



UNIVERSITY OF  
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**A GUN OF ONE'S OWN: GENDER REPRESENTATION IN  
CONTEMPORARY WESTERNS**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the construction of gender in post-Unforgiven North American studio and independent Westerns. This gender framework is developed through the concept of gender hegemony (Connell, 1987). Gender hegemony is presented as a critical theory with which to conceive gender relations and it can be split into the concepts of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) and hegemonic femininity (Schippers, 2007). This critical framework is utilised to analyse how contemporary Westerns are going beyond the paradigm of the Western hero as White, male, and heterosexual. Discussing films such as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Django Unchained*, and *The Keeping Room*, and TV series such as *Deadwood*, *Westworld*, and *Godless*, this thesis addresses how different races and sexual identities are being accommodated within the boundaries of the genre, and contends that the growing number of films that portray such characters go beyond an idea of genre revisionism (Szalosky, 2001). The conflation of race, gender, sexual orientation, and genre modifies the boundaries of the Western, converting it into a site for the representation of diversity. The Western is thus queered and decoded so that it can achieve social relevance in the new millennium, and every identity can wield a gun of its own.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This MA dissertation aims to address how gender has been represented in contemporary Westerns. For the purposes of this research, “contemporary” refers to Westerns made after *Unforgiven* (1992, Clint Eastwood) in the United States of America (USA). Therefore, the chapters of this dissertation will consider USA Hollywood studio and independent films produced between 1992 and the present. There are several reasons for choosing *Unforgiven* as the beginning of the proposed corpus of films. First, its critical and financial success started a resurrection of the genre after more than a decade of its almost complete absence from the screens, as Andrew Patrick Nelson, among other authors, has noted (2013a: xv). Secondly, from an *auteurist* perspective, *Unforgiven* was the last Western that was starred in and directed by the figure who can be considered the last specialist Western director: Clint Eastwood. By the time *Unforgiven* was released, Eastwood had directed four Westerns, starring himself, and had been the protagonist of another eight features, including two hybrid films, namely the musical comedy *Paint your Wagon* (1968, Joshua Logan) and the drama *The Beguiled* (1971, Don Siegel). After *Unforgiven*, the Western would be addressed by filmmakers who did not have that marked allegiance to the genre. Finally, at the time of its release, the critical reception was divided between those who considered *Unforgiven* to be a “classic Western” (Malcolm, 1992; Hinson, 1992; Jameson, 1992: 14), those who regarded it as “revisionist” or “demythologizing” (Travers, 1992; Turan, 1992), including Eastwood himself (1992: 46), and, finally, those who deemed it to be both classic and revisionist (Howe, 1992; Garci, 1993: 3). Such opinions from a varied group of authors can lead to the conclusion that *Unforgiven* achieved a mixture of the old features of the genre and a new way to approach it and that this mixture became a paradigm. Furthermore, it can be argued that subsequent films in the genre had to shape themselves in response to that paradigm.

As will be explained in the Literature Review, there is a critical and scholarly consensus in respect of considering the Western as a mythical receptacle in which the identity, politics and social issues of the USA are investigated. Conflicts are displayed through it, and possible solutions are rehearsed. In the pre-*Unforgiven* period of the genre, those issues and their solutions were both addressed from an almost exclusively White, heterosexual, masculine viewpoint. Some female-led Westerns can be considered the exceptions that prove the rule, such as *Duel in the Sun* (1946, King Vidor), *Johnny Guitar* (1954, Nicholas Ray) and *Forty Guns* (1957, Samuel Fuller). Also, the race angle was approached with different degrees of appropriateness in films such as *Broken Arrow* (1950, Delmer Daves), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964, John Ford), *The Scalphunters* (1968, Sydney Pollack), and *Soldier Blue* (1970, Ralph), from both Native American and Black perspectives. However, in the revival that followed the success of *Dances With Wolves* (1990, Kevin Costner) and *Unforgiven*, the Western entered a stage that has been

called “revisionist” (Szalosky, 1996: 48), in the sense that the films started to consciously and systematically challenge the classic narratives of the genre. In Alexandra Keller’s view, “almost every western made in the 1990s ha[d] to justify itself as a western” (2001: 28) by subscribing to a political agenda, especially if it was related to gender and race issues.

From the gender viewpoint, the feminist struggle appears to have reached a historic peak in 2017 and 2018. The #MeToo movement became prominent in social media after accusations made by many actresses against film producer Harvey Weinstein (Lee, October 6th, 2017), which prompted a campaign to raise social awareness of abuse and male dominance. That activism, led by Hollywood actresses, has permeated society so that, for instance, in Spain a female strike, the first of its kind, was carried out on March 8th 2018, International Women’s Day (Jones, March 8th, 2018). Such events constitute important advances toward gender equality and mark a potential historical turning point.

It is in this momentum that this research finds its impact. As a reflector of these social issues, this thesis examines how the tensions that have led to this explosion of the feminist struggle have influenced contemporary Western features. Films such as *Jane Got a Gun* (2015, Gavin O’Connor), *Sweetwater* (2013, Logan Miller) and *Meek’s Cutoff* (2010, Kelly Reichardt), as well as TV series such as *Godless* (2017, Scott Frank) and *Westworld* (2016-, Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan), explore the female aspect of a genre that has been defined and developed through a masculine perspective. Therefore, this research faces the challenge of answering the following questions: Can contemporary Westerns embody feminist discourses? If so, how might they do it? Furthermore, how would the potential accommodation of feminist postulates influence the genre’s boundaries? Finally, what would this mean for the social relevance of a genre that was once the most successful and influential within Hollywood’s output? However, before addressing these questions it is necessary to define the Western for the purposes of this thesis.

## **1.1 A Working Definition of the Western**

Considerable effort has been made to define the Western as a film genre. From André Bazin’s seminal assertion that “the Western was born of an encounter between a mythology and a means of expression” (1967: 142), scholars from a number of countries and cultures have tried to pinpoint the essential traits of the Western in terms of its setting, its form and its content. For instance, it has been stressed in relation to time that “in order to qualify as a Western, a film is usually set in a particular historical moment roughly between the Battle of the Alamo in 1836 and the Mexican Revolution in 1913” (Needham, 2010: 40). Concerning its location, it has been argued that “overall, the territory covered by films that are very definitely Westerns extends in a

broad sweep from Alaska down to Mexico and across to Florida”, but definitely “not the East” (Cameron, 1996: 7). From the point of view of form, the Western has been seen as having the characteristics of the rite, in the sense that it accumulates structures that repeat themselves in order to support the ideological and historical discourse that the genre is supposed to embody (Fernández-Santos, 1987: 18-19). Finally, regarding its ideological content, the Western can be considered as “a mythology that, like all of them, functions at the same time as *idealisation, compensation and an interpretive system*” (Astre and Hoarau, 1975: 15; author’s translation; italics in the original). Following this notion, “the Western revives indefinitely that privileged and dangerous hour in which, upon a new continent, the first experience of men starts again” (Astre and Hoarau; 1975: 27; author’s translation). That first experience is closely related to the history and politics of the USA (see Coyne, 1997; Walker, 2001b).

