element of myth-as-history in Ransom's flashback to illustrate to the viewer that we are dealing with an unreliable narrator. Ransom's tale of the West is ridden with clichés and stereotypes, all of which signify that his way of retelling the story eschews historical accountability. In other words, Ford has his first-person narrator reconstruct a distorted version of the West to draw our attention away from the individual images and toward the process of imagining. The director wants the viewer to recognize Ransom's account as subjective.

However, this paradigm does not seem to be applicable when it comes to the film's representation of Pompey. That is because most scenes featuring Pompey are laden with concrete historical referents, through which the director attempts to articulate a strong social commentary (corroborating Horne's reading of Pompey as an emancipatory figure), but by which, in turn, the director violates the subjective nature of his first-person narrator. Ford's attempt to award the character Pompey with the heroic virtues of the (conventionally white)

[431] Correspondingly, the claim stands that Ford's reducing of Pompey to occupy a position and fulfil a narrative function based utterly and entirely on the color of his skin is in and of itself a racist practice, confirming such notions that Ford, even at his most determined to "'do right' […] cannot escape his own innate condescension" (Dempsey 5).

Western hero, while at the same time pointing out his status as a marginalized, ostracized individual suffering from institutionalized racism and segregation, adds to Ransom's account a level of objectivity that markedly disrupts the otherwise consistent stylization and self-aggrandizement of Ransom, the narrator. While these scenes and instances entail strong elements of social and historical criticism in and of themselves, they also obfuscate the element of Ransom, the representative of white male hegemony, debunking himself as a false authority. The simplified and reductive perspective on history we are offered with regards to Pompey must instead be ascribed to Ford, the director (corroborating Mellen's criticism of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE's representation of black Americans).

To illustrate: Perhaps the most significant scene and most salient depiction of the dynamics I have outlined is the school scene, in which Ransom asks Pompey to recite parts of the Declaration of Independence. David Coursen has offered an excellent description of the scene, which is worth quoting at length, because it already hints at the conflicting dynamics at play:

> [W]ritten on the blackboard, a converted stagecoach schedule, are the words 'Education is the basis of law and order', and the walls are adorned with likenesses of Washington and Lincoln, and even a crudely drawn American flag. When the next question is addressed to the class's token Negro, Pompey (Woody Strode, here looking as Uncle Remusy as Ford could make him), and he stands up so that his face shares the frame with the likeness of the Great Emancipator himself, the scene seems ready to succumb to a terminal case of galloping flag-waving.
>
> At this point, a peculiar thing happens to the storybook civics lesson. As Pompey begins his recital, his illiteracy betrays him and he says 'was writ' instead of 'was written'. But Ranse, who did not interrupt Nora's recital or comment on her garbled syntax (leaving the corrections to a zealous student), immediately corrects Pompey's error, interjecting 'was *written*, Pompey'. More to the point, he delivers the correction in an exasperated, almost patronising tone of voice, his manner cool and even slightly intimidating. In short, Ranse speaks to Pompey with very little of the folksy warmth or good-natured tolerance he shows everyone else in the room, even visitors ill-mannered enough to wear hats or light pipes in the classroom. Further, Ford acknowledges this difference, punctuating the correction by cutting from Pompey to a slightly asymmetrical shot of Ranse, sternly seated at his desk, and viewed from an angle used in no other context in the scene. The rest of the recitation is fragmented into alternating shots of an uncertain Pompey vainly struggling to finish, and a stern Ranse, making corrections and discouraging another student from helping Pompey, who never *does* manage to finish. Both James Stewart's delivery and the visual treatment of the exchange suggest, without ever quite insisting, that the teacher, so supportive of everyone else in the class, is subtly, perhaps unconsciously, patronising his black student. Thus when Pompey apologises for forgetting the self-evident truth 'that all men are created equal', Ranse's reply, 'that's all right, Pompey, a lot of people forget that part of it', is more ironic than he knows. (238; emphasis in original)

The final part of Coursen's analysis of the scene, in which he discerns that Ransom's reaction to Pompey's apology "is more ironic than he knows" is particularly interesting. As Coursen correctly identifies, in the scene, visual arrangements (like the skewered camera angle) and concrete historical references that visual ally both Pompey and Ransom with presidential champions of American history serve to further notions of his hypocrisy and that make us question Ransom's moral integrity. Aptly, Pompey, as a statement of (self-)empowerment, is visually associated with Abraham Lincoln; Ransom with the slave-owning Founding Father George Washington – as a reminder of the hypocrisy and injustices on which the nation was built (cf. Horne 10). Yet these references exceed Ransom's subjectivity. Elsewhere, Ransom distorts the facts, the process of which viewers will use against him once he has revealed his lie. In this scene (and in other scenes featuring Pompey[432]), however, Ford uses the facts against him immediately.

Thus, the director introduces an element of objectivity in his portrayal of Pompey, the effects of which mean that his representation is inconsistent with the rest of the film. As such, the dynamics I have discussed above – the film reproducing hegemonic masculinity to challenge hegemonic masculinity through the distorted gaze of a lying, hypocritical first-person narrator – do not apply here. In this way, *nostalgia* falls short of fully explaining the film's representation of Pompey. In his representation of Pompey, Ford uses the imagery and iconography of conventional hegemonic masculinity – physical strength, moral integrity, a dedication to the Western code of individualism (to the extent that his status as a disenfranchised individual allows it) – to illustrate the arbitrariness of the United States' distribution of power. Ford challenges his audience to question stereotyped visions of black Americans by giving his sole black character the characteristics usually reserved for the white Western hero, by explicitly pointing out that the only thing that prevents Pompey from 'attaining' hegemonic masculinity is institutionalized racism.

In doing so, Ford, on the one hand, demonstrates the complex interplay of discourses of race and gender, illustrating as he does in Pompey the cultural construction of gender and racial regimes. There is no natural origin to white male hegemony that would justify its status if its modes and characteristics can be successfully emulated and reproduced by a black man. Pompey's appropriation of the phallus signifies and reveals the arbitrariness of the construction of white men's symbolic power. On the other hand, however, Ford replicates the idealization of hegemonic masculinity that he challenges elsewhere in the narrative. Yet I contend that this inconsistency does not negate the film's overall message.

[432] For instance, in the scene chronicling Election Day in Shinbone, we see Pompey forced by racial segregation to stoically wait outside the saloon in which the vote takes place, while the white men of the town enthusiastically congregate inside the building.

Whether the film relies too heavily on stereotypes of representing black Americanness in its representation of Pompey, and whether this is done for ideological reasons that would ultimately convict John Ford of notions of white superiority the way Mellen's commentary insinuates, I cannot conclusively answer. Even though I think Mellen has a point, I am inclined to agree with Horne to read Pompey as an emancipatory character, mainly because in the frame narrative, the part in which Ford speaks to his audience through Hallie, unfiltered from Ransom's distorting gaze, we see Hallie in a powerful gesture of mutual recognition, allying her taciturn rebellion with Pompey (cf. Horne 11). In their recognition of each other's suffering and grief, in that these two characters are the only two characters beside Ransom who know who really shot Liberty Valance, in that these two characters understand the meaning of the cactus rose while Ransom remains oblivious to it until the very end, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE above all unites feminism and the emancipation of black Americans through the Civil Rights Movement in cause and spirit.

Coda

In THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, Ransom Stoddard travels West with the mission to civilize and cultivate. To do so, he tries to become "the man who shot Liberty Valance", that is, the perfect combination of domestic moral integrity and individualist violent power; he tries to become and camouflage as natural a reformed cultural ideal of gender. In the film's final reel, he admits his failure to the newspapermen: Though he could not reconcile both ends, he did what he could and at least pretended, disclosing to internal and cinema audience alike his hypocrisy, his preposterous and illegitimate appropriation of authority over history and historiography. An audience might already feel aggravated in light of such an outrageous injustice, but Ford does not end there: As the editor in chief burns his notes, uttering perhaps the most frequently quoted words in the genre's longstanding history, "This is the West, Sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend" (01:54:50-01:54:56) – an aphorism that perfectly comprises the genre's ritualized concealment (printing the legend) of the cultural construction of gender (truth) with the simplistic, naturalizing reduction to sex (legend) –, he and his colleagues, the all-male internal audience, equipped with the professional authority and obligation to inform the people, condone his actions. The journalists' actions describe, as Catherine Ingrassia correctly identifies, "a value system that depends on complicity" (8). As such, burning the minutes and withholding the truth in favor of a legend that has been proved a lie signifies, and, in fact, problematizes, patriarchy's systemic resilience and resistance to change, as well as the defiant obstinacy of its agents to defend and retain the idea of a monoculture – to unite men in their pursuit of a singular, essential masculinity, of "pure maleness" (Mellen 258) – as the basis of white male hegemony (cf. Hogan & Pursell 67).

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE steps in where the journalists fail and betray the American people: it demystifies the legend; it prints the fact; it "willfully reinscribes the limitations of the genre it purports to expose and ultimately combats the deteriorating authority of the Western" (Ingrassia 13). THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE exposes itself and thus exposes the genre. It unmasks the Western as an episteme (cf. Langford 28) of U.S. American history and identity. The film comments on a genre whose subliminal ideological purpose has always been to explore (and in its wake, provide) identity, and it does so by "confronting and scrutinising, rather than simply printing, the legend" (Coursen 238). The legend reads that through the Western, America could explain its own identity to itself (cf. Hoberman 85), that it could legitimatize its history. Like Ransom does paradigmatically in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, the Western, Ford concedes, tells stories that are characterized and informed above all by linearity, simplicity, causality, and – crucially – falsification: stories of 'cowboys and Indians', West and East, wilderness and garden, individualism and domesticity, white and non-white, masculine and feminine, good and evil.[433] Accordingly, Ford biographer Tag Gallagher noted about THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE: "The historical truth is merely a footnote, and, need it be said, this is the problem. Every student of history (and Ford was one) must continually marvel at the disparity between historical fact and tradition. People prefer fantasy and, often, they need it" (409).

Birthed in the wake of genocidal conquest and Victorian moral, the Western became trapped in binarities; binarities that necessarily but hitherto surreptitiously fell short of grasping, let alone representing truth. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, however, reveals that the story of America, that the story of the cowboy hero, that its implications for conceptualizations of gender, are stories of nuances and contingencies – stories that cannot be simplified in narratives of black hats and white hats[434] (cf. Matheson, "John Ford on the Cold War…" 360-1), and must no longer be sanitized by media that prefer to print the legend.[435]

Ford demonstrates that individualism and domesticity cannot be reconciled into a singular, stable coherent gender identity as a causal consequence of sex, and that this

[433] With all the freedoms and with all the limitations of cinematic expression, Ford in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE finds a way to identify, vividly illustrate, and critique the intellectual premise on which years later the most important vanguards of Western film scholarship – Jim Kitses's *Horizons West* or Richard Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* – would base their research: deconstructing the myth.

[434] The irony is not lost on me that it was John Wayne, embodiment of THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE's various grey areas, who proclaimed seven years later at the peak of the United States' involvement in Vietnam: "They tell me everything isn't black and white. Well I say why the hell not?" (Hoberman 85).

[435] Coursen adds another interesting metatextual point: "Ostensibly, the editor's gesture [tearing the paper apart and destroying the minutes of Ransom's story, T.S.] suggests that the new society, which Peabody, with his devotion to truth, had helped to shape now demands that the truth be suppressed. But the repetition of the paper-crumpling in its various contexts actually suggests a basic continuity between past and present; truth has always subverted the social order and, in the past as in the present, has necessarily been suppressed to preserve 'Western law'" (239).

impossibility should no longer be sustained. The process that drove Howie Kemp into spells of agonizing self-loathing in THE NAKED SPUR and that was stubbornly displaced in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is openly revealed as an aporia in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE.[436] More to the point, THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE successfully manages to not only vectorize its critique towards individual representations that succeed or failed to implement this impossible union of values and virtues, thereby reflecting a general socio-cultural trend of the sixties (cf. Kimmel 262). Instead, the film directs its criticism at the complex interplay of processes that inform these representations: cultural construction and naturalization.

Ford shows us the Western for what it is: the attempt of white men to justify the conquest of the land, to organize society by restrictive, arbitrary, reductive categories, and to invent and subsequently promulgate a legend to fill the historical void after the fact – a legend that through its incessant reiteration, ubiquity and popularity has eventually replaced the fact. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, therefore, stands at the beginning of an emerging period of filmmaking throughout the sixties that tried to revisit the legend (cf. Weidinger 198), hoping to rediscover the facts, or at the very least reflect "upon the conditions of possibility of its own history-making enterprise" (Langford 27).

Situated in "a strange vacuum of temporal and topographical specificity" (ibid. 30), John Ford issued a virtually timeless and utopian commentary on the political and historical dynamics of his country: "THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE is a historical testament of deconstructive meanings, and John Ford is at the center of them all, as storyteller, as poet, and as subject, looking back on his country and into his work" (Anderson 25). In the tumultuous sixties, however, this supratemporal approach, of course, resonated especially strongly,

[436] This is a prominent theme throughout the sixties: In SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF! (Burt Kenendy, 1969), for instance, hero Jason's (James Garner) obsessive asseverations of his plans to go to Australia eventually coalesce with his innate desire to settle down and marry the 'right' woman, Prudy (Joan Hackett). As Jason imposes a ridiculous 'agreement' on Prudy, asking her to promise him to follow him to that last refuge for rugged individualists whenever he feels they must go just as he promises to be a good husband and father, SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF! imagines a dreamscape in which the hero has it both ways, fusing individualism and domesticity in a coherent gender identity, facilitated and confirmed by the formation of the perfect heterosexual couple. Yet the film uses several strategies to remind viewers of the artificiality of this narrative and its longstanding idealization in the genre's history: mostly through its use of comic hyperbole, as well as obvious references to established texts such as MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (citing Henry Fonda's balancing on a chair in front of the sheriff's office, or featuring Walter Brennan as the head of an Clanton-esque gang of delinquent sons) and HIGH NOON (Prudy assisting her future husband's defense of the town when nobody else will like Grace Kelly as Amy Kane (cf. Hannan 55-57). But, most poignantly, the film debunks its narrative as a self-consciously ridiculous fabrication when Jason's comic sidekick Jake (Jack Elam) breaks the fourth wall at the end of the film, addressing the audience and thereby invoking THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE: one, by revealing a narrative parallel, telling the viewer directly of Jason's becoming governor after the town joins the rally to secure statehood; and two, by obtrusively drawing the viewer's attention to the film's pastiche reiteration of the Western myth: "Now, the way this story ends is that they get married. And he goes on to become governor of the state. He never gets to Australia, but he keeps reading a lot of books about it. I get to be sheriff of this town, then I go on to become one of the most beloved characters in Western folklore" (SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF, 01:31:33-01:01:32:00).

particularly in contrast to the New Frontier-policies of John F. Kennedy. Whereas the Kennedy administration potently recycled and reinvigorated the myth of the frontier to find a fitting rhetoric for its Cold War endeavors (cf. Corkin 235), Ford's film took an admonishing stance, defying the reductive applications of 'Western law' to global politics (cf. ibid. 208-9), complicating them instead. Matheson observes accordingly:

> In the early 1960s, with Jack Kennedy's vision of a New Frontier moving the American public to accept military debacles like the Bay of Pigs, what method of cultural critique could be more damning than the deconstruction of the popular Western and its promotion of Manifest Destiny? What director could be more capable of such a project than John Ford? ("John Ford on the Cold War…" 363)

In other words: Kennedy declared the New Frontier open; John Ford, with THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, closed "both his own mythic frontier and that of the film genre he helped create" (McBride 632), and thereby set precedent for a new approach to Western filmmaking that was better equipped to reflect the energies brooding in a certain demographic: the marginalized, the liberal, the youth. With THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, the most prominent ambassador of the Western turned his back on mainstream politics and culture. With THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, the Western embarks towards a different kind of frontier: that of dissent and revisionism (cf. Langford 28, 32). With THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, the Western becomes counterculture, sensing the dawn of New Hollywood and anticipating, on distant horizons, the arrival of New Historicism.

4.6.2. Apocalypse: THE WILD BUNCH (1969)

By the end of the decade, the United States had undergone radical changes. Incisive events both at home and abroad had altered the political and socio-cultural landscape dramatically, incrementally opening a schism between ever more militant cultures of dissent and an ever more reactionary establishment, both of which began to assert their place in history more and more violently. As Americans began to recognize and to ever more firmly sketch the contours of the dividing lines between each other, the United States abandoned its once imperturbable belief in a cultural consensus. "American society […] had 'come apart'" (Heale 133).

With the assassinations of John F. Kennedy (1963), Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy (both 1968), Americans had lost three of their most prominent and most charismatic agents of optimism to crimes of extreme, unprecedented violence. As these figures were replaced by more conservative offices on the one hand – with the presidential administrations of Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) and subsequently Richard Nixon (1969-1974) – and by a

more radical form of activism on the other – for instance, by an increasingly violent Black Power movement spearheaded by Malcolm X –, the United States seemed "trapped in an irrationally rising tide of violence" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 581). As the decade came to a close, "[so] many hopes […] – the abolition of poverty, the elimination of racial discrimination, the elevation of the Third World – had not been fulfilled" (Heale 155). All the while, news from the nation's catastrophic involvement in Vietnam – first the Tet Offensive, then the massacre of My Lai, and ultimately such incomprehensibly futile battles like Hamburger Hill – polarized Americans like never before.

At the same time, the Sixties were a decade of extreme optimism (cf. Heale 155) and groundbreaking technological advancement. Infused with the hopes and dreams of the Hippie movement, the Peace movement, and rock 'n' roll, Americans in the sixties like never before in history felt they could facilitate change (cf. Savran 114-5). As such, each in their own way, both the masses that flocked to Woodstock and the spirit that put Neil Armstrong on the moon in 1969 are testaments to the contradictory social dynamics of the sixties: whether perceived from the vantage point of counterculture or the mainstream, a growing awareness of global and domestic shortcomings attracted tremendous collective responses that would substantially boost the nation's confidence and transform its identity.

Likewise, the women's movement achieved several significant goals, in spite of administrations' reluctance and negligence: "The call for equal pay was formally met in 1963, and a surprise victory was won in 1964 with an amendment to the Civil Rights Act banning discrimination on grounds of sex as well as of race, religion and national origin" (Heale 149). Through landmark events such as the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* or her subsequent co-founding of the National Organization of Women (NOW), women across the country began to make their voices heard, inaugurating a time of critical feminist thinking and protest that combined the personal and political, brought terms and concepts such as sexism and patriarchal oppression on the map, "and developed perspectives that would enhance their capacity to question significant elements of the security regime's political and cultural rhetoric" (Wildermuth 76, with reference to Susan Hartmann, *From Margin to Mainstream*, (1989)). Though in largely individuated voices and with at times variegated agendas, feminist dissent inspired huge numbers of young people to strive for liberation (cf. Heale 151-2), culminating in the Stonewall riots and its subsequent protest march that "helped to precipitate the formation of the Gay Liberation Front" (ibid. 153).

By 1969, gender, race, and sexuality – as well as their intersectional effects – had become firmly established as decisive, if divisive, concepts of critical thinking, manifesting not only in academic debate but also in both grass root political activism and personal lifestyle choices, lived realities and philosophies. Indeed, as one of the most pertinent slogans of the decade sounded, the personal had become political, leading a generation of young people to

perform gender in fierce opposition to societal conventions (cf. Savran 117, 122). On a myriad of fronts, hitherto marginalized members of society formed communities from cultural fragments (cf. Heale 154) and combined their voices to sound their disapproval of and desertion from white male heterosexual hegemony, not rarely by any means necessary and against the odds of violent resistance, while preceding generations – later dubbed by Richard Nixon "the silent majority" – geared up in defense of the very same (cf. Savran 123).

Hollywood, and specifically the Western, naturally reflected these dynamics, infusing its visions of the frontier with a great deal of skepticism and discord on the one hand, and an unparalleled degree of diversity on the other. Benefitting no doubt from drastic changes within Hollywood's production and distribution systems,[437] the Westerns produced between 1962 and 1969 differed immensely from their antecedents, most significantly in their overt display of "profanity, sexuality, and violence" (Prince 16) and, coincidentally, their increasing inclusion of hitherto marginalized identities in pivotal, sometimes even leading roles. Especially as the decade came to a close, feminism and other countercultural tenets gradually became more tangible as "ideological irritants" (Britton, *Sideshows* 77). With more liberal, more realistic, more brutal, and therefore more contemporaneous visions of the West, such as DUEL AT DIABLO (Ralph Nelson, 1966), THE BALLAD OF JOSIE (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1967), FIRECREEK (Vincent McEveety, 1968), HANG 'EM HIGH (Ted Post, 1968) or TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE (Abraham Polonsky, 1969), the Westerns of the sixties certainly recognized – and thus endeavored to cater to – a more diverse audience.

Yet it is crucial to remember that such representations were not necessarily and certainly not singularly fueled by a growing social awareness among Hollywood studios. Rather, as scholars have been quick to point out, Hollywood responded rather in line with its established priorities of marketability, profitability, supply and demand: As an increasingly more diverse audience openly voiced their hunger to be represented in terms that reflected their actuality, Hollywood answered the call, partly in an attempt to preserve its crumbling financial stability in light of significant structural changes that launched the mushrooming of independent productions, thus confronting studios with extraordinary competition. Like in response to the societal shifts following the Great Depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s (see 4.2.)., Hollywood cultivated a firstly lucrative and only secondly socially aware enterprise from

[437] Stephen Prince notes "two watershed events" that most significantly changed the face of Hollywood films in the Sixties: "the revision in September 1966 of Hollywood's thirty-six-year-old Motion Picture Production Code and the creation two years later of the Code and Rating Administration (CARA) with its G-M-R-X classification scheme" (12). David A. Cook elaborates: "[…] the MPAA had further revised the Production Code in September 1966 to eliminate specifically proscribed behavior and to offer instead a list of ten general guidelines (e.g., 'Detailed and protracted acts of brutality, cruelty, physical violence, torture and abuse, shall not be presented'). These were to be applied contextually, relative to a film's plot, and a provision was made for borderline cases to be released with a 'Suggested for Mature Audiences' designation, opening the door to the classification and ratings system that would succeed the Code in 1968" (137).

people's ever more grim-yet-inclusive environments of social dissent and ubiquitous violence (cf. Coyne 143; cf. Mitchell 224; cf. Prince 16; cf. Cook, "Ballistic Balletics" 146-7).

Still, these are the foundational years for the paradigm-shifting New Hollywood period, issuing a new kind of cinema under the regime of a new generation of executives and filmmakers inspired by new ideas and a different worldview that impacted their art dramatically (cf. Cook, "Ballistic Balletics 143; cf. Hannan 12). Films like DR. STRANGELOVE OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB (Stanley Kubrick, 1964), BLOW-UP (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966), THE GRADUATE (Mike Nichols, 1967), BONNIE AND CLYDE (Arthur Penn, 1967), ROSEMARY'S BABY (Roman Polanski, 1968), 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), EASY RIDER (Dennis Hopper, 1969), MIDNIGHT COWBOY (John Schlesinger, 1969), and BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (George Roy Hill, 1969), altered the cinematic landscape forever with narratives that appealed specifically to counterculture and that wholeheartedly departed from established cinematic conventions or the idea of a socio-cultural consensus.

Likewise, the Western was subject to change: Never before had the genre attracted such a great diversity of stories of both oppression and liberation, with even John Wayne displaying a level of unprecedented vulnerability in his character Rooster Cogburn in TRUE GRIT (Henry Hathaway, 1969).[438] And never before had the genre been populated by such a great diversity of agents of both oppression *and* liberation. And although the majority of Western productions between 1963 and 1969 hesitated to adopt, or simply failed to achieve, the level of self-reflectivity and self-criticism issued by THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE in 1962, several Westerns of the time do give evidence to a growing interest to revisit and potentially reconsider the nation's conceptualization of its mythic roots.

Crucially however, throughout the sixties, the most popular Westerns – and, as history would prove, the most enduring Westerns in terms of cultural pervasiveness[439] – that exhibited such critical potential and that displayed a level of self-reflectivity, did not originate from the United States, but from Italy. Much work has been done to rehabilitate the *Spaghetti Westerns* from the their initial vilification, first and foremost by the groundbreaking studies of Sir Christopher Frayling.[440] Especially Sergio Leone's 'Dollar'-trilogy, comprising PER UN POGNO DI

---

[438] Ironically, this most dramatic deviation from the kind of invincible star persona he had cultivated over the previous four decades would eventually be the role that won him the Academy Award for Best Actor.

[439] Looking at contemporary pop-cultural products like a Kentucky Fried Chicken-commercial issued in the United Kingdom for Thanksgiving 2018, or even episodes of American Sitcoms like HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER or COMMUNITY, it seems noteworthy that ad-creators and showrunners apparently resort to the iconography of the Italian Western rather than the American Western when referencing 'the Western' as a pop-cultural episteme.

[440] Equally, and more recently, much work has been done to remind us that we should be careful to read non-American "Western" films not as crude, unilateral imitations of an alleged U.S. American original, but rather as films dealing with universally appealing tropes that can be retraced to any number of cultural contexts (cf. Klein 10-14). As such, the Italian Westerns (and other international Westerns, for

DOLLARI (A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS, 1964), PER QUALCHE DOLLARO IN PIÙ (FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE, 1965) and IL BUONO, IL BRUTTO, IL CATTIVO (THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY, 1966), as well as his *opus magnum* C'ERA UNA VOLTA IL WEST (ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST, 1968), read as deliberate, if culturally fluid and idiosyncratic, transpositions of and conscious responses to the "puritan-liberal Hollywood Westerns" of the U.S. (Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns* 160).[441] As such, Leone's films had considerable influence on how Americans would make, perceive, and judge the Western during the sixties and beyond.

A defining feature of Leone's reworking of the Western's formula, as noted by several commentators, is the unique treatment and meaning of violence in his films. As Clint Eastwood's anti-hero in A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS essentially kills the population of an entire town because there is money to be made, one is hard pressed to retrace in his actions any vestiges of a moral code reminiscent of Hollywood conventions. This is not to say that there is no significance to the display of violence. Quite the contrary, the seemingly gratuitous nature of Leone's use of violence, dramatized by the operatic score of Ennio Morricone and made visible by the surrealist distortions of his films' mise-en-scènes, challenges generic conventions "in helping shear screen violence free of the reassuring moral context that had always governed it" (Prince 18). Leone's West and his Westerns – the myth, as well as the myth of the myth – are void of any form of moral legitimation for violence and conquest along the lines of *Manifest Destiny*. Instead, they are governed by baroque machismo and greed, with his heroes differing from his villains only because they incorporate and execute the very same features a little more efficiently and effectively.

While Leone thus scrutinized the Western's formula from without, another filmmaker strove to similar ends from within: Sam Peckinpah (cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 202; cf. Mitchell 226). Without question a controversial figure throughout his career, most of Sam Peckinpah's oeuvre, comprising only fourteen feature films between 1961 and his untimely death in 1984, belongs to the most trenchant and profound analyses of American culture of his time. Especially his Westerns have received significant critical attention, beginning with the comprehensive analyses of Jim Kitses and his first edition of *Horizons West* dating as early as 1969. However, scholars' opinions still vary in the appreciation of Peckinpah's work, either applauding its uncompromising, intellectual investigation of America's core cultural themes or condemning his body of work as "'fascist' and a vicious celebration of primal masculine instinct" (Prince 4-5).

---

that matter), comment just as much, if not more, on generic conventions and socio-cultural discourses that are closer to home as they do on those from the United States.

[441] By this I mean that Leone's Westerns read as powerful commentaries on the myth of the frontier as processed by the American Western film, which subsequently assumed mythic status in and of itself. Narratively, Leone's source for inspiration for A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS came evidently from Akira Kurosawa's YOJIMBO (1961).

Peckinpah's 1969 feature THE WILD BUNCH, featuring in its starring roles William Holden as Pike Bishop, Ernest Borgnine as Dutch, Robert Ryan as Deke Thornton, Edmond O'Brien as Sykes, and Warren Oates as Lyle Gorch, is unanimously considered the director's most important film, irrespective of commentators' appreciation of or aversion to his work. THE WILD BUNCH chronicles the last days of a group of outlaws, trying to sustain their lifestyle of robbery and murder in a day and age when such endeavors no longer escape the law's reach. Following a catastrophically failed robbery attempt, the eponymous wild bunch traverses south of the border to Mexico, hoping for their luck to change. Constantly pursuing them is Deke Thornton, a former member of the gang, now reluctantly employed by greedy railroad official Harrigan (Albert Dekker) to hunt down the bunch and vanquish them once and for all. In Mexico, the bunch get caught up between the fascist regime of General Mapache (Emilio Fernandez), peons, and the revolutionary forces who are trying to overthrow the general. Siding with all parties at one point or another, their opportunism ostensibly changes for a moral awakening when one member of their gang – the romantic idealist Angel (Jaime Sànchez) – is captured, tortured, and publicly humiliated by Mapache and his henchmen. Determined to rescue Angel and go out in a blaze of glory, they enter Mapache's den and face him and his army, culminating in the most excessively violent and explicitly brutal shoot-out Hollywood had seen to date.

Aptly then, the film has most frequently been discussed in terms of its treatment of violent content within the heated socio-cultural climate of 1969, with Peckinpah's advocates commending his film to diagnose America with the festering infection of all-consuming violence that characterized this period of time, and his detractors reproaching the film as but a symptom of that very disease (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 593), reportedly labelling the director's approach to representing violence as "self-indulgent and disgusting" (Bliss, "'Back off to What?'" 109). One of the most insightful discussions of Peckinpah's body of work and the director's treatment of violence has been put forward by Stephen Prince in his comprehensive study *Savage Cinema*. Prince convincingly argues that Peckinpah's trademark montages of aestheticized violence, using multiple cameras shooting at different speeds and rapid cuts between compartmentalized shots and sequences (cf. 49, 67-72), are consistently counterpointed by "self-reflexive frameworks" (ibid. 169), such as "didactic tableaux" arrangements, layers of irony, and visual metaphors (ibid. 169-70). These, Prince argues, function to disturb the viewing experience, immersing viewers in the joys of visual spectacle while accentuating spectacle itself; that is, reminding viewers that what they are enjoying is the spectacularization of violence. In drawing attention to the processes of showing and viewing, of constructing images and meaning, Peckinpah makes viewers "complicit in the film's world

of brutality and death" (ibid. 175). Other scholars have made similar observations and raised similar points, corroborating Prince's assessment of Peckinpah's treatment of violence.[442]

Gender-specific discussions of THE WILD BUNCH do not abound. One excellent analysis that touches on aspects of gender has been put forward by Christopher Sharrett in his paper "Peckinpah the Radical: Politics of THE WILD BUNCH", in which he, among other aspects, points out a structural connection between Peckinpah's depiction of violence and sexual politics. Arguing that "THE WILD BUNCH is a meditation on America's promise versus its actuality" (103), Sharrett illustrates how the male characters in the film repeatedly invoke a moral code but never actually abide by it, let alone manage to embrace it (cf. ibid. 86-87). They are trapped in a semiotic field that is supposed to delineate hegemonic masculinity but only ever articulates its alleged antithesis: repressed homoeroticism (cf. ibid. 88). Finding as the only release to these seemingly irreconcilable energies a cataclysmic, self-destructive exertion of violence, THE WILD BUNCH reminds us, according to Sharrett, "that the sign systems of patriarchy are built on piles of the dead and that mass death reifies these systems" (92).

To conclude my analysis of gender representations in the American Western of 1903-1969, I intend to tie on to these observations and synthesize the valuable points raised by Prince and Sharrett, as their combined insights bring to a (temporary) close the structural constant of heteronormativity and white male hegemony as I have outlined its development in this study. As Sharrett interprets THE WILD BUNCH as one of the "most crucial analyses of the failure of the American experiment," "more than homage for a dead past" and "a recognition of how that past was probably always a deceit" (104), he attests to the film the quality to undo the structures on which male hegemony was built. Prince's dedicated analysis of Peckinpah's treatment of violence, meanwhile, at once substantiates Sharrett's argument and helps extend the scope of the director's critique. Foregrounding the techniques used by Peckinpah to single out the reciprocal relationship between viewers and the seen, Prince has convincingly demonstrated that Peckinpah explored violence in a way that implicated the viewer, "expos[ing] not just the look and feel of violence but its underlying psychic and social correlatives" by way of "creating a moral dialogue with the audience" (184, 185).[443] THE WILD BUNCH exemplifies the reciprocal relationship between a violent cinema, a violent history, and a violent reality.

---

[442] For instance, Kitses notes that "the audience is compelled to experience the thrills and the brutality, the sustained excess ideally keying spectatorship's uncomfortable insight into its own complicity" (*Horizons West* 203). Making a similar point, Mitchell states: "One way in which the viewer discovers complicity with the film lies in scenes that seem eminently formulaic, that elicit the most conventional of moral responses and yet reveal themselves as only stronger versions of an iconoclastic agenda" (249).
[443] Kitses implicitly suggests that this pattern links Peckinpah's cinema with Epic Theatre and strategies of estrangement. In fact, comparisons with Brecht have been made in the research of Peckinpah's cinema before (cf. Sharrett 81, 82). Prince, too, sees a kinship between both artists, but he is quite insistent in his hesitations to consider Peckinpah's approach a cinematic adaption or adoption of Brechtian ideas. He writes: "The Artaudian aesthetic, therefore, could not have taken Peckinpah very far in his interrogation of violence. Brecht's alternative would have been much more productive, because it would have enabled Peckinpah to structure violence in a self-conscious way that could open it up

Transferring Prince's insights to a gender-specific analysis, I will show that thereby Peckinpah manages to formulate a critique not only of white male hegemony and the process of representing it (like Ford did in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE), but also of the social processes that inform and predicate these representations outside the cinematic universe: Debunking the hollowness and flaws of cultural ideals of gender, THE WILD BUNCH problematizes the reciprocal relationship between a heteronormative cinema, a heteronormative history, and a heteronormative reality; in short, the discoursive primacy of heteronormativity. THE WILD BUNCH comprehensively undoes the Western's generic formula and its ties to hegemonic masculinity. To illustrate my argument, I wish to discuss the opening scene of the film, as it contains elements of both the film's iconic visuals and its iconoclastic social commentary.

Shattering Expectations

THE WILD BUNCH begins seemingly frozen in history, with a monochrome, newspaper-esque still featuring in its background an indistinct number of soldiers riding on horseback across a set of railroad tracks, while the credits in the foreground announce the film as a Phil Feldman production. After a couple of seconds, the film changes into moving images, presenting in full Technicolor and Cinemascope the five soldiers riding along, only to halt its action for another black-and-white freeze frame, this time announcing the film's title: THE WILD BUNCH (Fig. 85). All the while, the images are accompanied by the soundtrack of a military snare drum. Seconds later, the image unfreezes and the action resumes in Technicolor, with the soldiers continuing their ride (Fig. 86). This is a stylistic device that will punctuate the entire opening scene, making it a total of nineteen black-and-white freeze frames (counting the opening one), interrupting the flow of images to introduce us to more members of the cast and crew. Moreover, these frames immediately introduce the viewer to THE WILD BUNCH's distortion of cinematic action (in its literal sense) to draw our attention to the symbolism of this action as well as the artificiality of its representation.[444]

---

critically as a subject and an experience. I do not wish to suggest here that Peckinpah's films are Brechtian. They are not. Nor do I wish to imply that Peckinpah was a student of Brecht. He was not, and, if he were, then the CROSS OF IRON ending shows that he was a bad one. I am suggesting that Brecht's work represents a stylistic direction in which Peckinpah could have profitably taken his inquiries into violence, and […] he did so. He seemed to sense that alternate possibilities were available to him" (Prince 169).

[444] Furthermore, the freeze frames draw from negotiations of historical fact and legend (of truth and its mythification, see 4.6.1. THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE) qua its newspaper-esque look, which reduces depth to project a necessarily abstract and superficial image as it translates three-dimensional 'reality' to two-dimensional representation. Incidentally, the freeze frames and their blurring of depth "also have a spatial suggestiveness" that "suggest a further thematic" with "not only psychological but also ethical ramifications," (Bliss, "'Back Off to What?'" 106), culminating in the film's articulation of a fervent critique of capitalism (cf. ibid. 126).

Fig. 85. 00:00:31. Fig. 86. 00:00:36.

Source: THE WILD BUNCH, Sam Peckinpah (1969). Warner Bros.. DVD.

Cut to a group of children. We hear them laughing, as the camera cuts back to the group of soldiers approaching. A medium close-up, shot from below eye-level, introduces us to their alleged leader, riding ahead, wearing a sergeant's uniform, looking at the children playing. A second freeze frame informs us that the leader, who we will later get to know as Pike Bishop, is played by the actor William Holden. In a medium-long shot we see the group of children, framed from above eye-level, as they pause whatever they were doing to observe the soldiers ride further into town. The camera freezes for a third time to introduce us to the name of another actor, Ernest Borgnine, playing the character Dutch, as we will learn later on. The visual treatment of these characters in the establishing scene (close-ups and below eye-level shots that assume the perspective of children) as well as viewers' knowledge of generic conventions and the specific Western iconography (men riding on horseback, wearing, significantly, soldiers' uniforms) clearly suggests these characters are the heroes of the film.

After the film has introduced Robert Ryan (who is yet absent from the events on screen) in a fourth freeze frame, and after the soldiers have passed the group of children, the camera returns to the medium-long shot of the kids. One of them grabs a stick and prods it into a makeshift miniature arena in the dirt, as the camera cuts to a close-up of the inside of this arena (with the stick establishing visual coherence between both shots). We realize that the children are currently enjoying a cruel game, as they watch scorpions fight against hordes of fire ants, all the while poking the arachnids with sticks as they cringe in excruciating pain.

The scorpion tableau, as Prince calls it, has been subject to extensive critical analysis, so evocative and so evident are its metaphoric propensities (cf. Prince 175). Predators consumed by a devouring, uncompromising system, unknowingly doomed as the omnipotent, wrathful gods (the children) watch and toy with them as they perish, the tableau foreshadows the film's narrative trajectory and perfectly exemplifies the director's "indirect" approach (ibid. 185) to issuing a layered, moralistic, educational, meta-discursive critique.

Kitses, for instance, reads the sequence as the symbolization of "a structure in which innocence and cruelty, laughter and barbarity, idealism and blood-lust, exist side by side" (*Horizons West* 218). Slotkin, on the other hand, already discerns in his assessment of THE WILD BUNCH a connection between film and audience, noting: "The children serve as an image of ourselves, an audience of 'innocent spectators' whose expectation of violence can be construed as consent in or even desire for murderous entertainment" (*Gunfighter Nation* 595). In showing children as active perpetrators and sadist observers of violence, the film at once destabilizes our expectation of morality (childlike innocence) and upsets the 'safe' positioning of the audience as observers (cf. Prince 48). THE WILD BUNCH suggests that the execution of violence and its enjoyment as spectacle are part and parcel of the same dynamic. As the visual metaphor of the children torturing the scorpions draws viewers' attention to the alliance of violence and spectatorship, and as the montage is time and again interspersed with freeze frames that remind us of the artificiality of the medium, "the spectator [is] made complicit in the film's world of brutality and death" (ibid. 175). Like the children, we are divine spectators, hellish arbiters, as well as inevitable agents of violence. The scorpion tableau suggests that there is no such thing as simply watching; watching is always a *doing*, by which I mean an active partaking in social discourse, production of truth, construction of reality.

For a moment, the camera lingers on the image of the struggling scorpion, while off-screen we hear the voice of a preacher. As the camera cuts to the preacher, we see him in the process of addressing the temperance union, condeming the evil that lurks in spirits, as the soldiers pass him by in the background. Another freeze frame bisects the preacher's agitated sermon mid-speech. The extradiegetic music continues, while the preacher's sermon (the diegetic noise) is markedly cut in half. Now approaching the town's center, the group of soldiers pass two other soldiers. They salute and apparently recognize each other silently. At the town plaza, the soldiers dismount their horses. In military lingo – "All is quiet, Sir", "Let's fall in", "Follow me" (00:04:02-00:04:18) – they exchange pieces of information, as Pike surveys the environment, his eyes eventually locking on a Wells Fargo Administration Office, which the camera subsequently shows us in a reverse shot mirroring the object of his gaze. As they move closer to their destination – the Wells Fargo office, we infer – the soldiers accidentally bump into an elderly woman, who drops a stack of boxes. Pike and Dutch apologize profusely to the elderly woman and gallantly offer their assistance carrying her boxes across the street. Suddenly, the perspective changes. Each sequence so far has been presented to us from eye-level or below, and either from a neutral, unfocalized point of view or focalized by the children or Pike's roaming gaze, alternately rendering the audience spectators to the soldiers' actions, or encouraging them to identify with them by assuming their gazes. But now the camera cuts to a bird's view-establishing shot showing us the entire block surrounding the Wells Fargo Office from above, tracing the group of soldiers as they chaperone the lady across the street,

ostensibly shot from an adjacent rooftop, ostensibly a premonition of future events. Again, just like in the scorpion tableau, the film uses camera montage to draw our attention to the construction of looks and the process of looking. Except at this point we are not exactly sure whose eyes we are looking through.

As if to substantiate this notion with dialogue, the subsequent sequence introduces us to a sleeping Robert Ryan – we later learn his character is called Deke Thornton – being woken up by an aggravated man, Harrigan: "Thornton, wake up! Soldiers! Take a look!" (00:04:52-00:04:56). We realize we are on the adjacent rooftop, together with a group of heavily armed men – presumably bounty hunters –, watching the soldiers as they enter the office. In contrast to the soldiers who we have been observing so far, the bounty hunters on the rooftop – apart from Deke – seem disheveled, neurotic, edgy, anxious to kill; in other words: lacking composure and restraint. According to viewers' pre-existing 'knowledge' about genre and gender, these men, most illustriously overplayed by Strother Martin as Coffer and L.Q. Jones as T.C., represent gender failure. We are led to believe these are lesser men than those entering the Wells Fargo office because they are lacking the conventional qualities of heroic masculinities. Incidentally, we are led to believe that those watching are inferior to those acting. Next, the camera establishes the Wells Fargo office before the soldiers enter, presenting us a scene in which one clerk berates another. As we seem to simply happen upon an already ongoing event, which at the same time is so carefully staged, the film deliberately simulates realism, even draws our attention to this paradox; that is, to the discrepancy between our expectations of realism that the film intentionally engenders and the actuality of its construction, as the clerk says to his subordinated co-worker: "I don't care what you *meant* to do… it's what you *did* I don't like" (00:05:04-00:05:09) (cf. Sharrett 103).