As useful as these approaches can be in ascertaining the boundaries of the Western, the nature of genre is understood as a “process” (Altman, 1999: 54), which renders the effort of proposing a definition problematic. The challenges of transnationality, globalisation, the events of 9/11, the post-industrial rearrangement of the economy and, indeed, the feminist struggle have pushed its generic borders, so that a complete redefinition of the genre is required—and some attempts to do so will be addressed in the Literature Review of this research. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a practical, theoretical framework that makes explicit what is understood as “Western” for the purposes of this research, and which takes account of the context in which the Western is currently inscribed. With that notion in mind, the key element for a feature to be considered a Western is that it is set in a political place that can be considered a frontier space. The frontier was given a classic definition by Frederick Jackson Turner, when he called it “the line of most rapid and effective Americanization” (1994: 33-34). In Turner’s view, the frontier space was an exclusively American process the harsh conditions of which forged the unique nature of USA citizens. Several critiques of this idea of the frontier are offered in the Literature Review of this research. However, it is vital here to detach the characteristics of the frontier as a political space from the specifically American origin that Turner wanted for it. Considered from an abstract viewpoint, the notion of frontier finds its definition in the writings of Max Weber. Weber proposed that the defining characteristic of the State is that “it is the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a particular territory” (1919: 33; italics in the original). The frontier is hence a political space in which control by the State and its institutions is not complete or successful. The idea of the frontier is thus conceived from a historical perspective as well, and its conditions can be found in the American West, the State-cities of Ancient Greece, feudal Europe and pre-Meiji Japan, and contemporary Mexico under the violence of the drug cartels. In addition, stylistic and production values must inform this myth of the frontier if the Western is to be defined. In this sense, the classic Western

stands as a specific stylistic formulation of the myth of the frontier that was developed by a set of Hollywood studios during the first half of the 20th century. That stylistic formulation comprises the setting of Western films in the Western States of the USA in the period between 1836 and 1913, as Needham posited, as well as the development of a series of characters and tropes that inform the myth of the frontier in specific texts. As has been previously stated, this definition of the Western can and must be challenged. However, for the purposes of this research, the films discussed in respect of gender representation reappraise this definition in terms of setting and production.

## 1.2 Rationale of Chapters

A practical definition of the Western for the purposes of this research having been provided, it is now possible to outline the chapters of this thesis, as well as to develop the rationale of the case studies that will be discussed. First, Chapter 2 presents a Literature Review of critical writings about Westerns and gender, which are outlined and critiqued. In addition, the critical framework of this dissertation is explained, and, finally, a justification of the need for this research is provided.

Secondly, the body of analysis of the thesis is divided into two large sections. The first is Chapter 3, which is devoted to Gender Hegemony and Masculinities. The second is Chapter 4, which focuses on Gender Hegemony and Femininities. As will be explained in the Literature Review, this distribution of the content does not aim to assume that there is a natural difference between the masculine and the feminine. This separation serves as an organisational goal, rather than an ideological one, for one can argue that this outline of the content provides a more transparent framework that can lead to more fruitful findings. Furthermore, as masculinities and femininities are shaped against each other, the masculine permeates the chapter dedicated to femininities and vice versa. The structure of each chapter, then, mirrors that of the other. The chapters are subdivided into four sections each. Sections 3.1 and 4.1 discuss how different aesthetic choices in the construction of a film can lead to divergent conceptions of gender. Specifically, the use of neo-classic film form in the films *Appaloosa* (2008, Ed Harris) and *Hostiles* (2017, Scott Cooper) is compared with the utilisation of slow film strategies in, respectively, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007, Andrew Dominik) and *Meek's Cutoff*.

The second sections consider how the heterosexual paradigm might be queered in contemporary features. In this sense, queer masculinities are analysed in relation to the TV series *Deadwood* (2004-2006, David Milch) and the film *Brokeback Mountain* (2005, Ang Lee), while the conflation between genre and queer femininities is considered in the TV features *Godless* and

*Westworld*. In the third sections, issues of race as confronted by the Westerner are addressed. In this sense, the masculinities section compares how Black masculinities are shaped against the White Westerner paradigm, and how strategies of resistance and integration are displayed in the film *Django Unchained* (2012, Quentin Tarantino) and the TV series *Hell on Wheels* (2011-2016, Joe and Tony Gayton). In addition, the need for intersectional feminism that considers the different experiences of White and Black women is discussed in relation to the films *The Keeping Room* (2014, Daniel Barber) and *The Beguiled* (2017, Sofia Coppola). Finally, the last two sections broaden the scope beyond the definition of the Western explained above to consider how Western iconography escapes the borders of the genre in order to inform conceptions of gender in modern-set films. In this sense, the masculinities section 3.4 is suffused with an analysis of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018, Ron Howard), *Logan* (2017, James Mangold), *Hell or High Water* (2016, David Mackenzie) and the TV series *Justified* (2010-2015, Graham Yost). In the Femininities section 4.4, the films *Kill Bill* (2003-2004, Quentin Tarantino), *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015, George Miller), *Certain Women* (2016, Kelly Reichardt), and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017, Martin McDonagh) are discussed. Finally, the conclusion of this research offers a reflection on the future direction of a genre that is at a decisive point.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to revise the significant academic literature about gender and the Western, in order to prove the need for a gender framework to be applied to post-*Unforgiven* Westerns and to provide the bulk of theory upon which this dissertation stands. First, from a broader perspective, several analytical approaches to the Western as a film genre will be discussed. Secondly, an overview of writings from the last twenty-five years that relate USA history to the Western will be offered. Thirdly, a summary of the history of academic literature about gender and the Western will be presented, including theoretical approaches and case studies. Then, a justification for choosing *Unforgiven* as the beginning of the corpus will be offered. Finally, the concept of gender hegemony will be proposed as a critical framework for the research.

### 2.1 Theoretical Approaches

The Western has been approached using various critical frameworks. For instance, Michael Coyne has summarised the successive theories that have informed the literature about the genre in four successive stages: “mythic”, “*auteurist*”, “structuralist” and “political/allegorical” (1997: 7-12). First, Coyne locates the mythic approach in European (especially French) writers of the 1950s, such as André Bazin, who compares the westward expansion in the USA with the *Odyssey* (Homer, 1994) and the USA Civil War with the Trojan War (1967: 148). In Coyne’s view, Bazin applies a Eurocentric view as a way to justify critical interest in the genre (1997: 8). Secondly, Coyne locates an *auteurist* approach in the 1960s, with a particular focus on the works of John Ford. In his view, other directors, such as Delmer Daves, Anthony Mann, Howard Hawks, Budd Boetticher and Sam Peckinpah were equally devoted to the genre, but Ford’s *oeuvre* provided the most sophisticated and thorough vision of USA history (1997: 9-10). However, he points out that an *auteurist* approach would disregard some other meaningful Westerns, such as *Warlock* (1959, Edward Dmytryk) (1997: 94). Coyne considers *Warlock* one of the key 1950s Westerns, but one that would be disregarded by this approach because its director did not belong to the canon of Western directors. The third framework that Coyne recognises is the 1970s structuralist approach, with authors such as John Cawelti with *The Six-Gun Mystique* (1970) and Will Wright’s *Six-Guns and Society* (1975). According to Coyne, the problem with proponents of the structuralist approach was that “while they were rigorous in their discussion of genre ingredients, they were nebulous in their connection of Westerns to American social culture” (1997: 10). Therefore, he proposes a fourth approach in which his own work is inscribed: a “political/allegorical approach” (1997: 12). In his view, the political/allegorical approach works by “relating the genre’s narrative conflicts and thematic tensions to corresponding issues in twentieth-century U.S. society” (1997: 12).

Although Coyne's effort to map a brief history of theoretical approaches to Westerns is a positive one, some flaws should be noted in his work. The first of these is the conception of these frameworks as mainly chronological, because one can argue that some overlap exists. For instance, the *auteurist* approach is not limited to the 1960s; it is constantly evolving, as the publication of works such as *Searching for John Ford* (McBride, 2001) and *Sam Peckinpah Today: New Essays on the Films of Sam Peckinpah* (Bliss, 2012) proves. Furthermore, Coyne's explanation of his political/allegorical approach points to only a general connection between Westerns and USA history, with no details of how this should be addressed using films as texts. Finally, his work suffers from a normative character, since he proposes that the political/allegorical approach is the best perspective from which to analyse the Western.

In contrast to this diachronic point of view, John White has proposed a range of theoretical approaches that can be applied to Westerns. White offers a broad set of options, namely: genre studies, semiotic analysis, representation, ideology, discourse analysis, narrative structure, realism, *auteur* theory, star theory, psychoanalytical theory, postmodernism, and audience reception theory (2011: 42-113). To White, a view such as Coyne's "offers profounder insights into the Western" and allows for reflection on issues such as "class confrontations, racial antagonisms, national identity crises, generational dislocations, gender, tensions, and sexual repressions" (2011: 1-2). He believes, however, that this view must be applied cautiously. An exclusively general political/allegorical approach could produce superficial and incomplete readings of particular films (2011: 2). Therefore, White posits the range of perspectives, which can intersect and be combined, in order to avoid that danger. One can argue that the political/ allegorical approach bears a specific relation to the theoretical frameworks of representation, ideology, and discourse analysis proposed by White. For the purposes of this research, close text analysis, as a form of semiotic analysis, will be utilised as a tool in order to assert how these frameworks function in relation to the corpus of films considered in the thesis.