Cut to the rooftop, the camera shows us Deke watching the soldiers as they say their goodbyes to the elderly lady before they enter the office. Back inside, the snare drum suddenly stops, changing for ambient strings before it resumes its pace and culminates in a tense, percussive crescendo, as the soldiers approach the disputing clerks, draw their guns, knock back and forcefully shove around clerks and customers. The camera cuts to a close-up of Pike Bishop's face, as he callously declares: "If they move, kill 'em!" (00:05:33-00:05:38), before the camera captures the final freeze frame of the exposition, featuring William Holden's face juxtaposed to the credits of director Sam Peckinpah, aligning the two.

The soldiers, who we now know are outlaws masquerading as military men presumably to ensure inconspicuous entry to and unhampered exit from the town, rob the office, collecting several bags of gold (later, we learn that the officials were prepared and swapped the gold for worthless washers). The men exchange clear and simple commands, functioning like a well-oiled machine as they empty the office's safe while holding their hostages at gunpoint. We have been trained to accept that outlaws can be heroes if their violation of what is lawful in turn

avows for what is right by a tradition of outlaw Westerns like JESSE JAMES. And we have been trained to recognize soldiers as paragons of virtue by a longstanding tradition of military Westerns like SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON. And we have been trained to appreciate the military professionalism of men under pressure in Westerns like THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN. Still, we cannot help but doubt the men's moral integrity, so visceral, so merciless, so sincerely unheroic is Pike's order to wantonly kill civilians.

This has to do with our expectation of the Western hero's use of violence. Schooled by countless Westerns, we have predicated our tolerance of violence on the notion that from the proficient, precise, and efficient use of violence comes redemption, reform, and betterment. Indeed, this myth, as Richard Slotkin has shown as early as 1971, has been deeply embedded in the nation's fabric ever since its inception ("Dreams and Genocide" 39). In the right pair of hands, the six-gun, we have been told, is effectively a surgeon's knife. By contrast, the bunch's favorite weapon is the shotgun, dealing death gratuitously, disproportionately, excessively, and indiscriminately.[445] More Captain Ernest Medina than Captain Nathan Brittles (SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON), and more Lieutenant William Calley Jr. than Chris (THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN) or Jesse James, the characters of THE WILD BUNCH in their resort to and execution of violence are much closer to the reality of 1969 than the heroic outlaws, soldiers and professional gunfighters of the Western myth.[446]

Sensing danger, Angel, another member of the bunch who has been designated as look-out, spots some rifles on the adjacent rooftop. Again, the film addresses the spectacle it is engaging in, drawing our attention to the gaze and the process of looking. Lifting the dramatic irony that we as viewers already knew they were being watched, THE WILD BUNCH now introduces another level of dramatic irony: that the bunch knows they are being watched and that they are watching the people that watch them, who do not know they are not only watching, but being watched. All the while we watch, as the film gradually builds up suspense, the construction of who-is-watching-who serving as a meta-discursive metaphor that signifies the peculiarity of gazes as well as the sexualized power dynamics they conceal (I will elaborate on this shortly), ever so subtly reminding us that we, as viewers watching the events, are an integral part of the construction of gazes and the unfolding action.

Finally, as the temperance movement starts parading down main street to the sound of "Shall we gather at the river" – as a most evident reference to John Ford, once more standing in as a synecdoche for the Western genre (cf. Grønstad 54) –, the bunch decide to make a run

---

[445] Indeed, the bunch's approach to violence is best signified in their usage of the machine gun in the final scene.

[446] Accordingly, Prince writes: "The violence of that film […] fed off the climate of violence endemic to the era and was a conscious response to it, not a mere reflection of it" (27).

for it, using civilians as human shields to secure their escape.[447] But the trigger-happy bounty hunters ignore the bunch's cunning and start shooting, indiscriminately killing outlaws and civilians alike. The bunch responds in kind. A cacophony of violence ensues: A myriad of squibs explodes as THE WILD BUNCH shows graphically the effect of bullets hitting bodies (as opposed to the sanitized "clutch your chest and fall" kind of screen violence "of the Hollywood western and combat film" (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 593) during the Production Code era), thus awarding the representation of violence with a hitherto unseen level of realism. On the other hand, the film distorts this very realism by drawing attention to the artificiality of the seen.[448] Bodies endlessly fall in slow-motion, seemingly never hitting the ground, whirling in contortions as the camera balletically whirls around them.[449]

A reprise to the sexualized power dynamics contained in the rooftop observation, there is a brief but salient exchange of gazes between Pike and Deke at the center of the shoot-out in front of the Wells Fargo Office that condenses the sexualized power dynamics and serves as a more conclusive example to THE WILD BUNCH's repeated emphasis on gaze constructions. Pike is loading his horse with a saddle bag of what he thinks is gold, trying to escape, as the camera cuts to Deke, standing on top of the adjacent building, stalling for a moment. Cut back to a close-up of Pike, who, for whatever reason, turns around, directing his gaze toward Pike, as if he felt he was being watched. Again, the film introduces us to a symbolic (and meta-discursively relevant) gaze construction: Pike is Deke's object first; as Deke recognizes his object, Pike realizes he is being watched.

Crucially, Deke watches Pike's back, who then turns around swiftly to face his counterpart, as if he felt the penetrating gaze on his vulnerable back. Clearly, the arrangement is loaded with homoerotic connotations. Pike initially turns around unarmed, waiting for Deke

[447] The hymn receives an even more distorted reprise a little while later, when another member of the bunch, Crazy Lee (Bo Hopkins), forces three hostages at gunpoint to sing the song for his own deranged, sadistic amusement, transforming the hymn "into a grotesque travesty" (Grønstad 52).

[448] In terms of THE WILD BUNCH's negotiation of realism, David A. Cook has offered an interesting perspective. Referencing broadcasting historian Erik Barnouw, Cook relates THE WILD BUNCH's slow-motion stylization of violence not only to the film's cinematic predecessors but also to the virtually omnipresent slow-motion footage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the subsequent introduction of instant replays in live broadcasts of American football games (cf. Cook, "Ballistic Balletics" 140; cf. Barnouw 348). For one thing, this complicates further the medial constructivism of reality; for another, it produces an example that links socio-cultural discourse directly with the stylized, markedly manipulated visual representation of violence (in the example of American football, Barnouw stated that with instant replay "brutal collisions became ballets" (348)).

[449] Prince has suggested as the director's intention behind the peculiar visualization of violence to elicit in his audience an educational and potentially cathartic experience (although Prince goes to show that the final product was much closer to offending and disturbing the viewer than catharsis in the Aristotelian sense) (cf. 8, 118-9): "Peckinpah incorporated the brief slow-motion interlude into his more complex montage sequences because the dynamic oscillation between normal and decelerated time demands a continuing perceptual reorientation from viewers. He apparently hoped the stylistic artifice would alternately immerse viewers in the spectacle on screen and then realign their perspective through the nonrealistic slow-motion insertions. These perceptual realignments he hoped would re-establish a new, less complacent and passive relationship between viewers and the screen spectacle, would, as he put it, wake viewers up to what violence is really all about" (66).

to make the first move: After the close-up of Pike, the camera cuts back to Deke, readying his rifle to shoot at Pike. Cut back to Pike. He recognizes Deke but hesitates to react, as an unwitting civilian carrying a tuba stumbles in the line of fire. Deke fires his rifle. Cut back to a medium shot of Pike and the civilian, as Deke's shot hits the innocent bystander while the camera stays on Pike. He realizes Deke's bullet might have hit him, as the civilian falls dead to the ground. Pike draws his gun, aims, and fires a shot in the direction of Deke. But he, too, misses, killing one of the bounty hunters instead. Pike saddles his horse, as Deke fires again, but his rifle misfires (or is he out of bullets?) – and the onslaught continues. Both men are evidently happy to use violence, not in defense of obligatory heterosexuality, but in an overt display of misguided, mischanneled homoerotic desire. Incidentally, Pike and Deke get out of the shoot-out unscathed, while the people around them drop like flies.

Especially as we gradually learn more about Deke and Pike's mutual past, we come to understand this exchange of gazes and bullets to be highly indicative of their relationship to one another. Unable to reconcile whatever they may feel, they resort to violence as a surrogate form of "orgasmic" release (Coyne 157). Accordingly, Kitses observes that "the adversarial relationships of his [Peckinpah's, T.S.] heroes are marked by intense looks exchanged at key moments, the male gaze that is a sign of the love that can only be expressed in combat" (*Horizons West* 203), and Sharrett eloquently suggests in the connection of violence and intimate gazes between men a "repressed homoerotic code" that "merges eros with thanatos" (87).

When the violence is done, some of the bunch have managed to escape, others have died, lawmen and dozens of innocent townspeople have been slaughtered. Only human vultures crowd the street, scavenging the human remains. In a final image, the camera returns to the children. Apparently satisfied with their game of torture, they incinerate the arena, burning scorpions and ants alike, while others flood the street, shouting "Bang! Bang!" (00:17:35-00:17:43) as they reenact the massacre they just witnessed, in a sequence that foreshadows the film's disturbingly nihilistic coda.

The opening sequence thus simultaneously portends all subsequent action and introduces the parameters that will shape the viewing experience. It iconoclastically shatters the concept of gender and genre expectations. Furthermore, it is characterized by a profound ambivalence that at once presents spectacle and meta-discursively challenges spectacularization, that indicates the viewers' position as observers and troubles it by implicating them, "mak[ing] us aware of our own resistant narrative desire" (Mitchell 249). Slotkin notes accordingly:

"Part of our excitement and terror comes from realizing that what is normally and traditionally concealed will at last be explicitly displayed. This outburst of total mayhem relieves the tension of

anticipation that Peckinpah has so carefully created, but our experience of that 'relief' creates another kind of tension that will persist throughout the film: the tension that arises from our realization that the normal rules of genre and myth will not necessarily apply. Since Peckinpah does not offer, within the film, an explicit denunciation of this kind of violence, the possibility is left open that the makers of this film will not scruple to show us forbidden actions and ideas, and that the heroes we will be asked to identify with may actually be monsters. The audience is thus engaged with an esthetic equivalent of the ethical problem of violence: How much of this sort of thing are we willing to look at? Is looking somehow a form of 'consent'? And if we are willing to let 'events' proceed under these conditions (that is, if we stay for the rest of the film), do we have a 'good' motive for doing so? To paraphrase Michael Herr: Are we willing to take responsibility for 'what we see' and for the curiosity – a form of wish or desire to see the unspeakable – that has brought us to this scene?" (*Gunfighter Nation* 597)

In this opening scene, Peckinpah hands us the master key to unlock all subsequent doors: whatever actions may follow, we must question the integrity of our characters and we must be reminded that we are equally accountable for their actions. The film will not do it for us. Jim Kitses asserts accordingly:

> Peckinpah's montage strives to look at violence both from within and without, to allow us both to experience it directly and yet to stand back, to register the blood and slaughter plus the fact that it is being presented in aesthetically pleasing forms. Peckinpah corrects generic representations by communicating a gory reality in his bloody images, and yet suggests that we all have an appetite for it. (*Horizons West* 203).

Having outlined the structural patterns that characterize the film, I will now discuss the implications of these patterns for the film's representation of gender.

Undoing Hegemonic Masculinity

Upon first glance, THE WILD BUNCH appears to be rather traditional in its representation of gender. The film draws extensively from the conventions of the Western genre, presenting a group of men anxious to retain their individualism within multiple systems of oppression that seem to close in on them. More to the point, THE WILD BUNCH is perhaps the most existentialist of the films I have discussed so far, perhaps together with PURSUED (see 4.4.3.) and THE NAKED SPUR (see 4.5.1), insofar as it presents a group of men desperately trying to make sense of their identity in an increasingly hostile environment of institutionalized oppression. Drifting further and further into an increasingly uncertain future, the men strive to find coherence and stability in living by the code of the Western hero.

The question is: What kind of code is that? To approach an answer, it is helpful to recall one of the first genre-critical assessments of the Western, Robert Warshow's seminal text "The

Westerner". In this well-received text dating 1954, Warshow lays out the contours of precisely that code as resting on heteronormativity – a world organized by men's allegedly innate penchant for violence and women's allegedly natural proclivity for civilization (cf. 36-37) – and, most importantly, on itself. Though Warshow never specified the point in terms of ideological or even gender critique, what he describes is the tautology of the Westerner's code of honor, its only purpose to defend, legitimatize and confirm itself through itself:

> What does the Westerner fight for? We know he is on the side of justice and order, and of course it can be said he fights for these things. But such broad aims never correspond exactly to his real motives; they only offer him an opportunity. The Westerner himself, when an explanation is asked of him (usually by a woman), is likely to say that he does what he 'has to do.' If justice and order did not continually demand his protection, he would be without a calling. Indeed, we come upon him often in just that situation, as the reign of law settles over the West and he is forced to see that his day is over; those are the pictures which end with his death or with his departure for some more remote frontier. What he defends, at bottom, is the purity of his own image – in fact his honor. This is what makes him invulnerable. (38)

How do these dynamics manifest in THE WILD BUNCH? Visually, the bunch are given the conventional heroic treatment of extensive close-ups, of below-eye level shots, and of scenes that supposedly indulge in their homosocial camaraderie, their taciturn understanding, their spectacular professionalism. Narratively, the film legitimatizes our expectations in Pike's leadership, in particular, with scenes that superficially substantiate his natural authority, especially in contrast to the false authority of Harrigan and Mapache – the former ruling by financial equity, the latter by despotic rule.[450] As such, Pike repeatedly claims to lead by example, invoking their shared lifestyle (cf. Kitses, *Horizons West* 219), the moral code that has characterized armies of Western heroes. Correspondingly, the film awards Harrigan and

[450] Ruthless capitalists and narcissistic tyrants have been stock villains of the West since even before the days of Gatewood (STAGECOACH) and Jeff Surrett (DODGE CITY). According to genre history, male authority that originated in big money or political oppression was always illegitimate and shallow, and marked as such by the lack of restraint of the characters that represented such power. And even though THE WILD BUNCH draws from that discursive knowledge, presenting in Harrigan and Mapache two characters that are profoundly characterized by their excess, it is not the film's point to individuate their evilness as singular phenomena. Rather, Harrigan and Mapache represent oppressive systems – the former corrupt corporate capitalism, the latter fascism. DODGE CITY illustrated the destructiveness of capitalism if abused for selfish reasons, with the hero saving the town and restoring the system (see 4.3.1.). By contrast, THE WILD BUNCH envisages capitalism (and fascism) as comprehensively flawed systems that the heroes try to eschew, while everybody else has been completely engulfed and consequently corrupted by them. Accordingly, Sharrett observes: "[…] THE WILD BUNCH shows the railroad to be the incarnation of everything hypocritical and morally reprehensible about capitalism. Harrigan is more than a railroad executive: he represents the hegemony of capitalism in the affairs of the state. The simple ideological point is that the police, the military, hired gunmen, and so on, are the enforcement apparatus always owned by the private sector. […] In THE WILD BUNCH, capitalism's veneer of democracy is transparent and irrelevant, and Peckinpah insists on this rapacity and murderousness as the true nature of this society" (95, 98).

Mapache with the kind of narcissism and excess that have characterized countless Western villains.

However, we gradually learn that the bunch, and Pike in particular, repeatedly betray the moral code they so fervently invoke. That is, the film offers us scenes that obviously and overtly indulge in the spectacle of masculinity, while at the same time complicating that spectacle through irony, as well as issuing subtle reminders of the artificiality of the spectacle and the reality it contrasts with.

To illustrate: Pushing south towards Mexico, the bunch must traverse the desert. Riding atop a dune, the elderly Sykes loses control over his horse, causing the entire party to plummet down the dune. Tector Gorch immediately turns on the old coot, threatening to kill him. Pike intervenes, invoking the code: “You’re not gonna get rid of anybody. We are going to stick together just like it used to be. When you side with a man you stay with him, and if you can’t do that, you’re like some animal. You’re finished! We’re finished. All of us!” (00:35:31-00:35:42) – the irony being, that moments before we saw a flashback shared by Pike and his former best friend Deke (now his enemy), revealing that because of Pike’s carelessness Deke was captured. Pike abandoned his friend and betrayed the code. He failed to perform professionalism and he failed to confirm his honor. He did not stay with the man he sided; he ran away in the face of adversity, becoming the very animal he dreads in others. And while the reminder of their brotherhood seems to work on Tector, we, the viewers, know that Pike is either a hypocrite or a tragic hero living in denial of his past mistakes to alleviate his suffering.[451]

Pike then orders everybody to mount their horses and continue to ride South. However, as he tries to mount his own horse, the stirrups tear and he gracelessly falls to the ground. As he visibly struggles to get up again, Tector and his brother Lyle do not hesitate to mock him and challenge his authority, conflating Pike’s ability to lead with the gendered performance of showing physical strength: “Looks like brother Pike needs help, brother Lyle” – “That brother Pike and the old man Sykes makes a man wonder if it ain’t time to pick up his chips and find another game” (00:36:54-00:37:02). First, Tector equates Pike with his brother Lyle by talking about him using the same appellation, then Lyle degrades him further by comparing his accident with the feebleness of Sykes, patently the most degenerate of the bunch. As the camera emulates the brothers’ gazes, looking down on the vulnerable Pike, we are reminded of the competitive and relational dynamics of negotiating male authority, of the small but serious games of competition that are so decisive for hegemonic masculinity, of the *libido dominandi*. To drive the point home, Tector adds: “How in the hell are you going to side with anybody when you can’t even get on your own horse?” (00:37:11-00:37:16), at once amplifying

[451] The flashback is of crucial importance, as it adds a mutual, and therefore seemingly objective account of the past. Rather than sentimentally purporting that the Western code presents something that has been lost along the way, issuing but a critique of modernity, the flashback reveals that there never was something like a code. It was always a construct that Pike never upheld.

his challenge towards Pike's authority with an even more explicit sexualized threat and reminding us of the irony of Pike's previous reference to the code: How can he demand his men respect the code if he himself cannot muster the strength to lead by example?

But Pike keeps the upper hand. He draws himself up and mounts his horse, riding off towards the horizon without so much as saying another word to his internal male audience. He seems exhausted, but he has stood up to the challenge. The camera shows us a close-up of Lyle and Gorch, juxtaposed with a medium-long shot of Pike steering his horse away, as if to punish them for their insubordination, only to culminate in a juxtaposition of a close-up of Dutch's face wistfully tracking Pike with his gaze. Finally, the scene ends with an extensive long shot of Pike, shot from behind against the sunset, riding forth ailing-yet-proud, exposed-yet-triumphant, weak-yet-strong.

In particular this final arrangement, the elongated shot of Dutch's gaze and the subsequent shot of its object, the heroic image of Pike and his aging-yet-capable masculine authority draws our attention to the ambivalence of spectacle and its construction. Thematizing the look, the viewer is invited to consider not only the object but the process of looking itself, as well as its complicated sexual connotations. We are invited by the visuals to mire, even desire, the image of the male hero that is created in front of our eyes, but at the same time, by means of the film meta-discursively addressing the process of projecting this image, we are invited to challenge that very image – especially since we have learned in the very same scene that the epistemes (or rather, mythemes) the image draws from to construct itself are but hollow illusions.

That is, the image has little to no meaning if it cannot be substantiated by actions. We know that Pike has done little to nothing do deserve Dutch's apotheosizing gaze. Judged by his actions alone, Pike is not a hero. And yet he is presented as one, and thus perceived as one. There is nothing in Pike's display of leadership that justifies his status; there is nothing in his habitus that merits the visual treatment. Severed from a moral code to give it meaning and coherence, the image of the hero is simply spectacle, is construction without substance, is copy without original. And while it is captivating nonetheless, it has no reference other than itself. The tautology that Warshow describes, "the purity of his own image" that "makes him invulnerable" (38) – is made visible by its defilement. The *a priori* assumed status of the Western hero is made visible by its non-fulfilment. As Peckinpah shows that the image has no substance, he successfully breaks the cycle of generations of Westerns which had built upon and promulgated the truism of what Jane Tompkins described with the following: "It doesn't matter whether a man is a sheriff or an outlaw, a rustler or a rancher, a cattleman or a sheepherder, a miner or a gambler. What matters is that he be a *man*. That is the only side to be on" (18).

Generations of Westerns had been organized by the circular construction of heteronormativity: that a man was a man because he acted like a man, and that a woman was a woman because she acted like a woman – relying on the alleged self-evidence of gender coherence that found its exclusive confirmation in the formation of the heterosexual couple. Generations of Westerns had generated countless iterations of narratives fueled by the energies that resulted from the irreconcilable contradictions contained in this tautology, growing ever darker, ever more violent, ever more self-inquisitive, and ever more cynical about the impossibility to resolve the conundrum within the constraints of the system. THE WILD BUNCH detonates these energies and shakes the system, asking us: On what grounds do we make these assumptions? What do these characters actually do to deserve our attention, our adoration? Why do we cling on to these expectations, and why do we have them in the first place? In asking us these questions, the film reveals the Western hero as a cultural construction, comprehensively dismissing all pretexts of naturalization.

To clarify with another example: Prompted to comment on the true nature of the bunch, Deke, despite having been abandoned by Pike, stresses that “We’re after men, and I wish to God I was with them” (01:32:30-01:32:35). In one brief, emphatic expression, Deke and THE WILD BUNCH summarize the tautology of the Western hero’s relation to idealized white masculinity – the invocation that the bunch are white men suffices to idealize them, and they are idealized because they are white men – and illustrates the discrepancy between an image that is evoked – the image of the Western hero summoned to our eyes through Deke’s wistful perception and channeled by his wish to be with them – and the lack of visible evidence, or action, to corroborate his sentiment.