As Aumont and Marie have noted, "film text analysis derives [...] from general structural analysis" (1988: 67; author's translation). Understood as such, text analysis utilises three main concepts from structural semiology: "film text", "text system", and "code" (1988: 70; author's translation). Within the notion of film text, the film is considered as both a "signifying object" and a "unit of discourse" (1988: 70; author's translation). Furthermore, the text system is "a model of the structure of the film statement", which is specific for each text and "constructed by the analyst" (1988: 70; author's translation).<sup>1</sup> Finally, the code is the overall "principle that rules over the relations between the signifier and the signified" (1988: 71-72; author's translation). Text

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<sup>1</sup> The word "statement" has been chosen as the translation of the original French term "énoncé", which frames the film under structuralist and grammatical terminology.



analysis thus defined has been considered as an enclosed system, the only purpose of which is to explain the discursive mechanisms under which the text works, without addressing the political or social implications of such discourse. However, Roland Barthes goes beyond this limited idea of the semiological text and proposes that “the specific study of forms does not in any way contradict the necessary principles of totality and History” (1957: 220). In his study of myth understood as discourse, Barthes recognises that semiology “is not a metaphysical trap”, and that it is enriched by the “dialectical coordination of sciences it makes use of” (1957: 221). Therefore, this dissertation follows Barthes’ ideas of text and myth as rooted in history to achieve the social relevance that film studies should aim for. The thesis also coordinates semiology and gender studies in Barthes’ sense.

## **2.2 Contemporary Developments in Literature About the Western**

It should be noted that Coyne’s political/allegorical approach has enjoyed special relevance in the last twenty-five years of scholarly literature on Westerns. His work on the genre, *The Crowded Prairie*, is constructed around a historical and ideological framework in order to study how the Western helped to build USA national identity between the 1930s and the 1970s. Janet Walker has used a similar historical perspective in *Westerns: Films through History* (2001b), as has Stanley Corkin in *Cowboys as Cold Warriors* (2004). On the one hand, contributors to *Westerns* focus on historical representation as a constructed discourse, paying particular attention to revisionist strategies in 1990s Westerns—namely *Posse* (1993, Mario Van Peebles), *Dead Man* (1995, Jim Jarmusch) and *Lone Star* (1996, John Sayles)—and the intertwined historical and fictional aspects of the Buffalo Bill figure. On the other hand, Corkin utilises the political/allegorical approach to explore how social tensions in the USA during the post-World War II and Cold War periods were reflected in Westerns from 1946 to 1962.

In addition, *From Shane to Kill Bill* by Patrick McGee (2007) utilises a similar corpus of films to the work of Michael Coyne, but he outlines a Marxist approach, focused on the representation of class issues in Westerns from the 1930s to the latest developments of the genre, such as *The Quick and the Dead* (1995, Sam Raimi). Furthermore, some edited works, such as *The Movie Book of the Western* (Cameron and Pye, 1996) and *Hollywood’s West* (Rollins and O’Connor, 2005) have collated a number of articles that use as their critical framework several of the issues that John White considered intrinsic to ideological approaches to films. For the purposes of this literature review, only gender-centred texts will be discussed, but these books also convey problems of race, economy, class and history.

This account of recent scholarly literature on the Western can be concluded by referencing a new field in academic writing about the genre. Over the last decade, some works have focused on the post-2000 Western, as this research does. For instance, the edited book *Contemporary Westerns: Film and Television from 1990 to 2010* (Nelson, 2013b) offers an overview of the most significant instalments within USA Westerns after *Dances with Wolves*. In the view of its editor, “the Western is not the genre it once was” (2013a: xix) in terms of the number of productions and economic significance for the Hollywood industry; rather, it has become a “prestige genre” for producers or an exploration space for independent directors, such as Jim Jarmusch and Kelly Reichardt (Nelson, 2013a: xix). Marek Paryz reaches a similar conclusion to that of Nelson in *The Post-2000 Film Western: Contexts, Transnationality, Hybridity* (Paryz and Leo, 2015), in which he claims that “the Western has been re-established as a culturally valid form of film art, although [...] it will not recover its previous status” (2015: 4-5). Paryz posits that “the genre’s revisionism in the new millennium appears somewhat to be muted, especially in comparison with race- and gender-oriented agendas of some productions from the preceding decade” (2015: 3-4). One can argue that this assertion is inaccurate. Although the gender agenda is no longer “new”, as it was when *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993, Maggie Greenwald) was released, a stable trend of female-led Westerns has been developing over the last two decades, as will be described later. It can be suggested that Paryz’s claims justify the need for a gender framework around contemporary Westerns since such a study could reveal whether the films had developed a gender agenda or not.

Finally, Paryz and Leo’s edited work deals with ideas of transnationality and hybridity, which are based on Neil Campbell’s *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (2008). Campbell’s approach pushes the field of studies on the Western toward a broader consideration that goes beyond USA borders (and frontiers). The author applies the Deleuzian concept of “rhizome” to conceive the West “as always already transnational, a more routed and complex rendition, a traveling concept whose meanings move between cultures, crossing, bridging, and intruding simultaneously” (2008: 4). While Campbell provides an insightful framework that deserves exploration, its scope goes beyond the purposes of this research, with its focus on the gender approach and in U.S. Westerns, and hence it will not be applied here as a key theoretical input.

### **2.3 Masculinity and Femininity in Literature About the Western**

After considering possible methodologies and some of the contemporary developments in the scholarly literature about the Western, this literature review now focuses on writings about male and female representation in the genre. The issue of gender appears in early works about West-

erns, even if it does not do this under the name “gender studies”. For instance, Robert Warshow proposes a discussion about the characteristics of the male hero in his article *The Westerner* (1954). Warshow stresses that the Westerner is a “lonely” and “to some degree melancholy” figure, a “man of leisure” for whom property bears no importance and whose morality is driven by the principle of what “a man has to do” (1954: 191-194). Warshow summarises these characteristics in just one trait: honour, understood as “a style, concerned with harmonious appearances as much as with desirable consequences, and tending therefore toward the denial of life in favor of art” (1954: 194). Implicitly, this description of the Westerner portrays a certain dominant masculinity, which is proposed as a role model.

This notion of masculinity is shaped against an idea of femininity. In Warshow’s view, in the US gender schema, women are regarded as embodying “refinement, virtue, civilization, Christianity itself”, whereas men are presented as “fundamentally childish” (1954: 192). However, he highlights how the Western, “lacking the graces of civilization”, reverses this paradigm and presents the feminine from an infantile point of view and the West as a space “where men are men” (1954: 192). In subsequent decades, male-centric readings of the Western were pervasive. For instance, in their extended analysis of the genre (1975), Georges-Albert Astre and Albert-Patrick Hoarau split Warshow’s male character types into three categories—the Cowboy, the Sheriff and the Outlaw—while only one category was granted to women and to Native Americans, and none to other racial groups (1975: 103-143). On the one hand, Astre and Hoarau see the Westerner as the expression of an “essential masculinity”, in which “the essential is knowing the rules, the ethics code that allows him to vanquish and remain *self-possessed* [...]” (1975: 99; author’s translation; italics in the original). This idea of respect for the rules can be seen as another formulation of Warshow’s concept of the Westerner as a man of honour. On the other hand, they do not regard women’s representation in the Western as necessarily disdainful, but they nonetheless recognise how female roles have been reduced to a dichotomy between the “the virtuous wife” and “the exciting saloon girl” (1975: 133; author’s translation). Overall, Astre and Hoarau claim that “the woman is essential, not to provide a fantastic tone, but to value the virile principle of which she is the antagonist” (1975: 137; author’s translation). It can be posited, then, that in their view femininity is fundamental only in its relation to masculinity, and not by itself.

These male-centred views of the Western were challenged in the 1980s. Among other authors, USA historian Patricia Nelson Limerick called for a revision of the history of the West outside the parameters of the “American frontier” that Frederick Jackson Turner defined in 1893 as “the line of most rapid and effective Americanization” (1994: 33-34). Limerick criticises the “ethnocentric and nationalistic” perspective of Turner, as well as his disregard for women, and

his focus on agriculture above other economic activities and spaces (1987: 21). In her view, the frontier ought to be de-stressed, and the West understood as a “place and not a process”, a place where an intersection between “Indian Americans, Latin Americans, Anglo-Americans, Afro-Americans, and Asians” took place (1987: 26). Furthermore, Limerick claims that it is necessary to revisit the West from the point of view not only of economy and race but also of gender. On the one hand, she provides evidence of the hardships of Western prostitutes’ lives that challenges Astre and Hoarau’s “exciting saloon girl” model (1987: 50-52); on the other hand, she asserts that “far from revealing weak creatures held captive to stronger wills, new studies show female Western settlers as full and vigorous participants in history” (1987: 53), which contradicts the representation of “respectable” women as “childish”, or as just “brave companions of the pioneer” (Astre and Hoarau, 1975: 133; author’s translation). Overall, Limerick stresses that “there is no more point in downgrading them [women] as vulnerable victims than in elevating them as saintly civilizers” (1987: 54).

Following these New Western histories, from the 1990s onwards a new paradigm began to be constructed. On the one hand, revisionist Westerns that built on the success of *Dances with Wolves* and *Unforgiven* began to feature female lead characters.<sup>2</sup> Following McGee, these Westerns can be called “feminocentric” (2007: 69), a term that signals a feminine protagonist without asserting whether the film is developing a feminist discourse or not. On the other hand, literature about the Western produced by scholars and critics started to focus explicitly on gender issues. In this context, Jane Tompkins proposed a gender framework in order to explain the Western theoretically. In *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992), Tompkins claims that Westerns provide an ideal that is exclusively for men, that of “manhood”. For the author, “what matters is that he [the Westerner] be a *man*. That is the only side to be on” (1992: 17-18; italics in the original). Tompkins thus regards the Western as a literary—and later cinematic—genre that emerged as a contestation to the Victorian novel that spread domestic and Christian values as the embodiment of feminine values (1992: 39-40). Therefore, she argues that “the Western doesn’t have anything to do with the West as such. It isn’t about the encounter between civilization and the frontier. It is about men’s fear of losing their mastery, and hence their identity, both of which the Western tirelessly reinvents” (1992: 45).

These theoretical approaches to Westerns and gender have been accompanied by numerous case studies, focusing on both masculine and feminine representation. Within the former, David Lusted has proposed the notion of the Western as “male melodrama” (1996: 63) and has applied this to *Vera Cruz* (1954, Robert Aldrich) and *Warlock*. To Lusted, the Western becomes melodra-

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<sup>2</sup> This trend originated with *The Ballad of Little Jo*, *Bad Girls* (1994, Jonathan Kaplan), and *The Quick and the Dead*. It has been developed steadily to this day, with features such as *Jane Got a Gun*, *Westworld*, and *Godless*.

ma as a “form of fantasy exploring not the objective conditions of working-class masculinity but scenarios of what that homosocial state feels like and what can be done with those feelings” (1996: 64-66). From another perspective, Núria Bou and Xavier Pérez have included the Western as one of the chapters in their study of masculinity in Hollywood cinema. Drawing on the concepts of the “solar” and “twilight” hero coined by Gilbert Durand (see 1960), Bou and Pérez define the masculine hero by his attitude toward time: he either fights against it, or is defeated by it (2000: 25). Bou and Pérez locate the Westerner in the twilight framework, as he finds himself “immersed in a powerful consciousness of past times” (2000: 157; author’s translation).

Regarding case studies of female representation, John Parris Springer has analysed the presence of femininity in *Red River* (1948, Howard Hawks) in terms of discourse. According to Springer, *Red River* embodies a critique against an exclusively masculine perspective. The film is constructed in a way that “suggests that men who think they can live without the companionship, guidance, and help of women who are their equals often are doomed to an obsession with work (read: “career”) that isolates them from a larger community of shared human values to which women provide access” (2005: 124). In addition, Laura Antón has applied text analysis from a gender perspective to *Unforgiven*. Through a reading of the first and final sequences, Antón has located the feminine characters of the film as the “symbolic matrix of the text” (2011: 2; author’s translation), because they are the initiators of the trajectory of the William Munny character (Clint Eastwood).

Some aspects of these works on gender and the Western can be noted as critique. First, gender studies applied to the Western have been presented in a fragmented way, narrowing the scope to just individual films, with the exception of Tompkins.<sup>3</sup> In addition, although Antón’s case studies and Stephen J. Mexal’s chapter in *The Philosophy of the Western* (McMahon and Csaki, 2010: 69-87) have respectively considered gender in *Unforgiven* and *3:10 to Yuma* (2007, James Mangold), the primary interest remains in the classic instances of the genre. Furthermore, Michael Coyne dismissed the ability of new Westerns to become relevant once again as a reflection of political discourses in the USA. In his view, “the Western might occasionally incorporate modern political themes as subplots but, in all probability, could not lastingly accommodate feminism, Black rights and gay rights as crucial issues within the genre” (1997: 190). Moreover, Marek Paryz claimed that the gender-oriented agenda of the genre is not thriving to the extent that it was the 1990s. Therefore, the Western needs to be analysed through a systematic utilisation

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<sup>3</sup> Even though Tompkins created a landmark in this sense with *West of Everything*, it can be argued that her vision of the Western as a genre that came into existence as an expression of male fears of losing dominance presents an incomplete account of gender representation. Although it is an interesting perspective, one can say that it disregards other aspects that intersect with the view, such as the mythic retellings of the formation of a new society, the historical discourses that the Western can embody, and the economic aspects that exist in the relation between the masculine and the feminine.

of gender theory in order to build a complete framework which can allow to challenge Coyne's and Paryz's claims as well as extend gender analysis in the fashion of Antón's, or Springer's.

## 2.4 Gender Hegemony as Critical Framework

In order to explain gender representation in the above-mentioned group of Westerns, the concept of "gender hegemony" will be applied as the critical framework. The idea of "hegemonic masculinity" was coined by R. W. Connell (1983), who merged gender studies with Gramsci's notion of "hegemony" (see 1995). In their reformulation of the concept, Connell and Messerschmidt define masculinities as "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (2005: 836). On the one hand, these practices allow "men's collective dominance over women to continue" (2005: 840). On the other hand, however, hegemony is also applied to other distinct masculinities that are regarded as "non-hegemonic" (2005: 846). Therefore, they are considered "subordinated", as is the case of heterosexual men (Connell, 1995: 78); "complicit", in that they profit from the "patriarchal dividend" (Connell, 1995: 79) even if they do not practise hegemony; and "marginalized", which carries a relation with the concept of "patriarchal authorization" (Connell, 1995: 80) and can be applied to non-White masculinities. Mimi Schippers completed the gender hegemony framework started by Connell with a definition of "hegemonic femininity" (2007: 94). In Western societies, hegemony is envisaged within a heterosexual paradigm where "naturalized masculine sexuality [is constructed] as physically dominant *in relation to femininity*" (2007: 90; italics in the original). Schippers thus stresses relationality as one of the main features of the definition of hegemonic masculinity and femininity. The author then describes the latter as follows: "Hegemonic femininity consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of woman" (2007: 94; italics removed from the original). Connell has proposed the term "emphasised femininity" to name this idea, arguing that "there is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men" (1987: 296). However, it can be argued that Schippers' relationality framework stresses how asymmetrical masculine and feminine representations are, and hence this framework will be used in this research. Furthermore, this relation between masculinities and femininities is inscribed within the broader system of "gender relations" (Connell, 1987: 47). Connell locates three overlapping "structural models" (1987: 167) that perpetuate masculine dominance: a "structure of power" that hinders women's access to ruling positions in politics and the military (1995: 74); a "sexual division of labour" that produces "the dividend accruing to men from unequal shares of the products of social labour" (1995: 74); and a "structure of cathexis", which asserts the so-

cially allowed heterosexual and homosexual practices, as well as masculine and feminine sexual desires (1995: 74-75).