Like THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, THE WILD BUNCH concludes that the myth of the Western hero as no (f)actual equivalent in history or reality. Instead, the myth is a self-perpetuating lie, communicated incessantly and ubiquitously, buoyed up and carried forth by yet another myth: cinema – the tradition of this visual art form, and specifically the Western as “cinema *par excellence*” (Bazin, “The Western” 141) encapsulated in the wishful-yet-delusional gaze of Dutch, which, of course, is simultaneously our own and the genre’s. To specify in terms of gender: Pike’s representation of hegemonic masculinity, Pike’s status as a cultural ideal of gender, has no substance beyond entertainment, has no legitimacy beyond spectacle, has no reference besides its generic tradition – and yet, it is captivating and incredibly powerful. Still, there is no nature to be discriminated from culture, there is no immutable sex onto which gender could be coherently constructed (cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble* 9-10). There is just gender: unstable and contingent.

That notwithstanding, it is the struggle of Pike and his comrades to find that substance and re-establish that coherence for the remainder of the film. THE WILD BUNCH chronicles the men’s increasingly agonizing attempt to reconcile their intentions with reality (which is a

dynamic that reverberates throughout the film, as, for instance the clerk in the Wells Fargo Office tells his coworker in the opening scene: "I don't care what you *meant* to do… it's what you *did* I don't like"). They are "[f]allen idealists" who are "unable to live coherent lives in a changing world" (Kitses, *Horizons West* 202).

The visuals continue to present the men as heroes, granting us insight to spectacular acts of professionalism (the raid on the military train), intimate moments of homosocial bliss (the sharing of the whiskey bottle), the elevating respect they get from others (Deke repeatedly stressing how much he wished he was still one of them). At the same time, they degenerate further and further to primordial animals, as the film consistently undermines and ironizes the heroic treatment it awards the men visually. Correspondingly, we witness more emphatic declarations on the significance of the code that repeatedly clash with their actions: They invoke the sanctity of loyalty between good men ("He gave his word." – "Gave his word to a railroad." – "It's his word!" – "That ain't what counts! It's who you give it to!" (01:52:22-01:52:31)) – only to side with every fraction they encounter; they summon the inviolability of the female body, only to kill women gratuitously.[452]

[452] The most vivid example for this may be Angel's murder of his lover, Teresa. As he realizes that the woman whom he had worshipped for her virginal purity actively chose to become one of General Mapache's courtesans, Angel callously kills her. This is a profoundly disturbing act. The murder of Teresa illustrates how Angel's "notion of 'goddess' is entrenched in the virgin-whore construction of the female so essential to Western civilization" (Sharrett 102-3) and "visualizes the insane 'logic' of the Western's code of romantic love that licenses Angel's instantaneous movement from worship to murder" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 604). Through Angel's thinking, the film references the virgin-whore complex, but in stressing that it was Teresa's choice to become one of Mapache's women, the film withdraws any notion that Angel's reaction was justified. Killing Teresa, in the logic of the film, is completely out of line, as is pigeonholing women into constraining, binary conceptualizations of femininity. A later episode, featuring Pike adoring a Mexican prostitute for her Madonna-esque innocence, further complicates this aspect. In no way does Peckinpah attempt in THE WILD BUNCH to represent women as anything other than sexualized tokens of capital and catalysts to inter-male rivalry (cf. Bliss, "'Back off to what?'" 119), but at least for THE WILD BUNCH it can be argued that this very limited mode of representation is part of an overarching network of systemic critique. Though Peckinpah, to some extent, discombobulates the validity of the virgin-whore dichotomy (the goddess Teresa who turns out to be "a mango, ripe and waiting" (00:43:03-00:43:14); the whore who turns to be a goddess), his female characters never exceed stereotypization. However, since it is the point of the film to attack the patriarchal apparatus that concocted this mode of representation in the first place, it is in line with the general tone and concept of the film. That said, it must not be ignored that the victimization, disenfranchisement, sexualization and marginalization of women consistently permeates Peckinpah's entire oeuvre, including films of significantly lesser coherence and systemic critique. Peckinpah's cinema is hardly concerned with debasing heteronormativity by giving agency to marginalized voices. Instead, it repeatedly associates women, irrespective of their ethnicity, with explicit sexuality and suffering. Accordingly, Kitses concludes: "Complementing these damaged and alienated [male, T.S.] heroes, it is logically and inevitably woman as whore that is the director's ideal, at the centre of a warm fantasy in his only comic Western, THE BALLAD OF CABLE HOGUE (1970)" (*Horizons West* 203). This means that Peckinpah, and (to some extent) THE WILD BUNCH cannot be fully acquitted from charges that accuse the director of misogyny (cf. Coyne 158; cf. Mellen 250), even though more sympathetic critics have contextualized the director's reluctance to "[develop] his female characters beyond the superficial" (Andrews 33) as either acts of "straight-talking cynicism" (Andrews 46) or democratic nihilism (cf. Weidinger 147-8). In this vein, Bill Mesce writes in his study *Peckinpah's Women*: "To cite the death of these women as something extraordinary and somehow different from the multitudes of men dying all about them is a dishonest self-serving brand of feminism. Equality, parity, equivalence – whatever term one chooses to use – is a double-edged sword. To label these acts misogyny is to selectively break them out of a larger, brutal but fair distribution of

Eventually, their quest culminates in General Mapache's capture of Angel, when the villagers he swore to avenge essentially sell him out to Mapache.[453] The bunch witness Angel being tortured, dragged through Mapache's headquarters by a rope attached to the back of a car. In mutual and taciturn understanding, the men decide to free Angel even at the cost of their own lives. As they spend one last night in a bordello before they march to Mapache's den, we see Pike having another flashback, insinuating that he is still tormented by the memory of having abandoned his friend and betrayed the code. We infer that Pike is determined to set the record straight and make amends by rescuing Angel, for once doing a truly heroic deed, a selfless and sincere act of courage and sacrifice.

For a moment it seems as if the film is turning a corner on its previous deconstruction of male heroism, as generic expectations about famous last stands summon the images of great men and great heroes (cf. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 611), and for a moment these images seem to merge with the bunch's actions to form a coherent whole that re-establishes their honor and reinforces the code. For once, these images seem palpable for the bunch. On a similar note, Kitses observes: "In this light, Bishop's decision to return for Angel is classic Peckinpah action, the movement of a man into his past, a reassertion of identity, an honouring of the most important of contracts, with one's self, God's law" (*Horizons West* 222).

However, after Mapache has slit Angel's throat before the bunch could rescue him, and after Pike has killed Mapache in an act of retribution, for a moment nothing happens. The camera tracks the bunch anxiously whirling around, expecting a hail of bullets to rain on them, but the Mexican soldiers do not react. Pike has successfully cut off the serpent's head, immobilizing the remaining body. No blaze of glory ensues from the killing, the marked lack of a response symbolizing the insignificance of the deed. Instead of identity-establishing heroic self-sacrifice, Pike and the bunch have won a hollow victory.

Some laugh nervously as, paradoxically, the tension rises about this seemingly anti-climactic ending. Endlessly the camera tracks the bunch and their internal audience looking at each other. We realize as they realize that there was no heroism in their deed, no redemption, no coherence, no substance, no release. Eventually, Pike shoots one of Mapache's aides, the

---

favor and disfavor. This is not to diminish the *noir*ishness of Peckinpah's vision, but 'misogyny' is an unfairly limiting term. The mire expansive vision at work in THE WILD BUNCH – and throughout Peckinpah's work – would mire accurately be described as *misanthropy*. It's not that Peckinpah's films show the director with a low opinion of women, but with a low opinion of humankind in general" (125; emphases in original).

[453] This is crucial because part of THE WILD BUNCH's comprehensive critique is debunking the systemic nature of the patterns we observe in the bunch. THE WILD BUNCH presents us with a world void of moral, and (consequently) void of heroes. There are only active perpetrators of violence and passive victims of the same. Yet the characters we meet and how they organize themselves share a structural parallel: Be it the outlaw party of the film's focal characters headed by Pike, or the bounty hunters ordered by the ruthless, vengeful capitalist Harrigan, or the fascist regime commandeered by General Mapache – in time we learn that each of these groups is organized by a power structure that is at once incredibly powerful and completely arbitrary. That is, we experience different microcosms seemingly organized by a universal logic, hegemonic masculinity as generative principle.

Commander Frederick Mohr of the Imperial German army, in an act of vindictive defeatism and thus instigates the ultimate shoot-out, the at the time most visceral and explicit depiction of violence in cinema, notoriously referred to as the Battle of the Bloody Porch.[454] Again, like in the opening scene, THE WILD BUNCH oscillates between the realism of violence and its spectacularization, applying the same strategies of aestheticizing-yet-problematizing the representation of violence – except now, the nexus between violence and gender is even more clearly defined.

Kitses notes that "the group acts not for Angel's values […] but for the dead Angel, their own inadequate code, the past. More simply, they do what they do because there is nowhere to go" (*Horizons West* 223). In a similar vein, Sharrett attests a certain nihilism to the scene, describing the Battle of the Bloody Porch as "an apocalyptic inferno" (100). The metaphor is apt, indicating as it does the revelatory-yet-destructive qualities of the violence exacted upon bodies and imposed on the audience.[455]

In an explosion of all-consuming violence, the Western hero destroys everything including himself. When the battle is over, only vultures remain: Human ones, in the bounty hunters giddily scavenging the now-legendary bodies, and actual ones, picking through the plentitude of human remains. Deke, arriving at the scene after the killing is done, collects the gun of his friend and solemnly waits outside the courtyard's walls – for what, we do not know – while dozens of wounded and exiled pariahs flee the devastating aftermath (cf. Prince 123).

Reportedly, Peckinpah wanted to end the film here, but, as Prince notes, "producer Phil Feldman wrote Peckinpah an impassioned letter urging him to restore the rest of the conclusion" (124). The result – moving abruptly "from the vulture kingdom to Valhalla" (ibid. 124) – is a somewhat off-kilter ending, with the bunch receiving postmortem sanctification via close-ups of their laughing faces, which seems to mitigate and subvert the film's iconoclastic agenda. This has attracted considerable critical attention and diverging opinions, with some critics alleging that therefore the film after all communicates some idea of optimism, hope, and

[454] Shooting Mohr has highly interesting political ramifications, as Michael Bliss has demonstrated. Like Harrigan, Mohr functions as a personification of hegemony, of the power to "manipulate minor politicians or functionaries" and "the ability to wage war, which is, as Machiavelli points out, the ultimate source of governments' influence over individuals" ("'Back off to what?'" 119, 120). This power to manipulate agents of violence contrasts starkly with the powerlessness of the bunch, who are "purveyors not of strength but of weakness," and who's "violence is a sign of their futile self-loathing" (ibid. 120). Seen in this light, Pike's killing of Mohr signifies his killing the system. At the same time, though, the film makes perfectly clear that it is also yet another reaction of excessive violence (rather than a deliberate seizing of agency and power), allowing the viewer to ponder on the ambivalence of violence as the spectacular carnage unfolds (cf. ibid. 121-2).

[455] In fact, the apocalypse-metaphor reverberates through several critical discussions of the film, with, Michael Coyne, for instance, describing the final scene as "apocalyptic carnage" (154), Slotkin comparing the opening scene to an "amoral apocalypse" (*Gunfighter Nation* 597, 598), or Asbjørn Grønstad referring to Sam Peckinpah's Westerns, in general, as "apocalyptic" (51).

renewal through martyrdom (Bliss, “Martyred Slaves of Time” 42-43),[456] while others have even claimed to find an element of humanity in the magnification of the bunch’s deficiencies that eventually culminate in the massacre (Hannan 143-4).

Prince, meanwhile, has offered a more plausible interpretation, suggesting that “[t]hese contradictory aesthetic and moral tendencies at the film’s conclusion help make it a highly charged experience for viewers, one that provokes them into passionately differing responses,” while admitting that they “are also a sign of Peckinpah’s own uncompleted position as an artist on the subject of human violence” (125).

It seems surprising, however, that neither Prince nor other critics have considered to interpret the final sequence of the film analogous to the opening scene, regarding the final superimpositions of the bunch’s laughing faces as equally distorting visual interferences that are fully commensurate with the rest of the film. As Sykes arrives at the ruins of San Rafael with a couple of peons he must have assembled, he invites the solitary Deke to join them for yet another job they have to do, while survivors of the massacre keep plundering the battlefield, scavenging the machine gun and huge quantities of ammunition. THE WILD BUNCH strongly implies that in some shape or form the events we have just bore witness to will repeat themselves. There will be another bunch, there will be another job, there will be more violence. Deke begins to smile, making his way to join Sykes, who bursts into a maniacal laugh, which is then echoed by the laughter of Pike, Dutch, Angel, and the Gorch brothers, as their faces are superimposed over the ‘new’ bunch’s riding off to a new horizon.

THE WILD BUNCH tells us that history will repeat itself. Deke, who should have experienced some sort of catharsis from the carnage that unfolded in front of his eyes instead decides to continue the perpetual, nihilistic search for nothing. THE WILD BUNCH, therefore, does not end on a redeeming or optimistic note, but on a profoundly fatalist one, ironically in line with Bliss’s assessment of the film excluding the final sequence: “In the Bunch’s failure to reach self-awareness, we see the failure of contemporary capitalist America, an anhedonic culture that has lost the ability to do anything notable except wage war and experience pain” (“‘Back off to what?’” 126). More succinctly, Wheeler Winston Dixon asserts: “[…] in the world of the Peckinpah Western […] there are no victories” (166).

Transferred to a conceptualization of gender, THE WILD BUNCH concludes with patriarchy reinventing itself, dramatizing the defense and continuation of white male hegemony, hoping through one last surrealist intervention – as we see the bunch laughing in full life in defiance of their own deaths – to remind audiences that despite its ubiquity, despite

[456] Elsewhere, Bliss has argued that with the final scene THE WILD BUNCH “collapses back into a wistful reminiscence for men whose badness is not a function of their physical violence so much as the violence they do to their ideas of their past selves, as men who at one time had hope for a life different from the ones they finally lived” (“‘Back off to what?’” 127).

its resilience, despite its aura of power and palpable effect on reality, it is still lacking substance, it is still simply spectacle, it is still merely entertainment, and has, in fact, forever been nothing else.

THE WILD BUNCH is the Western's burial, not its rebirth. Jim Kitses writes: "With this bleak and desperate film, the dialogue is now finished, the vision dead" (*Horizons West* 222-3). It still has not found a way to reinvent the myth to formulate a truly optimistic, inclusive, egalitarian vision that respects gender plurality, equality, and diversity. Its major contribution is to comprehensively "[explode] the moral absolutes that had given shape and meaning to screen narratives for decades" (Prince xv), to annihilate all previous generic conventions and its respective tenets in social discourse. THE WILD BUNCH wants to shut down the system, waiting for somebody else to rummage through the ashes and restart the Western, restart society, restart conceptualizations of gender for a different, improved, reformed, or revolutionized vision. Virtually anything but this.

5. Conclusion

I began this study with two interconnected observations: one, that the classic American Western has still considerable currency as an episteme of American popular culture, specifically with regards to the conceptualization and representation of gender;[457] two, that even though the Western undeniably constitutes a central locus of discourse for the conceptualization and representation of gender, we are yet to fully understand its significance. The cinematic Western has been of tremendous importance for U.S. Americans collectively reflecting on change and societal shifts concerning discourses of gender and sexuality, but looking at the scholarship on the American Western produced thus far it seems that the genre uniformly and universally operated to stabilize and legitimatize the societal primacy of hetero-patriarchy. This study has asked if those results can truly account for the diversity and polyvalency of gender discourses contained in the American Western, limiting my discussions to the time between 1903 and 1969.

I argued that while scholarship has produced a host of interdisciplinary, ideological-critical research that has exposed the Western to be structurally conservative and thus affirmative of hetero-patriarchal domination, the cultural significance of the Western also as a platform for the subversion of male hegemony is one yet to be examined. Approaching the Western as a genre interested in the perpetually fluctuating *exploration* of gender and sexuality

[457] I saw this in the recourse of a German newspaper trying to illustrate to its readership the intricacies of mail ballots in the run-up to the 2020 U.S. presidential elections using the likeness of John Wayne from STAGECOACH, as well as in president Donald Trump's own likening to the (gendered) image of John Wayne during his election campaign preceding the 2016 elections.

(rather than in the rigid defense of a supposedly fixed condition), this study has offered a fresh perspective, one that equally respects the genre's normativizing powers that work to cement male hegemony as well as its productive powers that enable us to challenge its legitimacy.

Building past research, I have demonstrated that the classic Western's "historically mobile" defense of the "legitimacy of patriarchy" (cf. Connell, *Masculinities* 77) is inextricably tied to the construction of its own undoing. Substantiating my analysis with a theoretical framework inspired by the works of, most notably, Raewyn Connell, Pierre Bourdieu, and Judith Butler, this study has demonstrated that in the American Western the naturalization and normativization of gender – and by corollary the solidification of male hegemony – is consistently counteracted by the very processes and practices the genre relies on to implement this goal. Male hegemony rests upon the cultural construction of *difference* between men and women, a *difference* in habitus that is consistently purported to result naturally from the anatomical *difference* of dimorphously sexed bodies. The ubiquity of this pattern, in turn, is used to conceal the cultural construction of *difference* between men and women – of gender binarity – as natural. In other words, the culturally constructed idea of gender binarity precedes sexual dimorphism, but public perception that gender results naturally from sex camouflages this process of construction, thus legitimatizing and stabilizing the normative power of heterosexuality.

Transposing these constructivist gender-theoretical insights to film analysis (as a form of discourse analysis), I have offered in my critical investigation of Western films produced between 1903 and 1969 the following results:

Firstly, the Western evidently constructs sex as gender. I have revealed two dominant, deeply interwoven strategies through which this process can be revealed and made accessible for critical analysis, focusing in my approach on both representations of sexuality and gender. I have subsumed both strategies under a term that emphasizes the structural homology that unites them, labelling the Western's persistent application of circular logic – to construct that which it claims was predetermined, only to conceal the process of construction – the aporia of heteronormativity.

With regards to sexuality, I have shown, beginning with my analysis of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, that in order for the viewer to recognize the process of a burgeoning American community coming together as such, the Western constructs biological *difference* – men and women – based on discursive 'knowledge' about gender binarity that precedes the construction. This construction of the heterosexual couple, the gender subject, is then normativized in juxtaposition to the construction of a non-conformative gender abject, a distinct Other-figure that visibly deviates from the gender habitus displayed. It thus became evident that a character's gender intelligibility, in turn, was determined by their inclusion to, or exclusion from, ritualized performances of heterosexuality (i.e., in the case of THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

or SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, a dance). Therefore, I have argued that the Western constructs gender by negotiating performances that are either in accordance with or in violation of normativized heterosexuality. Heterosexuality determines whether a character qualifies as a socially accepted member, or intelligible subject, of the Western community. Accordingly, in THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY a dandy-character is expelled from the frontier-community. At the same time however, the character was revealed to be constitutive to the ritualized processes of creating said community. This structural dependence means that the dandy-character holds a position that is paradoxically both a part of and apart from community.[458] This way, the Other-figure reveals the inadequacy of the Self to legitimatize itself, thus giving evidence not only to the normative power of gender and sexuality but also to its contingency.

With regards to gender, I have argued with reference to the oft-quoted hyper-narrative of a gendered conflict between individualism and domesticity that the Western repeatedly falls short of comprehensively explaining the aporia of heteronormativity even within the confines of a rigidly binary model; that is, without a distinct Other-figure. Constructing and normativizing heterosexuality in accordance with the traditions of the genre – insisting on male individualism and female domesticity, but making it an essential task of female domesticity to domesticate, hence expunge male individualism – requires the Western to simultaneously dissolve and sustain gender binarity, a paradox that many films have attempted to eschew by suggesting the indefinite continuation and repetition of the processes of constructing heterosexuality. Examining the conflicts that arise between men and women about their gender identities (i.e., in THE NAKED SPUR) as well as the often-contrived strategies films employ to obscure, compartmentalize, or displace them (i.e., in HELL'S HINGES, DODGE CITY, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN), I have shown that heterosexuality in the Western is never natural but always diegetically and discursively constructed.

Jointly, these approaches have illuminated the Western's struggle with a societal apodictum. The Western visibly constructs sex informed by discursive 'knowledge' about gender. However, in drawing from that knowledge, in constructing it, the Western refutes the premises it is subsequently going to assume. It momentarily makes visible that which it claims was invisible.

Secondly, the aporia of heteronormativity fuels the evolution of the genre in reciprocity with cultural developments within the United States. In this etiology of the aporia of heteronormativity in the Western, I have appended my diachronic analysis with contextual findings borrowed from (film) history, cultural studies and sociology. I have demonstrated that the Western between 1903 and 1969 has always and seemingly irresolvably been enmeshed in a complex and contradictory economy of power and gender, wherein the endeavor to

[458] It became evident that policing this boundary between inside and outside the frontier-community was constructed as a performance denoting intelligible white masculinity.

naturalize and thus stabilize heterosexuality has repeatedly collided with the necessity to construct that which supposedly cannot exist.