Therefore, this thesis is situated within Marxist theory as applied to gender and film. The concept of hegemonic masculinity has already been used in film studies by Gray Cavender, to explain representations of masculinity and crime in thrillers such as *The Blue Dahlia* (1946, George Marshall) and *Die Hard* (1988, John McTiernan) (see 1999: 157-175). One can argue, following Patricia Nelson Limerick, that the idea of the West is intertwined with profound and complex historical, sociological, and economic implications. Therefore, it can be stated that the concept of gender hegemony constitutes an appropriate critical framework to unravel such implications from the perspective of gender in contemporary US Westerns.

## **2.5 Conclusion: The Need for a Gender Representation Framework**

In conclusion, the lack of a complete gender framework in the academic literature that considers post-*Unforgiven* Westerns from a gender hegemony approach has been revealed in this literature review. The purpose of this research is to fill that gap and provide a significant contribution to this area of the genre. If this research can prove that the Western, a genre widely considered as masculine and even misogynistic, can embody feminist discourses, it might be said that progressive gender representation in films can be achieved within formerly patriarchal structures. Finally, the Western might achieve new relevance in the 21st century if it can answer to such a challenge as the social need to represent gender equality. It is in that belief that this research will be conducted.

### 3. GENDER HEGEMONY AND MASCULINITIES

#### 3.1 Film Form and Hegemonic Masculinity: *Appaloosa* and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*

It has been stated in the Literature Review that a semiotic text analysis will be used in this dissertation to discern how gender is represented in contemporary Westerns, and specifically to “unpack’ the film text, exploring potential meanings and associations” (White, 2011: 48) around the concept of gender hegemony. While this approach based on close text reading will be maintained throughout the research, this section aims to discuss explicitly how different aesthetic choices regarding film form can result in distinct portrayals of masculinity.

In addition, a description of the Westerner in the classic literature about the genre has been provided in the Literature Review. The idea of the Western hero as a “man of honour” (Warshow, 1954: 194) or as the embodiment of an “essential masculinity” (Astre and Hoarau, 1975: 99; author’s translation) can be linked to a notion of hegemonic masculinity, whereas the feminine seen as “childish” (Warshow, 1954: 192) or reduced to a dichotomy between the “virtuous wife” and the “exciting saloon girl” (Astre and Hoarau, 1975: 133; author’s translation) responds to the framework of hegemonic femininity. How those classic definitions of gender in the Western interact with two different film forms will be analysed in relation to two films released in the same year: *Appaloosa* and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*.

##### 3.1.1 *Appaloosa: Hegemonic Masculinity Through Neo-Classic Form*

In subsequent chapters, several feminocentric films will be analysed in depth. However, a gender hegemony framework for post-*Unforgiven* Westerns would not be complete without taking into account another trend in films. It should be noted that these films maintain what can be called neo-classic film form, understood as “great expressive balance, communicational functionality and imperceptibility of linguistic mediation” (Casetti and Di Chio, 1990: 101; author’s translation). Furthermore, it should be stressed that the hegemonic masculinity embodied by a White, heterosexual, mature male protagonist in the tradition of John Wayne and “the Westerner” as described by Warshow is pervasive.<sup>4</sup> One can argue that, for the purposes of this research, there is one film that embodies the con-

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<sup>4</sup> Within the time-frame considered in this research, this group of films comprises post-2000 features such as *Open Range* (2003, Kevin Costner), *3:10 to Yuma* and *True Grit* (2010, Joel and Ethan Coen), and the TV mini-series *Broken Trail* (2006, Walter Hill) and *Hatfields and McCoy*s (2012, Kevin Reynolds).



cept of hegemonic masculinity as domination over femininity on the one hand and competition among masculinities on the other, while utilising neo-classic film form: it can be stated that *Appaloosa* is the paradigmatic example of neo-classic hegemonic masculinity, and it will be analysed as such in this section. *Appaloosa* portrays a frontier town where a wealthy cattleman exerts violence and eliminates successive marshals. The town council members decide to hire a legendary gunslinger and his partner, who operate from an ambiguous position in relation to federal laws, in order to tame the town's violent elements. The corrupt rancher is Randall Bragg (Jeremy Irons), while the two "town-tamers" are marshal Virgil Cole (Ed Harris) and his partner Everett Hitch (Viggo Mortensen).<sup>5</sup>

Marshal Virgil Cole is presented as the hegemonic masculinity of the film. One can propose that his depiction matches that of Warshow's Westerner: he is a man of honour who never surrenders, always speaks the truth, and feels embarrassed when having conversations about sex. Furthermore, Cole is willing to unleash violence against Bragg and his cowhands whenever it is required, as in the scene where Cole and Hitch kill three cowboys right after arriving in Appaloosa. Cole's masculinity is related to an idea of professionalism— "professional esteem and technically based dominance over other workers" (Connell, 1987: 292)—which in this case is connected to violence: he holds hegemony because he is the best at shooting guns. Lusted has proposed that "gunfighters and drifters are contract labour, often unemployed and always on the social margins" (1996: 63), which would situate them in a "category of working-class waged labour" (1996: 73). However, it can be argued that Cole, due to his proficiency with weapons and his Westerner attributes, performs a liberal occupation—he enforces the law—and, therefore, belongs to a hired middle class regarded as hegemonic. This situation of hegemony is highlighted in the text in the first appearance of Cole and Hitch. It responds to the portrayal of the hero in classic film form since "the typical Western movie opens with a landscape shot" (Tompkins, 1992: 69). Furthermore, during the chase of the Shelton brothers that occupies the middle section of the film, on several occasions Cole is framed upward, against the light, and this forms a blaze around his face and reveals a determined look in the performer's eyes, which could be described as "heroic" under generic conventions (see figure 1).

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<sup>5</sup> In this sense, *Appaloosa* refers directly to *Warlock*'s plot. As indicated in the Literature Review, Coyne underlined the significance of *Warlock* in the history of the genre (1997: 94), and it can be said that its influence can be seen in *Appaloosa*. Nevertheless, *Warlock* developed a social discourse about authority and the community (see Coyne, 1997: 94) while *Appaloosa* forfeits the social aspect to become a "male melodrama" (Lusted, 1996: 63) centred around the interplay between, on the one hand, four kinds of masculinity, and between each of them and the main female character, Allie French (Renée Zellweger), on the other.



*Figure 1. Virgil Cole framed as a Western hero. Appaloosa/New Line Cinema.*

Cole's masculinity is contested by both Randall Bragg and the Shelton brothers, Ring (Lance Henriksen) and Mackie (Adam Nelson). Ring and Mackie are located in a parallel situation of labour to that of Cole and Hitch: they belong to a profession in which guns are the primary tools, and they are skilful with them. The only difference comes from the fact that they work on different sides of the law, with the Shelton brothers utilising strategies that would be unworthy of Cole and Hitch, such as that of kidnapping Allie. Their conflict works on the level of professional equality, and is thus resolved professionally through ritual combat. The similar labour status is presented in the text through two specific shots. In the first, Ring and Cole agree to cease hostilities until they arrive at the town of Rio Seco and, in the second, once they are in the town, they decide on a time and a place for the duel. The composition in both shots is a medium shot, in which the two characters are facing each other as in a mirror, which stresses their likeness and, at the same time, their struggle (see figure 2).



*Figure 2. Virgil Cole and Ring Shelton as professional rivals. Appaloosa/New Line Cinema.*

Bragg's masculinity is displayed on a different level. Bragg first appears in the film murdering the previous town marshal and his two deputies. The reason for the killing is the marshal's intention of arresting two of Bragg's cowhands on a murder charge. Bragg's argument for not handing them over to the law seems to explain his role in the film: "I cannot spare them". His logic is not moral, but economic. It is not loyalty toward his men but a business necessity that leads him to murder the representatives of the law. Therefore, his masculinity competes with Cole's for hegemony on economic as well as moral grounds. Cole represents the liberal hired work—even if his tool is a firearm—of an affluent and educated middle class with a sense of morality, whereas Bragg represents the capitalist entrepreneur who wishes to increase his wealth by any means necessary. In contrast to the Shelton Brothers, Cole and Bragg are not situated in a relation of equality and no compromise is possible between them. This opposition is represented in the text through the use of a shot-reverse-shot structure. The first meeting between the characters is constructed by featuring them in different frames, and this treatment persists in the encounters between Cole and Bragg during the rest of the film. This aesthetic choice prevents them from sharing their presence within the limits of the same frame and renders their conflict irresolvable (see figures 3 and 4).



*Figure 3 and 4. The conflict between Virgil Cole and Randall Bragg is framed in shot-reverse-shot structure. Appaloosa/New Line Cinema.*

The fourth masculinity to be analysed in this section, that of Everett Hitch, can be regarded as the most transgressive. As Cole's sidekick, Hitch shares his classic Westerner values but, at the same time, it is implied that he comes from a cultured Eastern background. The voice-over reveals that he attended West Point, "the oldest military service academy" (Offstein and Dufresne, 2007: 96) in the USA, as did his father before him, which points to high familial status. Given such blend between Western and Eastern values, one can assert that he is a somewhat feminised character within generic conventions. For instance, a dialogue takes place between Hitch and Cole while they are chasing the Shelton brothers, Bragg and Allie. Cole values his abilities with a gun, but he considers Hitch to be sensitive and, he states: "Feelings get you killed". Therefore, Cole is playing the classic role of the Westerner, for whom sentiment is a feminine and hence weak trait, whereas Hitch's masculinity is challenged because of his delicacy. In addition, while Cole dresses "stylish[ly] but formal[ly]" (Lusted, 1996: 73), Hitch's choice of carefully trimmed facial hair and brown jacket with adornments speaks of a desire "to be looked at", in Laura Mulvey's sense (1975: 17). That is, he becomes an objectified male image. Moreover, these aesthetic choices also influence his combat style, for in the final gunfight against Bragg he adopts a non-traditional position that resembles that of the Spanish matador before tackling the bull (see figure 5).<sup>6</sup> For Lusted, "Westerns have played no small part in teaching men the pleasures and anxieties connected with being looked at [...]. Equally, they have consistently demonstrated that if looking is an assertion of power, it can also invite danger" (1996: 59). It can be argued that, for Hitch, seeking the external gaze results in his being feminised to a degree and, therefore, excluded from the competition for hegemony. Moreover, his refusal to engage in sexual intercourse with Allie reinforces his reluctance to achieve such a dominant role. However, he does support the hegemony embodied by Cole with his eight-gauge shotgun, makes him a complicit, albeit ambiguous, masculinity.



Figure 5. Everett Hitch resembles the bullfighter before the duel. *Appaloosa*/New Line Cinema.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy J. Mitchell has noted that bullfighting is not about "courage" but about "nerve" (1986:406), as a kind of know-how. That assertion, alongside the feminised appearance of the suit worn by Spanish matadors, renders the bullfighting reference ambiguous in relation to masculinity. Furthermore, it can be noted that in 2006 Viggo Mortensen starred in the big-budget Spanish production *Alatriste* (2006, Agustín Díaz-Yanes), in which he played a Spanish soldier, mercenary and swordsman from the 17th century. In the limited DVD edition, the actor commented that he had based *Alatriste*'s way of moving on the aesthetic of the Spanish bullfighter (2006). It can be posited that a similar idea was used for Everett Hitch.

Finally, the four masculinities discussed above are shaped against one femininity: that of Allie French. One can state that Allie represents Schipper's concept of hegemonic femininity, as her physical appearance and her skills are deployed to please her masculine counterparts. Therefore, the representation of femininity is rendered problematic in *Appaloosa*. Allie is deeply embedded in Connell's three structures of gender relations. First, her status of "real lady" prevents her from being included in the structure of labour, and hence she depends economically on her partner. Secondly, and as a result of the previous statement, she is objectified as a prize in a contest for power between the four masculinities of the film, who are much older than her.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, her sexual promiscuity is criticised in the structure of cathexis by Cole and Hitch, who go as far as saying that "she'll fuck anything that ain't gelded". It can be argued, then, that the film's ideological point of view is masculine and patriarchal. Allie is often presented as an obstacle within the plot and is only allowed to express her views once, before the gunfight in Rio Seco. She says: "I am afraid all the time". It can be noted, then, that her sexual practices constitute a survival strategy, and a feminine approach would have helped deepen the dichotomy between the virtuous wife and the exciting saloon girl. Nevertheless, the perspective is not shifted toward Allie for long enough and, therefore, the sexual politics of the film punish her actions.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. First, three common traits should be noted in the four competing masculinities: they are all White, heterosexual and from the middle or upper classes. There is no presence of queer masculinities, other racial males or working-class characters apart from the nameless cowboys employed by Bragg. Therefore, the contest for hegemony is open only to men with that set of characteristics. Furthermore, the conflicts are resolved only through gunplay, first between Cole and Hitch and the Shelton brothers, and then between Hitch and Bragg. There is no possibility of a negotiated solution between them. Moreover, *Appaloosa* ends with the victory of middle-class, liberal men over the capitalist entrepreneur. However, as Connell has noted, capitalist managers have become the hegemonic masculinity of today (1995: xiii). This fact makes the film's conclusion somewhat unrealistic; it is as if the film's discourse has crafted to counteract neo-liberal dominance over an impoverished middle class on the verge of an economic crisis. Finally, in relation to gender, the violent manner of resolving social conflicts among hegemonic masculinities is not challenged by any non-hegemonic femininity. Allie French embodies hegemonic femininity and is shown as encouraging competition among the men. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Appaloosa* relies on classic Western conventions in terms of form, but also in relation to how gender is represented. In this sense, the film's gender framework justifies and supports the White, violent, middle-class male as the hegemonic man who is dominant over women and other non-hegemonic masculinities.

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<sup>7</sup> By the time the film was released, Renée Zellweger was 39 years old, whereas Ed Harris was 58, Jeremy Irons was 60 and Lance Henriksen was 68.

*Appaloosa* thus stands at the opposite end of the ideological range to feminist films, and shows how the classic and conservative Western is still able to be developed in contemporary features.

### **3.1.2 The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford: *Blurring Hegemonic Masculinity through Slow Film Form***

Neo-classic film form is utilised in *Appaloosa* to build a discourse around hegemonic masculinity that offers certainty and clear-cut conclusions. However, a different option is developed in *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. It can be posited that the film contests the link between hegemonic masculinity and the classic Westerner that *Appaloosa* depicts, through the use of a different aesthetic choice, namely that of slow film form. “Slow film” has been applied as an umbrella term for a range of films the style and aesthetics of which “make time noticeable in the image and consequently felt by the viewer” (De Luca and Jorge, 2016: 5). As De Luca and Jorge have noted, this effect is achieved through a set of techniques that result in a “disjunction between shot duration and audiovisual content” (2016: 5). Different scholars have identified such techniques as the use of the long or super-long take, the action unfolding in real time, framed tableau shots, hyperrealism, de-dramatisation, silence, stillness, infrequent editing or cutting, the lack of emotional range and mobility in the characters, and austere *mise-en-scène* (see Jaffe, 2014; De Luca and Jorge, 2016; Grønstad, 2016). As a result of the use of these techniques, slow films offer a rejection of clear-cut readings and posit questions about the worthiness of representation and about decisions regarding the use of time within a neoliberal economy, making them a political stand (2016: 14).