Crucially, this study has chronicled the Western's own coming to terms with the contradictory dynamics it has been tasked to negotiate since its beginnings. Providing an ideal platform for the exploration of American identity, the Western has gradually incorporated discursive knowledge about its subject and itself, both in terms of the tangible normative constraints and the potential for critique and subversion. Films like CIMARRON, DODGE CITY, PURSUED, THE NAKED SPUR, or THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, revealed in their distinctive utilization of the cinematic apparatus – as a conflation of narrative, visual, auditive devices – a growing awareness about the discursive specificities of the genre as well as the artistic means with which to address them. I have found an apt conclusion for these dynamics in THE WILD BUNCH's indiscriminately violent reckoning with the genre and its self-defeating, self-destructive, albeit extremely productive formula. Therein I have found proof that the Western has repeatedly entertained contingency in an attempt to explore and critically reflect on gender and sexuality. This way, I challenge the dominant narrative of existing scholarship about the Western's reputedly hermetic defense of hetero-patriarchy against violations in terms of sexuality and gender.

Finally, I have consulted additional theoretical input from Postcolonial Theory and other theoretical branches in order to demonstrate the interwovenness of several discourses the Western negotiates in the language of gender. Particularly my discussions of THE REDMAN'S VIEW, STAGECOACH and THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN have illustrated the necessity for intersectional analyses, as discourses of race, class, and colonialism/imperialism are inseperably connected to the Western's exploration of gender. Thus, I have shown that the normative power of heterosexuality extends to and correlates with the normative power of Whiteness, as does the Western's critical exploration of the legitimacy of that power.

I am confident that future perspectives may emerge from this study. It will be interesting to find, for instance, whether different theoretical frameworks will provide different, potentially even more precise and/or abstract vantage points to substantiate, expand, and/or revise the results offered here.

For example, the radically-constructivist, postmarxist, post-structuralist reworkings of discourse theory put forward by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, laid out primarily in their seminal *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, may prove a viable alternative to the approaches utilized in this study. Their way of reworking Gramsci's understanding of hegemony, "defining it as the expansion of a discourse to a dominant horizon of social orientation" (Glasze & Mattissek, "Die Hegemonie- und Diskurstheorie von Laclau und Mouffe" 144; Transl. T.S.), thus connecting discourse analysis and an ideological-critical application of hegemony that this study has attempted by way of introducing Bourdieu,

Foucault, and Butler in addition to Connell, seems particularly promising. Likewise, their emphasis on antagonisms, or a "constitutive outside" to the construction of identity may corroborate and/or enhance the understanding of the processes of identity formation, of inclusion and exclusion to the idea of a collective body politic, and of normativization as inextricably tied to contingency laid out herein (cf. ibid. 147-51). Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical deliberations could provide a possible junction to supplement the results of this study with empirical data (cf. ibid 160-1).

Incidentally, their remarks on *dislocation* and the productive evolution of new hegemonies and new antagonisms may constitute a promising vantage point to extend the critical discussion of heteronormativity and gender contingency in the American Western beyond 1969 (cf. ibid. 150).[459] How does the exploration of gender develop in films like McCABE AND MRS. MILLER (Robert Altman, 1971), HANNIE CAULDER (Burt Kennedy, 1971), BUCK AND THE PREACHER (Sidney Poitier, 1972), which focus on hitherto marginalized identities and their relation to a discriminating, white male hegemony, thus assuming an openly antagonistic stance against the normative force of previous generations of Westerns?

Similarly, it might prove interesting to draw inspiration from recent efforts within and outside academia calling for a decolonization of knowledge. Especially in light of the Western's own history of containing revisionism within traditional, hegemonic epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies – a phenomenon that became evident in the ostensibly revisionist Westerns of the 1970s,[460] resurfaced in Kevin Costner's sentimental DANCES WITH WOLVES (1990), and recently came into view again with Paul Greengrass's NEWS OF THE WORLD (2020) – such new perspectives may offer invaluable insights that have hitherto been barred from public perception and marginalized within scholarly debate. Put differently, how do films that have approached the Western from conventionally marginalized perspectives, introducing non-normative ontologies to a discourse dominated by straight, white men, give further evidence to the contingency and malleability of discourse, and, in turn, to the genre's inherent potential to explore and visualize narratives of political change?[461] Conversely, how do these dynamics relate to the continued pre-eminence of white men working the genre, and how are

[459] To that end, the fruitful debates between Laclau, Slavoj Žižek and Judtih Butler in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* may contain similarly promisining insights.

[460] For instance, SOLDIER BLUE (Ralph Nelson, 1970), LITTLE BIG MAN (Arthur Penn, 1970), THE GREAT NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA RAID (Philip Kaufman, 1972), PAT GARRETT & BILLY THE KID (Sam Peckinpah, 1973), or BUFFALO BILL AND THE INDIANS OR SITTING BULL'S HISTORY LESSON (Robert Altman, 1976).

[461] Here, one thinks of films such as POSSE (Mario Van Peebles, 1993), DEAD MAN (Jim Jarmusch, 1995), BURY MY HEART AT WOUNDED KNEE (Yves Simoneau, 2007), BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (Ang Lee, 2006), MEEK'S CUTOFF (Kelly Reichardt, 2010), THE REVENANT (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2015), THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (Antoine Fuqua, 2016), WOMAN WALKS AHEAD (Susanna White, 2017).

these antagonisms of simultaneous inclusion of and immunization against Other-ontologies representative of the dominant social and political forces of a given time?[462]

I wish to end on a personal anecdote. In April 2019, I spoke at an international film studies conference in London and presented elements of my research, specifically my reading of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN. On a different panel, another speaker noted in an attempt to illustrate the topicality of their own research that, as a subject of interdisciplinary film studies research, the Western, by comparison, had been comprehensively dealt with in the past (to paraphrase: “The Western? – It’s been done”). I belief this study is evidence that it has not.

My discussion of Western films that appeared between 1903 and 1969 has demonstrated and discussed the myriad of ambiguities that have consistently characterized the genre’s search for a stable, univocal identity. That way, I have shown that the Western’s generic formula – though synchronically diverse and diachronically fluctuating – has been constructed upon paradoxical dynamics, the tensions of which have manifested themselves most clearly in the films’ representations of gender. At times overtly criticizing the dogmatic heterosexual orthodoxy that organizes gender, at other times covertly reproducing and concealing the indissoluble tensions that produce it, the Western’s negotiation of gender – from its discursive establishment in the early days of American cinema, through years of perpetual reconfiguration and readjustment, to its liberating (temporary) self-destruction in the late 1960s – has never been monologically affirmative or self-evident. Instead, it has always been struggling to make sense of the aporia of heteronormativity, as the paradoxical cultural construct that dwells beneath its surface.

Jim Kitses once wrote: “[T]he western is American history” (“Authorship and Genre” 57). Provocative as the statement may be – did it not deliberately aim at the Western’s notorious confusion of history and myth –, I belief this still holds true. Our perception of history (and myth) is perpetually altered by the discourses that shape our lives. History and historiography (i.e., the West), myth and mythography (i.e., the Western) are not fixed categories. They are and will continue to be subject to reinterpretation and resignification. They are never ‘done’. Kitses continued: “At the heart of [the Western’s; T.S.] material, and crucial to an understanding of the gifts the form holds out to its practicioners, is an ambiguous, mercurial concept: the idea of the West” (ibid. 57).

Incidentally, Kitses wrote this in 1969.

---

[462] For instance, BLAZING SADDLES (Mel Brooks, 1974), UNFORGIVEN (Clint Eastwood, 1992), DJANGO UNCHAINED (Quentin Tarantino, 2012), LONE RANGER (Gore Verbinski, 2013), THE HOMESMAN (Tommy Lee Jones, 2014), THE HATEFUL EIGHT (Quentin Tarantino, 2015), BONE TOMAHAWK (S. Craig Zahler, 2015), THE RIDICULOUS 6 (Frank Coraci, 2015), IN A VALLEY OF VIOLENCE (Ti West, 2016), HOSTILES (Scott Cooper, 2017), THE BALLAD OF LEFTY BROWN (Jared Moshe, 2017), WIND RIVER (Taylor Sheridan, 2017), THE BALLAD OF BUSTER SCRUGGS (Ethan Coen & Joel Coen, 2018).

6. Filmography

12 STRONG, Nicolai Fuglsig (2018)

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, Stanley Kubrick (1968)

3 BAD MEN, John Ford (1926)

3:10 TO YUMA, Delmer Daves (1957)

3:10 TO YUMA, James Mangold (2007)

A CHEYENNE BRAVE, James Young Deer (1910)

AIR FORCE, Howard Hawks (1943)

ANNIE OAKLEY, George Stevens (1935)

APACHE DRUMS, Hugo Fregonese (1951)

ARIZONA, Wesley Ruggles (1940)

BEND OF THE RIVER, Anthony Mann (1952)

BLAZING SADDLES, Mel Brooks (1974)

BLOOD ON THE MOON, Robert Wise (1948)

BLOW-UP, Michelangelo Antonioni (1966)

BONE TOMAHAWK, S. Craig. Zahler (2015)

BONNIE AND CLYDE, Arthur Penn (1967)

BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA, Sam Peckinpah (1974)

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN, Ang Lee (2006)

BROKEN ARROW, Delmer Daves (1950)

BROKEN BLOSSOMS OR THE YELLOW MAN AND THE GIRL, D.W. Griffith (1919)

BUCK AND THE PREACHER, Sidney Poitier (1972)

BUFFALO BILL AND THE INDIANS OR SITTING BULL'S HISTORY LESSON, Robert Altman (1976)

BURY MY HEART AT WOUNDED KNEE, Yves Simoneau (2007)

BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID, George Roy Hill (1969)

C'ERA UNA VOLTA IL WEST [ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST], Sergio Leone (1968)

CANADIAN PACIFIC, Edward L. Marin (1949)

CANYON PASSAGE, Jacques Tourneur (1946)

CAPTAIN BLOOD, Michael Curtiz (1935)

CIMARRON, Anthony Mann (1960)

CIMARRON, Wesley Ruggles (1931)

CLEOPATRA, Cecil B. DeMille (1934)

COMMUNITY, Dan Harmon (2009-2015)

CORONER CREEK, Ray Enright (1948)

CROSS OF IRON, Sam Peckinpah (1977)

CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT, Francis Ford (1912)

DANCES WITH WOLVES, Kevin Costner (1990)

DAY OF THE OUTLAW, André De Toth (1959)

DEAD MAN, Jim Jarmusch (1995)

DESTRY RIDES AGAIN, George Marshall (1939)

DEVIL'S DOORWAY, Anthony Mann (1950)

DJANGO UNCHAINED, Quentin Tarantino (2012)

DODGE CITY, Michael Curtiz (1939)

DR. STRANGELOVE OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB, Stanley Kubrick (1964)

DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK, John Ford (1939)

DUEL AT DIABLO, Ralph Nelson (1966)

DUEL IN THE SUN, King Vidor (1946)

EASY RIDER, Dennis Hopper (1969)

FIGHTING MAN OF THE PLAINS, Edward L. Marin (1949)

FIRECREEK, Vincent McEveety (1968)

FORT APACHE, John Ford (1948)

FORTY GUNS, Samuel Fuller (1957)

FOUR'S A CROWD, Michael Curtiz (1938)

FURY AT FURNACE CREEK, Bruce Humberstone (1948)

GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES, Howard Hawks (1952)

GONE WITH THE WIND, Victor Fleming (1939)

GUNFIGHT AT THE OK CORRAL, John Sturges (1957)

GUNGA DIN, George Stevens (1939)

HANG 'EM HIGH, Ted Post (1968)

HANNIE CAULDER, Burt Kennedy (1971)

HELL OR HIGH WATER, David Mackenzie (2016)

HELL'S HINGES, Charles Swickard & William S. Hart (1916)

HIGH NOON, Fred Zinnemann (1950)

HOSTILES, Scott Cooper (2017)

HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER, Carter Bays & Craig Thomas (2005-2014)

HUD, Martin Ritt (1963)

IL BUONO, IL BRUTTO, IL CATTIVO [THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY], Sergio Leone (1966)

IN A VALLEY OF VIOLENCE, Ti West (2016)

IN OLD ARIZONA, Irving Cummings (1928)

JESSE JAMES, Henry King (1939)

JOHNNY GUITAR, Nicholas Ray (1954)

JUDGE PRIEST, John Ford (1934)

JUNIOR BONNER, Sam Peckinpah (1972)

KNIGHT OF THE TRAIL, William S. Hart (1915)

KLONDIKE ANNIE, Raoul Walsh (1936)

LAW AND ORDER, Edward L. Cahn (1932)

LITTLE BIG MAN, Arthur Penn (1970)

LONELY ARE THE BRAVE, David Miller (1962)

LONE RANGER, Gore Verbinski (2013)

LONE STAR, John Sayles (1996)

LUST FOR GOLD, S. Sylvan Simon (1949)

McCABE AND MRS. MILLER, Robert Altman (1971)

McLINTOCK!, Andrew V. McLaglen (1963)

MEEK'S CUTOFF, Kelly Reichardt (2010)

MIDNIGHT COWBOY, John Schlesinger (1969)

MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON, Frank Capra (1939)

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, John Ford (1946)

MY LITTLE CHICKADEE, Edward F. Cline (1940)

NEWS OF THE WORLD, Paul Greengrass (2020)

NINOTCHKA, Ernst Lubitsch (1939)

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN, Ethan Coen & Joel Coen (2007)

NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE, Cecil B. DeMille (1940)

NORTHWEST PASSAGE, King Vidor (1940)

ON THE WATERFRONT, Elia Kazan (1954)

ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS, Howard Hawks (1939)

PAT GARRETT & BILLY THE KID, Sam Peckinpah (1973)

PER QUALCHE DOLLARO IN PIÙ [FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE], Sergio Leone (1965)

PER UN POGNO DI DOLLARI [A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS], Sergio Leone (1964)

POSSE, Mario Van Peebles (1993)

PURSUED, Raoul Walsh (1947)

RAGE AT DAWN, Tim Whelan (1955)

RAMONA, Henry King (1936)

RAMROD, André De Toth (1947)

RANCHO NOTORIOUS, Fritz Lang (1952)

RAWHIDE, Henry Hathaway (1951)

REAR WINDOW, Alfred Hitchcock (1954)

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, Nicholas Ray (1955)

RED RIVER, Howard Hawks (1948)

RED WING'S GRATITUDE, James Young Deer (1909)

RETURN OF THE BAD MEN, Ray Enright (1948)

RIO BRAVO, Howard Hawks (1959)

RIO GRANDE, John Ford (1950)

RIVER OF NO RETURN, Otto Preminger & Jean Negulesco (1954)

ROSEMARY'S BABY, Roman Polanski (1968)

SAMSON AND DELILAH, Cecil B. DeMille (1949)

SANDS OF IWO JIMA, Allan Dwan (1949).

SANTA FE TRAIL, Michael Curtiz (1940)

SERGEANT RUTLEDGE, John Ford (1960)

SHANE, George Stevens (1953)

SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, John Ford (1949)

SHICHININ NO SAMURAI [SEVEN SAMURAI], Akira Kurosawa (1954)

SILVER CITY, Ray Enright (1948)

SOLDIER BLUE, Ralp Nelson (1970)

SOUTH OF ST. LOUIS, Ray Enright (1949)

STAGECOACH, John Ford (1939)

STATION WEST, Sidney Lanfield (1948)

STEAMBOAT ROUND THE BEND, John Ford (1935)

STRAIGHT SHOOTING, John Ford (1917)

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF!, Burt Kenendy (1969)

TELL THEM WILLIE BOY IS HERE, Abraham Polonsky (1969)

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD, Michael Curtiz (1938)

THE ALAMO, John Wayne (1960)

THE ARYAN, Reginald Baker & William S. Hart (1916)

THE BALLAD OF BUSTER SCRUGGS, Ethan Coen & Joel Coen (2018)

THE BALLAD OF CABLE HOGUE, Sam Peckinpah (1970)

THE BALLAD OF JOSIE, Andrew V. McLaglen (1967)

THE BALLAD OF LEFTY BROWN, Jared Moshe (2017)

THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIFE, William Wyler (1946)

THE BIG COUNTRY, William Wyler (1958)

THE BIG TRAIL, Raoul Walsh (1930)

THE BIRTH OF A NATION, D.W. Griffith (1915)

THE CARIBOO TRAIL, Edwin L. Marin (1950)

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, Michael Curtiz (1936)

THE COVERED WAGON, James Cruze (1923)

THE CRUSADES, Cecil B. DeMille (1935)

THE FAR COUNTRY, Anthony Mann (1955)

THE FIGHTING 69th, William Keighley (1940)

THE FURIES, Anthony Mann (1950)

THE GRADUATE, Mike Nichols (1967)

THE GREAT NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA RAID, Philip Kaufman (1972)

THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, Edwin S. Porter (1903)

THE GUNFIGHTER, Henry King (1950)

THE HATEFUL EIGHT, Quentin Tarantino (2015)

THE HIGHWAYMEN, John Lee Hancock (2019)

THE HI-LO COUNTRY, Stephen Frears (1998)

THE HOMESMAN, Tommy Lee Jones (2014)

THE HORSE SOLDIERS, John Ford (1959)

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, William Dieterle (1939)

THE IRON HORSE, John Ford (1924)

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, Clarence Brown and Maurice Tourneur (1920)

THE LAST SUNSET, Robert Aldrich (1961)

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, Antoine Fuqua (2016)

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, John Sturges (1960)

THE MAN FROM COLORADO, Henry Levin (1948)

THE MAN FROM LARAMIE, Anthony Mann (1955)

THE MAN IN THE GREY FLANNEL SUIT, Nunnally Johnson (1956)

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE, John Ford (1962)

THE MEN, Fred Zinnemann (1950)

THE MISFITS, John Huston (1961)

THE NAKED SPUR, Anthony Mann (1953)

THE OKLAHOMA KID, Lloyd Bacon (1939)

THE OUTLAW, Howard Hughes (1943/1946)

THE OX-BOW INCIDENT, William A. Wellman (1943)

THE PATRIOT, William S. Hart (1916)

THE PERFECT SPECIMEN, Michael Curtiz (1937)

THE PLAINSMAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1936)

THE PONY EXPRESS, James Cruze (1925)

THE PROFESSIONALS, Richard Brooks (1966)

THE RED GIRL AND THE CHILD, James Young Deer (1910)

THE REDMAN'S VIEW, D.W. Griffith (1909)

THE RETURN OF DRAW EGAN, William S. Hart (1916)

THE REVENANT, Alejandro G. Iñárritu (2015)

THE RIDICULOUS 6, Frank Coraci (2015)

THE SEARCHERS, John Ford (1956)

THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH, Billy Wilder (1955)

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, Cecil B. DeMille (1932)

THE SQUAW MAN, Cecil B. DeMille & Oscar Apfel (1914)

THE SQUAW MAN, Cecil B. DeMille (1931)

THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS, Lewis Milestone (1946)

THE TEXAS RANGERS, King Vidor (1936)

THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA, Tommy Lee Jones (2005)

THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE, John Huston (1948)

THE UNDEFEATED, Andrew V. McLaglen (1969)

THE VIRGINIAN, Victor Fleming (1929)

THE WALKING HILLS, John Sturges (1949)

THE WESTERNER, William Wyler (1940)

THE WILD BUNCH, Sam Peckinpah (1969)

THE WIZARD OF OZ, Victor Fleming (1939)

THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON, Raoul Walsh (1941)

THEY WERE EXPENDABLE, John Ford (1945)

THREE GODFATHERS, John Ford (1948)

TRUE GRIT, Henry Hathaway (1969)

TUMBLEWEEDS, William S. Hart (1925)

TWELVE ANGRY MEN, Sidney Lumet (1957)

UNFORGIVEN, Clint Eastwood (1992)

UNION PACIFIC, Cecil B. DeMille (1939)

VIRGINIA CITY, Michael Curtiz (1940)

WAGON MASTER, John Ford (1950)

WARLOCK, Edward Dmytryk (1959)

WELLS FARGO, Frank Llyod (1937)

WESTERN UNION, Fritz Lang (1941)

WHITE FAWN'S DEVOTION, James Young Deer (1910)

WIND RIVER, Taylor Sheridan (2017)

WOMAN WALKS AHEAD, Susanna White (2017)

YELLOW SKY, William A. Wellman (1948)

YOJIMBO [YÔJINBÔ], Akira Kurosawa (1961)

YOUNG MR. LINCOLN, John Ford (1939)

7. Works Cited

Abel, Richard. "'Our Country'/Whose Country? The 'Americanisation' Project of Early Westerns." *Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western*. Ed. Edward Buscombe and Roberta E. Pearson. London: BFI, 1998. 77-95. Print.

Alexander, Jae, Blaine Allan, Gretchen Bisplinghoff, Jane Gaines, Charlotte Herzog, Lisa Lewis, Gina Marchetti, Maryann Oshana, Ellen Seiter, and Carol Slingo, ed. *Film Reader 5: Film & Cultural Studies: Feminist Film Criticism*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, 1982. Print.

Allen, Richard C.. *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina P, 1991. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.32106018299450>. 11 Aug 2020.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: BFI, 2004. Print.

Anderson, Kent. “The William Brigman JPC Award Winner: John Ford: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 39.1 (2006): 10-28. Electronic Resource. <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2006.00201.x>. 3 Apr 2020.

Anderson, Mark Lynn. “The Star System.” *American Film History: Selected Readings, Origins to 1960.* Ed. Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016. 99-114. Print.

Andrews, David. “Peckinpah, Rape, and Female Characterization.” *Post Script* 33.1 (2013): 33-48. Electronic Resource. <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2186/docview/1746040637?accountid=13042>. 15 May 2020.

Armitage, Shelley. “Rawhide Heroines: The Evolution of the Cowgirl and the Myth of America.” *The American Self: Myth, Ideology, and Popular Culture*. Ed. Sam B. Girgus. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1981. 166-181. Print.

Balio, Tino. “Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939.” *History of the American Cinema, Volume 5*. Ed. Charles Harpole. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1995. Print.

Bandy, Mary Lea, and Kevin Stoehr. *Ride, Boldly Ride: The Evolution of the American Western*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2012. Print.

Barck, Karlheinz, Peter Gente, Heidi Paris, and Stefan Richter, ed. *Aisthesis: Wahrnehmung Heute oder Prespektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*. 7th Edition. Leipzig: Reclam, 2002. Print.

Barnouw, Erik. *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*. Second Revised Edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Electronic Resource. <https://bibliu.com/app/?query=brutal%20collisions#/view/books/9780199879175/epub/ops/xhtml/ch5.html#page_348>. 19 May 2020.

Barr, Charles. “Dodge City.” *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 181-188. Print.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Transl. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044105913255>. 12 Aug 2020.

Basinger, Jeanine. *Anthony Mann*. New and expanded edition. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2007. Print.

Battaglia, Debbora. “On Practical Nostalgia: Self-Prospecting among Urban Trobrianders.” *Rhetorics of Self-Making*. Ed Debbora Battaglia. Electronic Resource. <https://ezproxy-

prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2612/view/10.1525/california/9780520087989.001.0001/upso-9780520087989-chapter-5>. 2 Apr 2020.

Bayer, Ines. *Anthony Mann: Kino der Verwundung*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2019. Print.

Baym, Nina, ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Volume B*. 7th ed. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007. Print.

Bazin, André. “The Evolution of the Western.” 1955. *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 49-56. Print.

---. “The Western, or the American Film Par Excellence.” *What is Cinema? Vol. II*. Transl. Hugh Gray. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1971. 140-148. Print.

---. *What is Cinema? Vol. II*. Transl. Hugh Gray. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1971. Print.

Beem, Chris. “Trump’s Manhood.” *The Democracy Institute*. Electronic Resource. <http://democracyinstitute.la.psu.edu/blog/trumps-manhood>. 16 Dec 2016.

Bell, Walter F.. “Westerns.” *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Ed. Bret E. Carroll. Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: SAGE, 2003. 489-491. Print.

Belton, John. *Widescreen Cinema*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992. Print.

---. “Re-Imagining American Communities: Hollywood, Hawks, and Ford in 1939.” *MLN* 122.5 (2007): 1166-1179. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30133981>. 27 Jan 2021.

Benshoff, Harry M., and Sean Griffin. *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies*. 2nd ed. Malden, Oxford, and Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Print.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad*. 1978. Anniversary ed. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2012. Print.

---. “The Rites of Assent: Rhetoric, Ritual, and the Ideology of American Consensus.” *The American Self: Myth, Ideology, and Popular Culture*. Ed. Sam B. Girgus. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1981. 5-42. Print.

Bereswill, Mechthild, and Anke Neubauer, ed. *In der Krise? Männlichkeiten im 21. Jahrhundert*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2011. Print.

Berg, Charles Ramírez. "The Margin as Center: The Multicultural Dynamics of John Ford's Westerns." *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*. Ed. Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2001. 75-101. Print.

Bergmann, Franziska. *Die Möglichkeit, dass alles auch ganz anders sein könnte: Geschlechterverfremdungen in Zeitgenössischen Theatertexten*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015. Print.

Berkenkamp, Katrin. *Die Konstruktion und Demontage des Amerikanischen Helden: Männlichkeitsentwürfe in Westernliteratur und –film*. Stuttgart: ibidem, 2014. Print.

Berkhofer, Robert F.. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Print.

Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner. "Sex in Public." *Critical Inquiry* 24:2 (1998). 547-566. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344178>. 12 Dec 2018.

Bernardi, Daniel. "The Voice of Whiteness: D.W. Griffith's Biograph Films (1908-1913)." *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema*. Ed. Daniel Bernardi. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1996. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K.. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Bingham, Dennis. *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994. Print.

Bird, Sharon R.. "Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity." *Gender and Society* 10.2 (1996): 120-132. Print.

Bliss, Michael. "Martyred Slaves of Time: Age, Regret, and Transcendence in THE WILD BUNCH." *Peckinpah Today: New Essays on the Films of Sam Peckinpah*. Ed. Michael Bliss. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 2012. 36-44. Electronic Resource. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1386824>. 15 May 2020.

---. "'Back Off to What?' Enclosure, Violence, and Capitalism in Sam Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH." *Sam Peckinpah's THE WILD BUNCH*. Ed. Stephen Prince. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 105-129. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07670>. 15 May 2020.

Bly, Robert. *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1999 [1990]. Print.

Bohnsack, Ralf. “Der Habitus der ‘Ehre des Mannes’: Geschlechtsspezifische Erfahrungsräume bei Jugendlichen Türkischer Herkunft.” *Männliche und Soziale Ordnung: Neuere Beiträge zur Geschlechterforschung*. Ed. Peter Döge and Michael Meuser. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2001. 49-71. Print.

Bordwell, David. “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance.” *Film Comment* 7.3 (1971): 18-20. Electronic Resource. <www.jstor.org/stable/43752833>. 2 Apr 2020.

---. “The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917-60.” *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. Ed. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. London: Routledge, 1988. 1-84. Electronic Resource. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2242/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=93873&site=ehost-live>. 7 July 2020.

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 5th ed. New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, Auckland, Bogotá, Caracas, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Mexico, Milan, Montreal, New Delhi, Paris, San Juan, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1997. Print.

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, ed. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. London: Routledge, 1988. Electronic Resource. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2242/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=93873&site=ehost-live>. 7 July 2020.

Bourdieu, Pierre. “Die Männliche Herrschaft.” Transl. Jürgen Bolder. *Ein Alltägliches Spiel. Geschlechterkonstruktionen in der Sozialen Praxis*. Ed. Irene Dölling and Beate Krais. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997. 153-217. Print.

---. *Die Männliche Herrschaft*. 1998. Transl. Jürgen Bolder. 3rd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016. Print.

Bovenschen, Silvia. *Die Imaginierte Weiblichkeit: Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu Kulturgeschichtlichen und Literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen*. 1979. Sonderausgabe zum 40jährigen Bestehen der edition suhrkamp. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003. Print.

Brakensiek, Stephan, ed. *Impressionismus ohne Farbe: Lovis Corinth – Max Slevogt*. Trier: BoD, 2016. Print.

Brandes, Holger. *Der Männliche Habitus. Band 2: Männerforschung und Männerpolitik*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2002. Print.

Brannon, Robert. “The Male Sex Role: Our Culture’s Blueprint of Manhood, and What It’s Done for Us Lately.” *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role*. Ed. Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1976. 1-45. Print.

Britton, Andrew. “Notes on PURSUED.” *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 196-205. Print.

---. “Sideshows: Hollywood in Vietnam (1981).” *Britton on Film: The Complete Film Criticism of Andrew Britton*. Ed. Grant, Barry Keith. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2008. 74-96. Electronic Resource. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/18205>. 15 May 2020.

Brod, Harry, ed. *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men’s Studies*. 1987. London: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Bronfen, Elisbath. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992. Print.

Bronfen, Elisabeth, and Norbert Grob, ed. *Classical Hollywood*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013. Print.

---. “Einleitung.” *Classical Hollywood*. Ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Norbert Grob. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013. 11-73. Print.

---. “Die Zwölf Geschworenen: TWELVE ANGRY MEN.” *Classical Hollywood*. Ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Norbert Grob. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013. 378-385. Print.

Brookes, Ian. *Film Noir: A Critical Introduction*. New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2017. Print.

Brown, Jeffrey A.. “‘Putting on the Ritz’: Masculinity and the Young Gary Cooper.” *Screen 36.3* (1995): 193-213. Print.

Brownlow, Kevin. *The Parade’s Gone By…*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996 [1968]. Print.

---. *The War, the West, and the Wilderness*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. Print.

Bublitz, Hannelore. *Judith Butler zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius, 2002. Print.

Buckland, Warren. “A Furious Exactitude: An Overview of Christian Metz’s Film Theory.” *Conversations with Christian Metz: Selected Interviews on Film Theory (1970-1991)*. Ed. Warren Buckland and Daniel Fairfax. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2017. 13-32. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1zkjxzm.5>. 23 Oct 2020.

Buckland, Warren, and Daniel Fairfax, ed. *Conversations with Christian Metz: Selected Interviews on Film Theory (1970-1991)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2017. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1zkjxzm>. 23. Oct 2020.

Budd, Michael. "A Home in the Wilderness: Visual Imagery in John Ford's Westerns." 1976. *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 133-147. Print.

Buscombe, Edward. *Stagecoach*. London: BFI, 1992. Print.

---. *100 Westerns: BFI Screen Guides*. London: BFI, 2006. Print.

---. "Painting the Legend: Frederic Remington and the Western." *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*. Ed. Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2001. 154-168. Print.

Buscombe, Edward, ed. *The BFI Companion to the Western*. New York: Antheum, 1988. Print.

Buscombe, Edward, and Roberta E. Pearson, ed. *Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western*. London: BFI, 1998. Print.

Buscombe, Edward, Christine Gledhill, Alan Lovell, and Christopher Williams. "Psychoanalysis and Film." *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*. Ed. John Caughie and Annette Kuhn. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 35-46. Print.

Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, ed. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London and New York: Verso, 2000. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 1990. New York and London: Routledge, 2007. Print.

---. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. 1993. London and New York. Routledge, 2011. Print.

---. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988): 519-531. Print.

---. "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*." *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 35-49. Print.

---. “Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism.” *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. Ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek. London and New York: Verso, 2000. 11-43. Print.

Calder, Jenni. *There Must Be a Lone Ranger*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974. Print.

Cameron, Ian, ed. *The Movie Book of Film Noir*. London: Studio Vista, 1992. Print.

Cameron, Ian, and Douglas Pye, ed. *The Movie Book of the Western*. London: Studio Vista, 1996. Print.

Campbell, Donna M. "Forms of Puritan Rhetoric: The Jeremiad and the Conversion Narrative." *Literary Movements*. 4 Jul 2013. Washington State University. 22 Feb 2018. <http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/jeremiad.htm>. Web.

Carroll, Bret E., ed. *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: SAGE, 2003. Print.

Carroll, Noël. “The Professional Western: South of the Border.” *Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western*. Ed. Edward Buscombe and Roberta E. Pearson. London: BFI, 1998. 46-62. Print.

Carroll, Rachel. *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012. Print.

Cashman, Sean Dennis. *America Ascendant: From Theodore Roosevelt to FDR in the Century of American Power, 1901-1945*. New York and London: New York UP, 1998. Print.

Castro Varela, María do Mar, and Nikita Dhawan. *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine Kritische Einführung*. Ed. Rainer Winter. Bielefeld: transcript, 2015. Print. Cultural Studies 36.

Caughie, John, and Annette Kuhn, eds. *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Cawelti, John G.. *The Six-Gun Mystique*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UPP, 1971. Print.

---. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1976. Print.

Charney, Leo. “Historical Excess: JOHNNY GUITAR’s Containment.” *Cinema Journal* 29.4 (1990): 23-34. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1225314>. 15 Aug 2019.

Chiattone, Antonio. *Il Film Western*. Milan: Poligono, 1949. Print.

Churchill, Ward. “Fantasies of the Master Race: Categories of Stereotyping of American Indians in Film.” *Film and Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 697-703. Print.

Cixous, Hélène. *Die Unendliche Zirkulation des Begehrens: Weiblichkeit in der Schrift*. Berlin: Merve, 1977. Print.

Cohan, Steven. *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1997. Print.

Cohan, Steven, and Ina Rae Hark, ed. *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Cohen, Cathy J.. “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?”. *GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3.4 (1997): 437-465. Electronic Resource. <http://read.dukeupress.edu/glq/article-pdf/3/4/437/415452/ddglq_3_4_437.pdf>. 15 Dec 2020.

Connell, Raewyn. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987. Print.

---. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity, 2005. Print.

Connell, Raewyn, and James W. Messerschmidt. “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.” *Gender and Society* 19.6 (2005): 829-859. Print.

Cook, David A.. “Ballistic Balletics: Styles of Violent Representation in THE WILD BUNCH and After.” *Sam Peckinpah’s THE WILD BUNCH*. Ed. Stephen Prince. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 130-154. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07670>. 19 May 2020.

Cook, Pam. “Masculinity in Crisis? Tragedy and Identification in *Raging Bull*.” *Screen* 23.3-4 (1982): 39-46. Print.

---. “Women and the Western.” 1988. *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 293-300. Print.

Cook, Pam, ed. *The Cinema Book*. 3rd ed. London: BFI, 2007. Print.

Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans*. [1826]. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.

Corkin, Stanley. *Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2004. Print.

Costello, Matthew J.. "Rewriting HIGH NOON: Transformations in American Popular Political Culture During the Cold War, 1952-1968." *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*. Ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2005. 175-197. Print.

Countryman, Edward, and Evonne von Heussen-Countryman. *Shane*. London: BFI, 1999. Print.

Coursen, David F.. "John Ford's Wilderness: The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance." *Sight & Sound* 47.4 (1978): 237-241. Electronic Resource. <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2186/docview/1305510446?accountid=13042>. 2 Apr 2020.

Cowie, Elizabeth. "*Film Noir* and Women." *Shades of Noir: A Reader*. Ed. Joan Copjec. London and New York: Verso, 1993. 121-166. Print.

Coyne, Michael. *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997. Print.

Crafton, Donald. "The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931." *History of the American Cinema, Volume 4*. Ed. Charles Harpole. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1997. Print.

Creekmur, Corey K.. "Acting Like a Man: Masculine Performance in MY DARLING CLEMENTINE". *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*. Ed. Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1995. 167-182. Print.

Cuddon, J.A.. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 4th Edition. London: Penguin, 1999. Print.

Cuordileone, K. A.. "'Politics in the Age of Anxiety': Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960." *The Journal of American History* 87.2 (2000): 515-545. Print.

---. *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Dancyger, Ken, and Jeff Rush. *Alternative Scriptwriting: Successfully Breaking the Rules*. 4th Edition. Oxford: Focal Press, 2007. Print.

Darby, William. *John Ford's Westerns: A Thematic Analysis, with a Filmography*. Jefferson: McFarland, 1996. Print.

Davis, Fred. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: The Free Press, 1979. Print.

Davis, Ronald L.. *William S. Hart: Projecting the American West*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2003. Print.

De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Transl. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Print.

DeCordova, Richard. *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2001. Print.

Delanty, Gerard, and Engin F. Isin, ed. *Handbook of Historical Sociology*. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage, 2003. Print.

Demetriou, Demetrakis Z.. "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique." *Theory and Society* 30 (2001): 337-361. Print.

Dempsey, Michael. "John Ford: A Reassessment." *Film Quarterly* 28.4 (1975): 2-15. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1211642>. 27 Jan 2021.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, ed. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: Sage, 2000. Print.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Second Edition. Ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: Sage, 2000. 1-28. Print.

Dinges, Martin. "'Hegemoniale Männlichkeit': Ein Konzept auf dem Prüfstand." *Männer – Macht – Körper: Hegemoniale Männlichkeiten vom Mittelalter bis Heute*. Ed. Martin Dinges. Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2005. 7-33. Print.

Dinges, Martin, ed. *Männer – Macht – Körper: Männlichkeiten vom Mittelalter bis Heute*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2005. Print.

Disch, Lisa, and Mary Hawkesworth, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016. Print.

Dixon, Winston Wheeler. “Re-Visioning the Western: Code, Myth, and Genre in Peckinpah’s THE WILD BUNCH.” *Sam Peckinpah’s THE WILD BUNCH*. Ed. Stephen Prince. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 155-174. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07670>. 19 May 2020.

Dölling, Irene, and Beate Krais, ed. *Ein Alltägliches Spiel. Geschlechterkonstruktionen in der Sozialen Praxis*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997. Print.

Donaldson, Mike. “What is Hegemonic Masculinity?” *Theory and Society* 22.5 (1993): 643-657. Print.

Dorr, Lisa Lindquist. “The Perils of the Back Seat: Date Rape, Race and Gender in 1950s America.” *Gender & History* 20.1 (2008): 27-47. Print.

Duden, Barbara. “Die Frau Ohne Unterleib: Zu Judith Butlers Entkörperung. Ein Zeitdokument.” *Feministische Studien,* 11.2 (1993): 24-33. Electronic Resource. <https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/die-frau-ohne-unterleib-zu-judith-butlers/docview/1300491882/se-2?accountid=14652>. 15 Dec 2020.

Dusartz de Vigneulle, Nina, and Tobias Michael Schank. “Vom Buch zum Film: James Fenimore Coopers Lederstrumpf in intermedialer Sichtweise: Die graphischen Illustrationen Max Slevogts und der Beginn der verfilmten Abenteuergeschichte.” *Impressionismus ohne Farbe*. Lovis Corinth – Max Slevogt. Ed. Stephan Brakensiek. Trier: BoD, 2016. 22-35. Print.

Dyer, Richard. “Don’t Look Now: The Male Pin-Up.” *Screen* 23.3-4 (1982): 61-73. Print.

---. “White”. *Film and Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 733-751. Print.

---. *The Culture of Queers*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

---. *Heavenly Bodies*. Second Edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Electronic Resource. <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.4324/978020360551>. 8 Jul 2020.

Dzudzek, Iris, Caren Kunze, and Joscha Wullweber, ed. *Diskurs und Hegemonie: Gesellschaftskritische Perspektiven*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012. Print.

Elsaesser, Thomas, ed. *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI, 1990. Print.

Engler, Steffanie. “Habitus und Sozialer Raum: Zur Nutzung der Konzepte Pierre Bourdieus in der Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung.“ 2010. *Pierre Bourdieus Konzeption des Habitus. Grundlagen, Zugänge, Forschungsperspektiven*. Ed. Alexander Lenger, Christian Schneickert, and Florian Schumacher. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013. 247-260. Print.

Erhart, Walter. "Männlichkeit, Mythos, Gemeinschaft: Nachruf auf den Western-Helden." *Wann ist der Mann ein Mann? Zur Geschichte der Männlichkeit*. Ed. Walter Erhart and Britta Herrmann. Stuttgart and Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1997. 320-349. Print.

---. "Deutschsprachige Männerforschung." *Männlichkeit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Ed. Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016. 11-25. Print.

Esders-Angermund, Karin. *Weiblichkeit und Sexuelle Differenz im Amerikanischen Genrekino: Funktionen der Frau im Frühen Westernfilm*. Trier: WVT, 1997. Print.

Everschor, Franz. "The Big Trail: Die Überfällige Entdeckung eines Frühen 70mm-Films." *Film-Dienst* 61.15 (2008): 48-49. Print.

Eyman, Scott. *Print the Legend: The Life and Times of John Ford*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015 [1999]. Print.

Faulstich, Werner. *Filmgeschichte*. Stuttgart: UTB, 2005. Print.

---. *Grundkurs Filmanalyse*. 2. Auflage. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008. Print.

Fenin, George N., and William K. Everson. *The Western: From Silents to the Seventies*. New and Expanded ed. New York: Grossman, 1973. Print.

Fenske, Uta. "Film." *Männlicheit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Ed. Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016. 237-250. Print.

---. *Mannsbilder: Eine Geschlechterhistorische Betrachtung von Hollywoodfilmen 1946-1960*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2008. Print.

Fiedler, Leslie A.. *The Return of the Vanishing American*. Revised ed. New York: Stein and Day, 1968. Print.

Fisher, Austin, ed. *Spaghetti Westerns at the Crossroads: Studies in Relocation, Transition and Appropriation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016. Print.

Foucault, Michel. "Andere Räume." 1967. Transl. by Walter Seitter. *Aisthesis: Wahrnehmung Heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*. 7th Edition. Ed Karlheinz Barck, Peter Gente, Heidi Paris, and Stefan Richter. Leipzig: Reclam, 2002. 34-46. Print.

---. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 1969. Transl. by A. M. Sheridan Smith. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002. Print.

---. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1975. Transl. by Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Classics, 2020. Print.

---. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge*. 1976. Transl. by Robert Hurley. London: Penguin Classics, 2020. Print.

---. *Dispositive der Macht: Über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit*. Berlin: Merve, 1978. Print.

Frayling, Christopher. *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone*. Revised paperback Edition. London: I. B. Tauris, 2006. Print.

---. "The Quiet Man Gets Noisy: Sergio Leone, the Italian Western and Ireland." *Spaghetti Westerns at the Crossroads: Studies in Relocation, Transition and Appropriation*. Ed. Austin Fisher. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016. 13-46. Print.

Freedman, Estelle B.. "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s." *The Journal of American History* 61.2 (1974): 372-393. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1903954>. 23 Oct 2020.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. 50th Anniversary Edition. Ed. Kirsten Fermaglich and Lisa M. Fine. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013. Print.

Fuller, Graham. "The Psychological Western." *Sight & Sound* 26.5 (2016): 38-45. Print.

Gallagher, Tag. *John Ford: The Man and His Films*. Berkeley and Los Angeles and London: U of California P, 1986. Print.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. London: Fontana Press, 1993 [1973]. Print.

Geiger, Annette, Stefanie Rinke, Stevie Schmiedel, and Hedwig Wagner, ed. *Wie der Film den Körper Schuf: Ein Reader zu Gender und Medien*. Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2006. Print.