It should be stressed that *The Assassination* deals not only with masculinity but also with history. The film effectuates a portrayal of the historical bandit Jesse James (Brad Pitt), who has been recognised as one of the most prominent Western heroes, a Robin Hood figure (Astre and Horau, 1975: 306). As such, his adventures alongside his brother Frank have been reappraised by a variety of films.<sup>8</sup> This tradition of films has a common narrative trait: all the films feature an “Ascension and Descension master plot”, that is, “a story about a person who falls from a high place because of a tragic flaw in character” (Tobias, 1993: 258).<sup>9</sup> However, *The Assassination* is centred around Jesse’s last months and is, therefore, detached from any sense of causality in his evolution.

In those final days of the bandit’s life, two opposite social spheres are represented. The first is the world of the Missouri outlaws who follow Jesse and Frank James (Sam Shepard) in their

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<sup>8</sup> Namely, *Jesse James* (1939, Henry King), *The True Story of Jesse James* (1956, Nicholas Ray), *The Long Riders* (1980, Walter Hill), *Frank and Jesse* (1995, Robert Boris) and *American Outlaws* (2001, Les Mayfield).

<sup>9</sup> *American Outlaws* finishes when the “Ascension” part of the plot has reached its peak, without showing the “Descension”. However, it still abides by the plot’s rules.

plundering, and it is the one with which the narrative is primarily concerned. The second social sphere is that of “decent” society under the federal government, which is hinted at in the ball scene where Bob Ford (Casey Affleck) negotiates the reward for Jesse’s capture. One can highlight that the interplay between the two social spheres is aligned with the idea that “hegemonic features of culture are those that serve the interests and ascendancy of ruling classes, legitimate their ascendancy and dominance, and encourage all to consent to and go along with social relations of ruling” (Schippers, 2007: 90). Hegemony is thus a negotiation, and it results in different hegemonic masculinities: in the first case, Jesse James as *capo di tutti capi*; in the second instance, Captain Henry Craig (Michael Parks) as the uncompromising policeman who is set on bringing the bandit down. In contrast to *Appaloosa*, it is the outlaw who identifies himself with the individualist values of the Westerner, while the corporate capital of the railroad business is identified with the institutional State.<sup>10</sup>

However, the film’s aesthetic strategies impede the complete identification with either of these two hegemonic masculinities—especially Jesse’s—and make any simplistic reading of history problematic. In this sense, the construction of the hegemonic masculinity embodied by Jesse is more ambiguous than that of Virgil Cole. Jesse is presented in the first sequence as a potential hero by the voice-over (see figure 6). Further, his dominance over his men is shown as uncontested, and all of them seek to be in his close confidence.

One can posit that they thus constitute complicit masculinities in relation to Jesse’s hegemony. However, their recognition of the bandit’s dominance is based on fear as much as on respect, because Jesse is portrayed as a violent, unpredictable and paranoid leader. This is shown when he murders one of his subordinates, Ed Miller, because he suspects he might betray him. This action constitutes a radical departure from the Westerner paradigm: Jesse shoots people in the back, something the Western hero is not allowed to do under any circumstance. It is significant how this scene is filmed: Ed Miller is framed in a mid-shot riding and crying, and Jesse appears briefly and out of focus in the background to fire the shot. Therefore, the heroic representation to which Virgil Cole was subjected is not granted to Jesse and, moreover, he does not correspond to the idea of the “professional gunslinger” as Cole does. In *The Assassination*, professionalism is no longer a trait that defines masculinity. From another perspective, the protagonist is also detached from the portrayal of the Westerner because he displays what can be called suicidal tendencies. He explicitly asks Charlie Ford (Sam Rockwell) whether he has considered suicide, and then fires three shots into his own reflection in a frozen lake.<sup>11</sup> He then presents Bob Ford

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10 One can argue that it is assumed in *The Assassination* that the spectator already possesses some knowledge about the James story and, hence, the origins of the gang and their feud with the railroad are omitted.

11 One can argue that in this scene tribute is paid to *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973, Sam Peckinpah), in which another character with drifting tendencies, sheriff Pat Garrett (James Coburn), shoots at his reflection in the mirror right after killing Billy the Kid (Kris Kristofferson) in cold blood.

with a brand-new gun, and tells him: “I’ve been becoming a problem to myself”. In his final act, he creates the opportunity for Bob and Charlie to murder him.



Figure 6. *Jesse James framed as an epic hero by Roger Deakins' cinematography. The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford /Warner Bros.*

One can posit that Bob Ford desires to compete with Jesse for hegemonic masculinity within the outlaw social sphere. His depiction can be seen as another strategy that is utilised by the film to add complexity to the story of Jesse James, since the narrative point of view is shifted from Jesse to Bob. In his first appearance in the film, Bob is followed by the camera in a tracking shot that highlights that the narrative is going to be primarily focused on him. It can be proposed that Bob starts out in *The Assassination* as a subordinated masculinity because of his youth. He idolises Jesse, having read the dime novels and press clippings about him over the years, and the older outlaws ridicule him on several occasions for this reason. However, the encounter with the real Jesse, who reminds him that press stories “are all just lies”, results in Bob questioning the Jesse James legend.

There is one scene in which Bob and Jesse’s relation as competing masculinities is represented visually. It is situated in Martha Ford’s house, where Jesse arrives to inquire about the whereabouts of his cousin Wood Hite, who has been murdered by Bob. A long conversation at the dinner table follows, in which Bob accounts for the similarities between Jesse and himself, while the bandit tells the story of the fate of a man who wanted to betray him. The sequence is filmed with a shot-reverse-shot structure that stresses the opposition between the two characters while they exchange stories (see figures 7 and 8). However, Bob Ford not only questions Jesse’s legend as a bandit; he also challenges his own legend as Jesse’s killer. Bob tries to achieve a hegemonic position by divulging his killing through a theatre play in which he and his brother Charlie enact their crime. This “meta-linguistic reflexion [...] accounts for the impossibility of transmitting a history transparently” (Balló and Pérez, 2015: 195; author’s translation), and



results in hatred and contempt toward Bob, even from Charlie. In addition, meta-linguistic strategies are used in a sequence in which a singer—played by Nick Cave, the composer of the original soundtrack—performs *The Ballad of Jesse James* (2007) and Bob, completely drunk, challenges him as if challenging history itself. One can stress that even Bob does not believe his narrative of hegemony based on Jesse’s killing anymore.



Figure 7 and 8. The relation between Jesse and Bob Ford structured with shot-reverse-shot technique. The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford/Warner Bros.

It can be proposed that the use of slow film form is essential in the construction of Jesse’s and Bob’s masculinities. Wide angle long takes of landscapes in which characters move without rushing their pace are utilised as a trademark. Conversations develop calmly, with frequent use of slow zoom-ins. Stone and Cooke have argued about heritage film that “slowness [...] upsets the narrative search for closure, discomfits nostalgia, deconstructs stereotypes and highlights contradictions in the way that a given nation imagines itself” (2016: 322). A similar strategy is used in *The Assassination* in relation to history and gender, and this slowness makes hegemonic masculinity problematic in a way that *Appaloosa* does not. Furthermore, the narrative is punc-

tuated by several scenes in which a voice-over tells the story with apparent objectiveness, but images are slightly blurred. It can be argued that this technique also warns the audience about the ambiguity of any historical reconstruction (see figure 9).



Figure 9. *The blurred image erases clear-cut historical readings.* The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford/Warner Bros.

Overall, it should be highlighted that the options for hegemony here are also White, masculine and heterosexual. There are no female characters of importance in the film, apart from Jesse's wife, Zee; Bob's sister, Martha; and Wood Hite's mother-in-law, Sarah, whose roles are restricted to those of decoration or plot advancement. The same argument can be applied to Black, Native American, Asian and queer characters. Furthermore, the competition for hegemony is not based on performance, as in *Appaloosa*, but on storytelling and stardom. Jesse James holds hegemonic masculinity because a discourse about the social bandit has been successfully constructed around him, whereas Bob fails in trying to replicate a similar narrative as avenging vigilante—to the point of bringing ostracism and death upon himself.<sup>12</sup> Despite its almost-all-male cast, one can argue that *The Assassination* offers a more progressive view on hegemonic masculinity because, if hegemony is a constructed narrative, it can be deconstructed as well. That is a significant challenge to the classic ideology of the West.