Georgi-Findlay, Brigitte. *The Frontiers of Women's Writing: Women's Narratives and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion*. Tuscon: U of Arizona P, 1996. Print.

Giesenfeld, Günter. "…Denn Sie Wissen Nicht, Was Sie Tun: REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE." *Filmklassiker: Beschreibungen und Kommentare*. Band 2, 1947-1964. Ed. Thomas Koebner. Stuttgart, Reclam: 1995. 237-241. Print.

Gilbert, James. "David Riesman und die 'Krise' der Männlichkeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg." *Väter, Soldaten, Liebhaber: Männer und Männlichkeiten in der Geschichte Nordamerikas. Ein Reader*. Ed. Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz. Bielefeld: transcript, 2007. 277-292. Print.

Girgus, Sam B., ed. *The American Self: Myth, Ideology, and Popular Culture*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1981. Print.

Glasze, Georg, and Annika Mattissek, ed. *Handbuch Diskurs und Raum: Theorien und Methoden für die Humangeographie sowie die Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaftliche Raumforschung*. 3rd Edition. Bielefeld: transcript, 2021. Print.

Glasze, Georg, and Annika Mattissek. "Die Hegemonie- und Diskurstheorie von Laclau und Mouffe." *Handbuch Diskurs und Raum: Theorien und Methoden für die Humangeographie sowie die Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaftliche Raumforschung*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Georg Glasze and Annika Mattissek. Bielefeld: transcript, 2021. 138-166. Print.

Gledhill, Christine. "The Western." *The Cinema Book*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Pam Cook. London: BFI, 2007. 374-381. Print.

---. "Introduction." *Gender Meets Genre in Postwar Cinemas*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 2012. 1-11. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1x74qb>. 27 Apr 2020.

Gledhill, Christine, ed. *Gender Meets Genre in Postwar Cinema*. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 2012. Electronic Resource. <www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1x74qb>. 27 Apr 2020.

Göttlich, Udo. "Zur Epistemologie der Cultural Studies in Kulturwissenschaftlicher Absicht: Cultural Studies Zwischen Kritischer Sozialforschung und Kulturwissenschaft". *Die Werkzeugkiste der Cultural Studies: Perspektiven, Anschlüsse und Interventionen*. Ed. Udo Göttlich, Lothar Mikos, and Rainer Winter. Bielefeld: transcript, 2001. 15-42. Electronic Resource. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/16776654-6ae2-4f0b-a135-579d3764e6ac/1006768.pdf>. 22 Feb 2021.

Göttlich, Udo, Lothar Mikos, and Rainer Winter, ed. *Die Werkzeugkiste der Cultural Studies: Perspektiven, Anschlüsse und Interventionen*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2001. Electronic Resource. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/16776654-6ae2-4f0b-a135-579d3764e6ac/1006768.pdf>. 22 Feb 2021.

Gordon, Marsha. "'What Makes a Girl Who Looks Like That Get Mixed Up in Science?': Gender in Sam Fuller's Films of the 1950s." *Quarterly Review of Film & Video 17.1* (2000): 1-17. Electronic Resource. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509200009361476>. 16 Aug 2019.

Grainge, Paul. "Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes, and Media Recycling*." Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 23.1 (2000): 27-34. Electronic Resource. < https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1111/j.1537-4726.2000.2301_27.x>. 2 Apr 2020.

Grant, Barry Keith, ed. *Britton on Film: The Complete Film Criticism of Andrew Britton*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2008. Electronic Resource. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/18205>. 15 May 2020.

Grieve, Victoria M.. *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2018. Electronic Resource. <DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190675684.001.0001>. 16 Aug 2019.

Grigg, Russell, Dominique Hecq, and Craig Smith, ed. *Female Sexuality: The Early Psychoanalytic Controversies*. London: Karnac, 2015. Print.

Grob, Norbert: "Der Große Eisenbahn-Überfall: THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY." *Filmgenres: Western*. Ed. Bernd Kiefer and Norbert Grob. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003. 41-44. Print.

---. "Der Virginier: THE VIRGINIAN." *Filmgenres: Western*. Ed. Bernd Kiefer and Norbert Grob. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003. 58-63. Print.

Grønstad, Asbjørn. "Gathering at the River: Ford, Peckinpah and the Failure of the Communal." *American Studies in Scandinavia* 35.1 (2003): 51-67. Electronic Resource. <https://doi.org/10.22439/asca.v35i1.4421>. 27 Jan 2021.

Grundmann, Roy. "Taking Stock at War's End: Gender, Genre, and Hollywood Labor in THE STRANGE LOVE OF MARTHA IVERS." *American Film History: Selected Readings, Origins to 1960.* Ed. Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016. 398-422. Print.

Gubar, Susan. "Representing Pornography: Feminism, Criticism, and Depictions of Female Violation." *Critical Inquiry* 13.4 (1987): 712-741. Print.

Gunning, Tom. "Movies, Stories, and Attractions: 1902-1903." *American Cinema 1890-1909: Themes and Variations*. Ed. André Gaudreault. New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers UP, 2009. 112-132. Print.

---. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." [1981]. *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. Ed. Thomas Elsaesser. London: BFI, 1990. 56-67. Print.

---. “The Redman’s View.” *The Griffith Project: Volume 3*. Ed. Paolo Cherchi Usai. London: BFI, 1999. 123-126. Print.

Halberstam, Jack. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. Print.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation.” *Film and Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 704-714. Print.

Haller, Dieter. “Die Entdeckung des Selbstverständlichen: Heteronormativität im Blick.“ *Kea: Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14 (2001): 1-28. Print.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Was ist Macht?*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005. Print.

Hanisch, Michael. “Der Mann, der Liberty Valance Erschoss: THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE.” *Filmgenres: Western*. Ed. Bernd Kiefer and Norbert Grob. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003. 247-250. Print.

Hannan, Brian. *The Gunslingers of ’69: Western Movies’ Greatest Year*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2019. Print.

Hansen, Miriam. “Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship.” *Cinema Journal* 25.4 (1986): 6-32. Print.

Hapke, Laura. *Labor’s Text: The Worker in American Fiction*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers UP, 2001. Print.

Hardy, Phil. *The Western*. London: Aurum Press, 1995. Print.

Hart, William S.. *A Lighter of Flames*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1928. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101066123082> 7 Jul 2020.

Hartmann, Heidi. “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex.” *Signs* 1.3 (1976): 137-169. Print.

Hartmann, Jutta, Christian Klesse, Peter Wagenknecht, Bettina Fritzsche, and Kristina Hackmann, ed. *Heteronormativität: Empirische Studien zu Geschlecht, Sexualität und Macht*. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007. Print.

Harvey, Sylvia. “Woman’s Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir.” *Women in Film Noir*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. London: BFI, 2000. 47-68. Print.

Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*. 1974. 2nd Edition. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987. Print.

Hayne, Donald, ed. *The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1959. Print.

Heale, M. J.. *The Sixties in America: History, Politics and Protest*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001. Print.

Hearn, Jeff. “From Hegemonic Masculinities to the Hegemony of Men.” *Feminist Theory* 5.1 (2004): 49-72. Print.

Hearne, Joanna. “The ‘Ache for Home’: Assimilation and Separatism in Anthony Mann’s DEVIL’S DOORWAY.” *Hollywood’s West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*. Ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor. Lexington: UP of Kenturcky, 2005. 127-159. Print.

Hembus, Joe. *Western von Gestern: Das Buch zu der Fernsehserie über die Großen Westernfilme der 30er und 40er Jahre*. München: Heyne, 1978. Print.

---. *Western-Geschichte: 1540-1894. Chronologie/Mythologie/Filmographie*. München/Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1979. Print.

Hey, Barbara. *Women's history und Poststrukturalismus: Zum Wandel der Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte in den USA*. Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus VG, 1995. Print.

Higham, Charles. *Cecil B. DeMille*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1973. Print.

Hißnauer, Christian, and Thomas Klein. “Visualität des Männlichen: Skizzen zu Einer Filmsoziologischen Theorie von Männlichkeit.” *Männer – Machos – Memmen: Männlichkeit im Film*. Ed. Christian Hißnauer and Thomas Klein. Mainz: Bender, 2002. 17-48. Print.

Hißnauer, Christian, and Thomas Klein, ed. *Männer – Machos – Memmen: Männlichkeit im Film*. Mainz: Bender, 2002. Print.

Hoberman, J.. “How the Western Was Lost.” 1991. *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 85-92. Print.

Hogan, Maureen P., and Timothy Pursell. “The ‘Real Alaskan’: Nostalgia and Rural Masculinity in the ‘Last Frontier’”. *Men and Masculinities* 11.1 (2008): 63-85. Electronic Resource. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X06291892>. 17 Mar 2020.

Holtz, Martin. “The Western in Times of War: *Open Range* and *Seraphim Falls* as Post-9/11 Films.” *Violence and Open Spaces: The Subversion of Boundaries and the Transformation of the Western Genre*. Ed. Stefanie Mueller, Christa Buschendorf, Katja Sarkowsky. Heidelberg: UV Winter, 2017. 93-105. Print.

Horlacher, Stefan, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck. “Einleitung.” *Männlichkeit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Ed. Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016. 1-9. Print.

Horlacher, Stefan, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck, ed. *Männlichkeit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016. Print.

Horne, Abigail. “The Color of Manhood: Reconsidering Pompey in John Ford’s THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE.” *Black Camera* 4.1 (2012): 5-27. Electronic Resource. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/488214>. 8 Apr 2020.

Hutchinson, Pamela. “Endings… THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY.” *Sight & Sound* 26.2 (2016): 112. Print.

Hutson, Richard. “William S. Hart's HELL’S HINGES in the Progressive Era.” *Revue française d'études américaines* 4.122 (2009): 59-75. Electronic Resource. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/20875920>. 7 Jul 2020.

Indick, William. *The Psychology of the Western: How the American Psyche Plays Out on Screen*. Jefferson and London: McFarland, 2008. Print.

Ingraham, Chrys, ed. *Thinking Straight: The Power, Promise and Paradox of Heterosexuality*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Ingrassia, Catherine. “‘I'm Not Kicking, I'm Talking’: Discursive Economies in the Western.” *Film Criticism* 20.3 (1996): 4-14. Electronic Resource. <www.jstor.org/stable/44018850>. 3 Apr 2020.

Jacobowitz, Florence. “The Man’s Melodrama: THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW and SCARLET STREET.” *The Movie Book of Film Noir*. Ed. Ian Cameron. London: Studio Vista, 1992. 152-164. Print.

Jameson, Frederic. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. London and New York: Verso, 2009. Print.

Jewell, Richard B., and Vernon Harbin. *The RKO Story*. London: Octopus Books, 1982. Print.

Jones, Jonathan. “The Final Frontier.” *The Guardian*. 17 Jun 2002. theguardian.com. 15 Mar 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/jun/17/artsfeatures>. Web.

Kalinak, Kathryn. "'The Sound of Many Voices': Music in John Ford's Western." *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*. Ed. Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2001. 169-192. Print.

Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 2002. Print.

Kaplan, E. Ann. "Introduction to New Edition." *Women in Film Noir*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. London: BFI, 2000. 1-14. Print.

---. "Introduction to 1978 Edition." *Women in Film Noir*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. London: BFI, 2000. 15-19. Print.

Kaplan, E. Ann, ed. *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. Print.

---. *Women in Film Noir*. London: BFI, 2000. Print.

Kaufman, J.B.. "The Last Drop of Water." *The Griffith Project: Volume 5*. Ed. Paolo Cherchi Usai. London: BFI, 1999. 82-84. Print.

Kerner, Ina. "Verhält sich Intersektional zu Lokal wie Postkolonial zu Global? Zur Relation von Postkolonialen Studien und Intersektionalitätsforschung." Ed. Julia Reuter and Paula-Irene Villa. *Postkoloniale Soziologie: Empirische Befunde, Theoretische Anschlüsse, Politische Intervention*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010. 237-258. Print.

Kezich, Tullio, ed. *Il Western Maggiorenne: Tutto sul Film della Prateria*. Trieste: Zigiotti Editore, 1953. Print.

Kiefer, Bernd, and Norbert Grob, ed. *Filmgenres: Western*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003. Print.

Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. New York: The Free Press, 1996. Print.

Kirkham, Pat, and Janet Thumim, ed. *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993. Print.

Kitses, Jim. *Horizons West: Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah: Studies of Authorship Within the Western*. Bloomington and London: Indiana UP, 1969. Print.

---. "Authorship and Genre: Notes on the Western." 1969. *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 57-68. Print.

---. *Horizons West: Directing The Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*. New Edition. London: BFI, 2004. Print.

Kitses, Jim, and Gregg Rickman, ed. *The Western Reader*. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. Print.

Klein, Thomas. *Geschichte – Mythos – Identität: Zur Globalen Zirkulation des Western-Genres*. Berlin: Bertz+Fischer, 2015. Print.

Klevan, Andrew. *Barbara Stanwyck*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Knöbl, Wolfgang. "Theories That Won't Pass Away: The Never-ending Story of Modernization Theory." *Handbook of Historical Sociology*. Ed. Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage, 2003. 96-107. Print.

Koebner, Thomas, ed. *Filmklassiker: Beschreibungen und Kommentare*. Band 2, 1947-1964. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995. Print.

Korte, Helmut. *Einführung in die Systematische Filmanalyse*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999. Print.

Koszarski, Diane Kaiser. *The Complete Films of William S. Hart: A Pictorial Record*. New York: Dover Publications, 1980. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015003841734>. 7 Jul 2020.

Krutnik, Frank. *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.

Kuhn, Annette, and Guy Westwell, ed. *A Dictionary of Film Studies*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. Print.

Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso, 2014 [1985]. Print.

Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990. Print.

Lang, Robert. *Masculine Interests: Homoerotics in Hollywood Films*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. Print.

Langford, Barry. "Revisiting the 'Revisionist' Western." *Film & History* 33.2 (2003 Sep): 26-34. Electronic Resource. <http://ezproxy-

prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2242/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aft&AN=505042546&site=ehost-live>. 4 Apr 2020.

Laprévotte, Gilles. "L'Ami et L'Ennemi Silencieux: L'Indien dans le Cinéma Muet." *Les Indiens et le Cinéma: Des Indiens D'Hollywood au Cinéma Des Indiens*. Ed. Gilles Laprévotte, Michel Luciani, Anne-Marie Mangin, Georges-Henri Morin, Jean-Pierre Garcia, Marie Mauzé, Elisabeth Weatherford, Emilia Seubert. Amiens: Trois Cailloux, 1989. 18-34. Print.

Lenger, Alexander, Christian Schneickert, and Florian Schumacher, ed. *Pierre Bourdieus Konzeption des Habitus. Grundlagen, Zugänge, Forschungsperspektiven*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013. Print.

Lenger, Alexander, Christian Schneickert, and Florian Schumacher. "Pierre Bourdeius Konzeption des Habitus." *Pierre Bourdieus Konzeption des Habitus. Grundlagen, Zugänge, Forschungsperspektiven*. Ed. Alexander Lenger, Christian Schneickert, and Florian Schumacher, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013. 13-41. Print.

Lenihan, John H.. *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1985. Print.

Leverenz, David. "The Last Real Man in America: From Natty Bumppo to Batman." *American Literary History* 3.4 (1991): 753-781. Print.

Levitin, Jacqueline. "The Western: Any Good Roles for Feminists?" *Film Reader 5: Film & Cultural Studies: Feminist Film Criticism*. Ed. Jae Alexander, Blaine Allan, Gretchen Bisplinghoff, Jane Gaines, Charlotte Herzog, Lisa Lewis, Gina Marchetti, Maryann Oshana, Ellen Seiter, and Carol Slingo. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, 1982. 95-108. Print.

Liebrand, Claudia. "John Wayne Wouldn't Like Gay Cowboys: Ang Lees Western BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN und die Genretradition." *Schriftenreihe der Initiative Queer Nations e.V.* 1.5. (2008). Print.

Lipman-Blumen, Jean. "Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions." *Signs* 1.3 (1976): 15-31. Print.

Lloyd, Moya. "Performativity and Performance." *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*. Ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016. 572-592. Print.

Lovell, Alan. "The Western." *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1976. 164-175. Print.

Lucia, Cynthia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon, ed. *American Film History: Selected Readings, Origins to 1960.* Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016. Print.

Lugowski, David M.. “Queering the (New) Deal.” *American Film History: Selected Readings, Origins to 1960.* Ed. Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016. 264-281. Print.

Luhmann, Niklas. *Die Realität der Massenmedien*. 4th Edition. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009. Print.

Lünenborg, Margreth, and Tanja Maier. *Gender Media Studies: Eine Einführung*. Konstanz and Munich: UKV, 2013. Print.

Lusted, David. *The Western*. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2003. Print.

---. “Social Class and the Western as Male Melodrama.” *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 63-74. Print.

Maddrey, Joseph. *The Quick, the Dead and the Revived: The Many Lives of the Western Film*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2016. Print.

Manchel, Frank. *Cameras West*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971. Print.

Manon, Hugh S.. “Henry Hathaway’s RAWHIDE and the Hermetic Frontiers of Film Noir.” *Film & History* 33.2 (2003): 36-47. Print.

Martschukat, Jürgen. “‘I Relinquished Power in the Family’: Von Männlichkeits-, Sozial- und Wirtschaftskrisen in der 1930er Jahren.” *In der Krise? Männlichkeiten im 21. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Mechthild Bereswill and Anke Neubauer. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2011. 18-36- Print.

Martschukat, Jürgen, and Olaf Stieglitz. *“Es ist ein Junge!”: Einführung in die Geschichte der Männlichkeit in der Neuzeit*. Tübingen: Kimmerle, 2005. Print.

Martschukat, Jürgen, and Olaf Stieglitz, ed. *Väter, Soldaten, Liebhaber: Männer und Männlichkeiten in der Geschichte Nordamerikas. Ein Reader*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2007. Print.

Matheson, Sue. “The West – Hardboiled: Adaptions of Film Noir Elements, Existentialism, and Ethics in John Wayne’s Westerns.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 38.5 (2005): 888-910. Print.

---. “‘Let’s Go Home, Debbie’: The Matter of Blood Pollution, Combat Culture, and Cold War Hysteria in THE SEARCHERS (1956).” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 39.2 (2011): 50-58. Print.

---. “John Ford on the Cold War: Stetsons and Cast Shadows in THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962).” *Journal of Popular Culture* 45.2 (2012): 357-369. Electronic Resource. < https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2012.00929.x>. 2 Apr 2020.

McBride, Joseph. *Searching for John Ford: A Life*. London: Faber and Faber, 2003. Print.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York and London: Routledge, 2015 [1995]. Print.

McDaniel, Ruel. *Vinegarroon: The Saga of Judge Roy Bean, “Law West of the Pecos”*. Kingsport, Tenn.: Southern Publishers, 1936. Electronic Resource. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b4469911;view=1up;seq=4>. 3 Dec 2018.

McDonough, Kathleen A.. “WEE WILLIE WINKIE Goes West: The Influence of the British Empire Genre on Ford’s Cavalry Trilogy.” *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*. Ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor. Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 2005. 99-114. Print.

McGee, Patrick. *From SHANE to KILL BILL: Rethinking the Western*. Malden, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell, 2007. Print.

McGillis, Roderick. *He Was Some Kind of a Man: Masculinities in the B Western*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. Print.

Meeuf, Russell. *John Wayne’s World: Transnational Masculinity in the Fifties*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2013. Print.

Mellen, Joan. *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film*. New York: Pantheon, 1977. Print.

Mesce Jr., Bill. *Peckinpah’s Women: A Reappraisal of the Portrayal of Women in the Period Westerns of Sam Peckinpah*. Lanham, Maryland, and London: The Scarecrow Press, 2001. Print.

Messner, Michael A. *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*. Boston: Beacon, 1992. Print.

Meuser, Michael. “Hegemoniale Männlichkeit: Überlegungen zur Leitkategorie der Men’s Studies.” *FrauenMännerGeschlechterforschung: State of the Art*. Ed. Brigitte Aulenbacher, Mechthild Bereswill, Martina Löw, Michael Meuser, Gabriele Mordt, Reinhild Schäfer, Sylka Scholz. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2006. 160-171. Print.

---. “Soziologie.” *Männlichkeit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Ed. Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016. 218-236. Print.

Meuser, Michael, and Sylka Scholz. “Hegemoniale Männlichkeit: Versuch Einer Begriffsklärung aus Soziologischer Perspektive.” *Männer – Macht – Körper: Hegemoniale Männlichkeiten vom Mittelalter bis Heute*. Ed. Martin Dinges. Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2005. 211-228. Print.

Mikos, Lothar, and Claudia Wegener, ed. *Qualitative Medienforschung: Ein Handbuch*. 2nd Edition. Konstanz: UVK, 2017. Print.

Miller, D.A.. “Anal Rope.” *Representations* 32.1 (1990): 114-133. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928797>. 11 Aug 2020.

Miller, Gabriel. *William Wyler: The Life and Films of Hollywood’s Most Celebrated Director*. Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 2014. Electronic Resource. <https://kentucky.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.5810/kentucky/9780813142098.001.0001/upso-9780813142098-chapter-9>. 16 Oct 2020.

Miltenberger, Scott. “Leatherstocking Tales.” *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Ed. Bret E. Carroll. Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: SAGE, 2003. 267-268. Print.

Mitchell, Lee Clark. *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1996. Print.

Monticone, Paul. “The *Noir* Western: Genre Theory and the Problem of the Anomalous Hybrid.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 31.4 (2014): 336-349. Print.

Moore, Robert, and Douglas Gillette. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991. Print.

Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London and New York: Verso, 1998. Print.

Morgan, Iwan. “Introduction: Hollywood and the Great Depression.” *Hollywood and the Great Depression: American Film, Politics and Society in the 1930s*. Ed. Iwan Morgan and Philip John Davies. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016. 1-26. Print.

Morgan, Iwan, and Philip John Davies, ed. *Hollywood and the Great Depression: American Film, Politics and Society in the 1930.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016. Print.

Movshovitz, Howard. “The Still Point: Women in the Westerns of John Ford.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 7.3 (1984): 68-72. Print.

Mueller, Stefanie, Christa Buschendorf, and Katja Sarkowsky, ed. *Violence and Open Spaces: The Subversion of Boundaries and the Transformation of the Western Genre*. Heidelberg: UV Winter, 2017. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” 1975. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Laura Mulvey. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989. 14-26. Print.

---. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989. Print.

---. “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by DUEL IN THE SUN.” *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. 24-35. Print.

Musser, Charles. “The Travel Genre in 1903-1904: Moving Towards Fictional Narrative.” [1984]. *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. Ed. Thomas Elsaesser. London: BFI, 1990. 123-132. Print.

Nachbar, Jack, ed. *Focus on the Western*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974. Print.

Neale, Steve. “Masculinity as Spectacle.” *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*. Ed. John Caughie and Annette Kuhn. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. 277-287. Print.

---. *Genre*. London: BFI, 1996. Print.

---. “Questions of Genre.” *Film and Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 157-178. Print.

---. *Genre and Hollywood*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Needham, Gary. *Brokeback Mountain*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010. Print.

Neidhart, Stefanie. *Konstruktion von Männlichkeit. Männliche Herrschaft und Hegemoniale Männlichkeit. Bourdieu und Connell. Ein Vergleich*. Norderstedt: GRIN, 2011. Print.

Nichols, Bill, ed. *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1976. Print.

Nolley, Ken. “Printing the Legend in the Age of MX: Reconsidering Ford’s Military Trilogy.” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 14.2 (1986): 82-88. Print.

Nowotny, Peter. “Die Anfänge des Amerikanischen Spielfilms als Western: Von DER GROSSE EISENBAHNRAUB (1903) bis DES ROTEN MANNES SICHT (1909) und Folgende.” *Fischer*

Filmgeschichte. Band 1: Von den Anfängen bis zum Etablierten Medium 1895-1924. Ed. Werner Faulstich and Helmut Korte. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994. 168-181. Print.

Opitz-Belakhal, Claudia. "'Krise der Männlichkeit' – Ein Nützliches Konzept der Geschlechtergeschichte?." *L'Homme. Z.F.G.* 19.2 (2008): 31-49. Print.

Opratko, Benjamin. "Ein Theoretischer Universalschlüssel? Zur Ontologisierung des Hegemoniebegriffs bei Laclau und Mouffe." *Diskurs und Hegemonie: Gesellschaftskritische Perspektiven*. Ed. Iris Dzudzek, Caren Kunze, and Joscha Wullweber. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012. 59-83. Print.

Osgerby, Bill. "Giving 'Em Hell: Conflicted Masculinity in the American 'True Adventure' Pulps of the 1950s and 1960s." *Media History* 23.1 (2017): 28-49. Electronic Resource. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2016.1154784>. 16 Aug 2018.

Osteen, Mark. *Nightmare Alley: Film Noir and the American Dream*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2013. Print.

Pailler, Alain. "Sur le 'noir western.'" *Jeune Cinéma* 354 (2013): 30-39. Print.

Parker, Ben. "The Western Film and Psychoanalysis." *Film Quarterly* 68.2 (2014): 22-30. Print.

Pauly, Thomas. "Howard Hughes and his Western: The Maverick and THE OUTLAW." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 6.4 (1978). 350-367. Print.

Peek, Wendy Chapman. "The Romance of Competence: Rethinking Masculinity in the Western." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 30.4 (2003). 206-219. Electronic Resource. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956050309602857>. 17 Apr 2019.

Peltzer, Anja, and Angela Keppler. *Die Soziologische Film- und Fernsehanalyse: Eine Einführung*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015. Print.

Peterson, Jennifer. "The Competing Tunes of JOHNNY GUITAR: Liberalism, Sexuality, Masquerade." *Cinema Journal* 35.3 (1996): 3-18. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1225762>. 15 Aug 2019.

Popple, Simon, and Joe Kember. *Early Cinema: From Factory Gate to Dream Factory*. London: Wallflower Press, 2004. Print.

Prats, Armando José. *Invisible Natives: Myth & Identity in the American Western*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2002. Print.

Prince, Stephen. *Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise pf Ultraviolent Movies*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1998. Print.

Prince, Stephen, ed. *Sam Peckinpah's* THE WILD BUNCH. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07670>. 15 May 2020.

Pumphrey, Martin. "Why Do Cowboys Wear Hats in the Bath? Style and Politics for the Older Man." 1989. *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 50-62. Print.

---. "Masculinity." *The BFI Companion to the Western*. Ed. Edward Buscombe. New York: Antheum, 1988. Print. 181-183. Print.

Pye, Douglas. "Introduction: Criticism and the Western." *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 9-21. Print.

---. "Genre and History: FORT APACHE and THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE." *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 111-122. Print.

---. "The Collapse of Fantasy: Masculinity in the Westerns of Anthony Mann." *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 167-173. Print.

Ray, Robert B.. *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985. Print.

Reeser, Todd W.. "Englischsprachige Männlichkeitsforschung." Transl. Ulrike Kohn and Wieland Schwanebeck. *Männlichkeit: Ein Interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Ed. Stefan Horlacher, Bettina Jansen, and Wieland Schwanebeck. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016. 26-42. Print.

Reuter, Julia, and Paula-Irene Villa, ed. *Postkoloniale Soziologie: Empirische Befunde, Theoretische Anschlüsse, Politische Intervention*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010. Print.

Ricci, Mark, Boris Zmijewsky, and Steve Zmijewsky. *The Films of John Wayne*. Secaucus: The Citadel Press, 1976. Print.

Rieupeyrout, Jean-Louis. *Le Western: Ou, le Cinéma Américain par Excellence*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1953. Print.

Riviere, Joan. "Womanliness as a Masquerade." 1929. *Female Sexuality: The Early Psychoanalytic Controversies*. Ed. Russell Grigg, Dominique Hecq, and Craig Smith. London: Karnac, 2015. 172-182. Print.

Roberts, Randy, and James S. Olson. *John Wayne: American*. New York: The Free Press, 1995. Print.

Robinson, David. *Hollywood in the Twenties*. London and New York: A. Zwemmer and A.S. Barnes & Co, 1968. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.49015000841289>. 9 Jul 2020.

Röhrig, Anna Eunike. *Mätressen und Favoriten: Ein Biographisches Handbuch*. Göttingen: MatrixMedia, 2010. Print.

Rollins, Peter C., and John E. O'Connor, ed. *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*. Lexington: The UP of Kentucky, 2005. Print.

Roloff, Bernhard, and Georg Seeßlen, ed. *Western-Kino: Geschichte und Mythologie des Western-Films*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979. Print.

Rose, Suzanna M.. "Same- and Cross-Sex Friendships and the Psychology of Homosociality." *Sex Roles* 12.1-2 (1985): 63-74. Print.

Rosen, Marjorie. *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies & the American Dream*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. 1973. Print.

Rotundo, E. Anthony. *American Manhood. Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993. Print.

Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." 1975. *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*. Ed. Ellen Lewin. Oxford, Malden, and Carlton: Blackwell, 2006. 87-106. Print.

Rünzler, Dieter. *Im Westen Ist Amerika: Die Metamorphose des Cowboys vom Rinderhirten zum Amerikanischen Helden*. Wien: Picus, 1995.

Russo, Vito. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. New York: Harper & Row, 1981. Print.

Said, Edward W.. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Savran, David. *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. Electronic Resource. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7spqr>. 19 May 2020.

Schatz, Thomas. *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1999. Print.

---. “STAGECOACH and Hollywood’s A-Western Renaissance.” *John Ford’s STAGECOACH*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 21-47. Print.

Scherrer, Christoph, and Ulrich Brand. *Global Governance: Konkurrierende Formen und Inhalte Globaler Regulierung*. *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Online Akademie*. FES, 8 Mar 2017. Web. 6 Sep 2017.

Scheugl, Hans. *Sexualität und Neurose im Film: Die Kinomythen von Griffith bis Warhol*. München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1974. Print.

Schmale, Wolfgang. “Einleitung: Gender Studies, Männergeschichte, Körpergeschichte.” *MannBilder: Ein Lese- und Quellenbuch zur Historischen Männerforschung*. Ed. Wolfgang Schmale. Berlin: Berlin Verl. A. Spitz, 1998. 7-33. Print.

Schmale, Wolfgang, ed. *MannBilder: Ein Lese- und Quellenbuch zur Historischen Männerforschung*. Berlin: Berlin Verl. A. Spitz, 1998. Print.

Schnelle, Josef. “In die Falle Gelockt: THE WESTERNER.” *Filmgenres: Western*. Ed. Bernd Kiefer and Norbert Grob. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003. 101-105. Print.

Schößler, Franziska. *Einführung in die Gender Studies*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008. Print.

Schumach, Murray. *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor: The Story of Movie and Television Censorship*. New York: De Capo Press, 1974. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. 1985. Thirtieth Anniversary Edition. New York: Columbia UP, 2016. Print.

Seeßlen, Georg. *Trump!* Po*pulismus als Politik*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2017. Print.

Segal, Lynne. *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. Revised ed. London: Virago, 1997. Print.

Seier, Andrea. “Von ‘Frauen und Film’ zu ‘Gender und Medium’? – Überlegungen zu Judith Butlers Filmanalyse von PARIS IS BURNING.” *Wie der Film den Körper Schuf: Ein Reader zu Gender und Medien*. Ed. Annette Geiger, Stefanie Rinke, Stevie Schmiedel, Hedwig Wagner. Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2006. 81-95. Print.

Sharrett, Christopher. “Peckinpah the Radical: Politics of THE WILD BUNCH.” *Sam Peckinpah’s THE WILD BUNCH*. Ed. Stephen Prince. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 79-104. Electronic Resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.07670>. 15 May 2020.

Sickels, Robert C.. “Beyond the Blessings of Civilization: John Ford’s STAGECOACH and the Myth of the Western Frontier”. *John Ford in Focus: Essays on the Filmmaker’s Life and Work*. Ed. Kevin L. Stoehr and Michael C. Connolly. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008. 142-152. Print.

Simmon, Scott. “The Massacre.” *The Griffith Project: Volume 6*. Ed. Paolo Cherchi Usai. London: BFI, 1999. 86-87. Print.

---. *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre’s First Half-Century*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

Singer, Ben. “Film, Photography, and Fetish: The Analyses of Christian Metz.” *Cinema Journal* 27.4 (1988): 4-22. Print.

Sklar, Robert. *Film: An International History of the Medium*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1990. Print.

Slide, Anthony. *Early American Cinema*. New York: Barnes, 1970. Print.

Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. 1992. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. Print.

---. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*. 1st Edition. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan UP, 1973. Print.

---. “Dreams and Genocide: The American Myth of Regeneration Through Violence.” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 5.1 (1971): 38-59. Electronic Resource. <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2095/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1971.0501_38.x>. 19 May 2020.

Smith, Frances. “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: Re-Reading Gender in the ‘Nostalgia Film’.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 35.5 (2018): 463-487. Electronic Resource. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2018.1450582>. 27 Feb 2020.

Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1950. Print.

Smith, Ian Robert. “Cowboys and Indians: Transnational Borrowings in the Indian Masala Western.” *Spaghetti Westerns at the Crossroads: Studies in Relocation, Transition and Appropriation*. Ed. Austin Fisher. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016. 185-209. Print.

Smith, Imogen Sara. “Westward the Women.” *Sight & Sound* 25.5 (2016): 46-48. Print.

Smyth, J.E.. “CIMARRON: The New Western History in 1931.” *Film & History* 33.1 (2003): 9-17. Print.

---. *Edna Ferber’s Hollywood: American Fictions of Gender, Race, and History*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2010. Electronic Resource. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=3443441>. 31 Aug 2020.

Spears, Jack. *Hollywood: The Golden Era*. New York: Castle Books, 1971. Print.

Sprengler, Christine. *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2009. Print.

Stadel, Luke. “Natural Sound in the Early Talkie Western.” *Music, Sound & the Moving Image*. 5.2 (2011): 113-136. Print.

Staiger, Janet. “*Film Noir* as Male Melodrama: The Politics of Film Genre Labeling.” *The Shifting Definitions of Genre: Essays on Labeling Films, Television Shows, and Media*. Ed. Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Janovich. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008. 71-91. Print.

Stam, Robert, and Toby Miller, ed. *Film and Theory: An Anthology*. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. Print.

Stanfield, Peter. *Hollywood, Westerns and the 1930s: The Lost Trail*. Exeter: U of Exeter P, 2001. Print.

Sterritt, David. "The Last of the Mohicans (1920)." *TCM.com*. Unknown Date. 12 Mar 2018. <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/480765%7C0/The-Last-of-the-Mohicans.html>.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke UP, [1984] 2007. Print.

Stieglitz, Olaf. “Film, Vorbilder und männliche Sozialisation in den 1930er Jahren.” *Väter, Soldaten, Liebhaber: Männer und Männlichkeiten in der Geschichte Nordamerikas. Ein Reader*. Ed. Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz. Bielefeld: transcript, 2007. 221-242. Print.

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 7th Edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Stott, Rosemary. “Transitions to East Germany: The Distribution and Reception of ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST in the German Democratic Republic.” *Spaghetti Westerns at the Crossroads: Studies*

in *Relocation, Transition and Appropriation*. Ed. Austin Fisher. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016. 239-261. Print.

Strüver, Anke. "Grundlagen und Zentrale Begriffe der Foucault'schen Diskurstheorie." *Handbuch Diskurs und Raum: Theorien und Methoden für die Humangeographie sowie die Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaftliche Raumforschung*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Georg Glasze and Annika Mattissek. Bielefeld: transcript, 2021. 65-85. Print.

Studlar, Gaylyn. "Sacred Duties, Poetic Passions: John Ford and the Issue of Femininity in the Western." *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*. Eds. Gaylin Studlar and Matthew Bernstein. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2001. 43-74. Print.

---. "'Be a Proud, Glorified Dreg': Class, Gender, and Frontier Democracy in STAGECOACH." *John Ford's STAGECOACH*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 132-157. Print.

---. "Barrymore, the Body, and Bliss: Issues of Male Representation and Female Spectatorship in the 1920s." *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology, and Photography*. Ed. Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1995. 160-180. Print.

Studlar, Gaylyn, and Matthew Bernstein, ed. *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2001. Print.

Tacey, David J.. *Remaking Men: Jung, Spirituality and Social Change*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Tasker, Yvonne. *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Theweleit, Klaus. *Männerphantasien 1+2*. 4th Edition. München and Zürich: Piper, 2009. Print.

Thomas, Deborah. "How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male." *The Movie Book of Film Noir*. Ed. Ian Cameron. London: Studio Vista, 1992. 59-70. Print.

---. "Psychoanalysis and Film Noir." *The Movie Book of Film Noir*. Ed. Ian Cameron. London: Studio Vista, 1992. 71-87. Print.

---. "John Wayne's Body." *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 75-87. Print.

Thomas, Tony. *Howard Hughes in Hollywood*. Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1985. Print.

Thompson, Kristin. “The Formulation of the Classical Style, 1909-28.” *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. Ed. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. London: Routledge, 1988. 155-239. Electronic Resource. <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2242/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=93873&site=ehost-live>. 7 July 2020.

Tompkins, Jane. *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.

Tuska, Jon. “The American Western Cinema: 1903-Present.” *Focus on the Western*. Ed. Jack Nachbar. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974. 25-43. Print.

Tyler, Parker. “The Horse: Totem Animal of American Films.” *Sight & Sound* 16.63 (1947): 112-114. Print.

Unknown author. “Outlaw, The.” *Monthly Film Bulletin* 13.145 (1946): 171. Print.

Ursini, James. “Noir Westerns.” *Film Noir Reader 4*. Ed. Alain Silver and James Ursini. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 2004. 247-259. Print.

Verhoeff, Nanna. *The West in Early Cinema: After the Beginning*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2006. Print.

Verstraten, Peter. *Screening Cowboys: Reading Masculinities in Westerns*. Amsterdam: Bureau Grafische Produkties UvA, 1999. Print.

---. *Film Narratology*. Transl. Stefan van der Lecq. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: U of Tornoto P, 2009. Print.

Villa, Paula-Irene. *Sexy Bodies: Eine Soziologische Reise durch den Geschlechtskörper*. 4th Edition. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2011. Print.

Wagenknecht, Edward, and Anthony Slide. *The Films of D.W. Griffith*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1975. Print.

Wagenknecht, Peter. “Was ist Heteronormativität? Zu Geschichte und Gehalt des Begriffs.” *Heteronormativität: Empirische Studien zu Geschlecht, Sexualität und Macht*. Ed. Jutta Hartmann, Christian Klesse, Peter Wagenknecht, Bettina Fritzsche, and Kristina Hackmann. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007. 17-34. Print.

Walker, Janet. “Captive Images in the Traumatic Western: THE SEACHERS, PURSUED, ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST, and LONE STAR.” *Westerns: Films Through History*. Ed. Janet Walker. New York and London: Routledge, 2001. 291-251. Print.

Walker, Janet, ed. *Westerns: Films Through History*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Warner, Michael, ed. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 2011 [1993]. Print.

Warner, Michael. “Introduction.” *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Ed. Michael Warner. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 2011 [1993]. vii-xxxi. Print.

Warshow, Robert. “Movie Chronicle: The Westerner.” 1954. *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 35-47. Print.

Waters, Florence. “Jane Russell: The Poster Controversy That Made a Star.” *The Telegraph*. 1 Mar 2011. Electronic Resource. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/film-news/8354765/Jane-Russell-the-poster-controversy-that-made-a-star.html>. 9 Jan 2019.

Weidemann, Thomas. “Diskursanalyse und Filmanalyse”. *Qualitative Medienforschung: Ein Handbuch*. 2nd Edition. Ed. Lothar Mikos and Claudia Wegener. Konstanz: UVK, 2017. 477-483. Print.

Weidinger, Martin. *Nationale Mythen – Männliche Helden: Politik und Geschlecht im Amerikanischen Western*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2006. Print.

Weissberg, Liliane, ed. *Weiblichkeit als Maskerade*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994. Print.

Wells, Paul. “The Invisible Man: Shrinking Masculinity in the 1950s Science Fiction B-Movie.” *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men*. Ed. Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993. 181-199. Print.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. “Doing Gender.” *Gender and Society* 1.2 (1987): 125-151. Print.

Westbrook, Max. “The Night John Wayne Danced with Shirley Temple.” *Western American Literature* 25.2 (1990): 157-169. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1990.0050>. 23 Apr 2019.

---. “Flag and Family in John Wayne’s Westerns: The Audience as Co-Conspirator.” *Western American Literature* 29.1 (1994): 25-40. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1994.0088>. 9 May 2019.

Wetta, Frank J., and Martin A. Novelli. "'Romantic, Isn't It, Miss Dandridge?': Sources and Meanings of John Ford's Cavalry Trilogy." *American Nineteenth Century History* 7.2 (2006): 299-321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664650600810188>. 23 Apr 2019.

White, David Manning, and Richard Averson. *The Celluloid Weapon: Social Comment in the American Film*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972. Print.

Wildermuth, Mark E.. *Feminism and the Western in Film and Television*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Print.

Willemen, Paul. "Anthony Mann: Looking at the Male." *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 209-213. Print.

Williams, Doug. "Pilgrims and the Promised Land: A Genealogy of the Western." *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 93-114. Print.

Wills, Gary. *John Wayne's America: The Politics of a Celebrity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. Print.

Winter, Rainer. "Ethnographie, Interpretation und Kritik: Aspekte der Methodologie der Cultural Studies." *Die Werkzeugkiste der Cultural Studies: Perspektiven, Anschlüsse und Interventionen*. Ed. Udo Göttlich, Lothar Mikos, and Rainer Winter. Bielefeld: transcript, 2001. 43-62. Electronic Resource. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/16776654-6ae2-4f0b-a135-579d3764e6ac/1006768.pdf>. 22 Feb 2021.

Winter, Thomas. "Cult of Domesticity." *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Ed. Bret E. Carroll. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: SAGE, 2003. 120-122. Print.

Wood, Robin. "DUEL IN THE SUN: The Destruction of an Ideological System." *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 189-195. Print.

---. "DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK." *The Movie Book of the Western*. Ed. Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye. London: Studio Vista, 1996. 175-180. Print.

---. "RIO BRAVO & Retrospect." *The Western Reader*. Ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman. New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1998. 173-194. Print.

---. "'*Shall* We Gather at the River': The Late Films of John Ford." *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*. Ed. Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2001. 23-41. Print.

---. *RIO BRAVO*. London: BFI, 2003. Print.

Wright, Will. *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1975. Print.

Wullweber, Joscha. "Konturen eines Politischen Analyserahmens – Hegemonie, Diskurs und Antagonismus." *Diskurs und Hegemonie: Gesellschaftskritische Perspektiven*. Ed. Iris Dzudzek, Caren Kunze, and Joscha Wullweber. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012. 29-58. Print.