### 3.2 Queer Masculinities: *Deadwood* and *Brokeback Mountain*

It has been discussed in the previous section how *Appaloosa* and *The Assassination of Jesse James* enact a competition for hegemony among different kinds of masculinities in which female characters are either subdued to the dynamics of the contest or even non-existent. It can be proposed that the exclusive focus on masculinities in the aforementioned films embodies Jane

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<sup>12</sup> And, as White has noted, the fact that Brad Pitt is playing Jesse James puts the focus on the stardom discourse (2011: 161).

Tompkins' assertion that "female 'screen' characters, who are really extensions of the men they are paired with, perform this alibi function all the time, masking the fact that what the men are really interested in is one another" (1992: 40). As Tompkins notes, the concept of "homosocial desire" (1985: 1) coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, underlies this idea of male interest. Sedgwick states that the term "describes social bonds between persons of the same sex" (1985: 1). It has previously been applied to the Western by David Lusted, who argued that "insofar as the Western can indeed be understood as male, then, it is also homo-social, i.e. implying not just gender but also social relations which inescapably imply positions in a hierarchy of social class" (1996: 63).

However, Lusted's stress on economic and class hierarchies overlooks the importance given by Sedgwick to the "desire" part of the definition. Kosofsky explains that "to draw the 'homo-social' back to the orbit of 'desire', of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosociality and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted" (1985: 1-2). As specific instances of homosociality in the Western, Tompkins mentions *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957, John Sturges) and the relationship depicted between Wyatt Earp (Burt Lancaster) and Doc Holliday (Kirk Douglas) (1992: 40). Furthermore, Needham notes that the shooting contest between Matt Garth (Montgomery Clift) and Cherry Valance (John Ireland) in *Red River* can be read as a display of homosociality that verges on homosexuality through the association between guns and sexual attributes (2010: 62-63). Finally, businessman and gunfighter Tom Morgan (Anthony Quinn) in *Warlock* professes an explicit homosexual love for his partner Clay Blaisedell (Henry Fonda) that leads him to murder and, eventually, suicide by duel. Following this notion of homosociality and Tompkins' claims about men interested in each other, this section will investigate that continuum between homosociality and male homosexuality in the Western through an analysis of *Deadwood* and *Brokeback Mountain*. This comparison is made with the different formats of these features, as TV series and film respectively, in mind. Whereas *Deadwood* encompasses approximately 25 hours of story, *Brokeback Mountain* is developed in 134 minutes. The different runtimes influence the amount of information that can be shown and the complexity of the discourses. The potential queering of the Western that results from, respectively, repressing or making explicit homosociality and homosexuality, will be explored in both features.

### **3.2.1 Deadwood: The Economics and Politics of Male Homosocial Desire**

Across its three seasons, *Deadwood* recounts the development of the homonymous mining camp in the late 1870s. Following the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, in Sioux territory, myriad prospectors, businesspeople, hustlers and prostitutes formed the camp of Deadwood.

The series begins with the arrival in the camp of ex-lawman Seth Bullock (Timothy Olyphant) and his partner Sol Star (John Hawkes), as well as gunman Wild Bill Hickok (Keith Carradine) and his friends Charlie Utter (Dayton Callie) and “Calamity” Jane Canary (Robin Weigert). They discover that the owner of the Gem Saloon, Al Swearengen (Ian McShane), rules the camp using violence and business deals in order to increase his wealth. The potential annexation of the camp to the US territory shapes the interactions and alliances among the array of characters of *Deadwood*, especially when mining magnate George Hearst (Gerald McRaney) declares his intentions to monopolise the town’s economy. As noted by McGee, then, *Deadwood* “amounts to a vivisection of the origin of capital and the damaging effect the war for wealth has on any kind of human relationship” (2007: 236).

The interplay between the male characters of *Deadwood* constitutes a “war for wealth”, as McGee posits, but also a contest to achieve hegemony in a social environment that can be defined as unregulated since no formal written laws dictate the daily life of the camp. From another perspective, Paul Cantor agrees with the vision of *Deadwood* as a site for competition, and links the TV series with a Hobbesian framework, stating that “Milch portrays *Deadwood* as a community of alpha males who are constantly fighting to establish their individual dominance, to maintain a pecking order in the town” (2010: 118). One can say that the “alpha males” mentioned by Cantor are equivalent to the hegemonic masculinities of the critical framework utilised in this research. As in *Appaloosa* and *The Assassination*, a distinction between two models of hegemonic masculinity is presented in *Deadwood*. In this sense, the figure of the Westerner as defined by Warshaw and related to law enforcement and violent professionalism is embodied by Seth Bullock, while the opposite paradigm of the capitalist entrepreneur is represented locally by saloon keepers Al Swearengen and Cy Tolliver (Powers Boothe) and nationally by George Hearst. In addition, a set of complicit and subordinated masculinities surround those leading figures. First, sidekicks Charlie Utter and Sol Star follow Wild Bill Hickok and Bullock. Secondly, Swearengen employs Dan Dority (W. Earl. Brown), Johnny Burns (Sean Bridgers) and Silas Adams (Titus Welliver). Thirdly, the owner of the hotel, E.B. Farnum (William Sanderson), is always pursuing personal profit. Furthermore, the honest but discreet prospector Ellsworth (Jim Beaver) tries to make his claim work. Finally, the Chinese leader Mr Wu (Keone Young) is marginalised on account of his race.

However, *Deadwood* “deconstructs the system of Western characters by lending more complexity to the ‘bad guys’ like Al Swearengen [...] than to the ‘good’ Shane-like figure of Seth Bullock” (McGee, 2007: 236). There is no clear-cut distinction between the Westerner and the capitalist as there is in *Appaloosa*. Bullock’s violent professionalism is not praised as a virtue, but rather rendered as a “force of disorder” (Cantor, 2010: 124). However, even if Swearengen

pursues his own interests, he also possesses a sense of community that makes him “the chief architect of order without law in *Deadwood*” (Cantor, 2010: 124), which separates him from the more brutal and self-oriented Tolliver. Besides, Connell proposes that “though ‘hegemony’ does not refer to ascendancy based on force, it is not incompatible with ascendancy based on force” (1987: 297), and both Bullock and Swearingen make problematic the relation between violence and social recognition in the construction of hegemony. On the one hand, Bullock is regarded as hegemonic because of his past as a lawman and his self-created image of an honest man, which earns him the ironic title of “His Holiness” from Swearingen. Nevertheless, his violent reactions undermine that image and damage his claim for hegemony. On the other hand, Swearingen is regarded as hegemonic because of the speed with which he resorts to violence if his interests are in peril, but also because “he actually takes a certain civic pride in *Deadwood*” (Cantor, 2010: 133) and contributes to the development of the camp. The complexity of the series in this regard reaches its deepest point when Bullock and Swearingen form an allegiance in order to face Hearst, for the sake of their own interests but also for the sake of *Deadwood*. Their opposite masculinities find a point of intersection, in contrast to the similar character pairs in *Appaloosa* and *The Assassination*, whose irresolvable differences prevent this.

These relations of hegemony between the male characters of *Deadwood* are further blurred by the homosocial desire that is established between several pairs of personages. First, Dan Dority and Al Swearingen maintain a close relationship in which Dan seeks Swearingen’s approval and gets jealous when other characters, especially Silas Adams, gain favours from him. Dan’s envy reaches such a point that he beats up Adams’ partner Hawkeye (Monty Henson), and he is on the verge of tears when Swearingen reassures him of his preference. Furthermore, Swearingen almost makes Dan’s desire verbally explicit when, after being close to dying due to a urinary tract obstruction, he wakes up and asks Dan: “Did you fuck me when I was out?” Dan replies, “No”, and Swearingen says: “Then stop looking at me like that” (see figures 10 and 11). Secondly, a similar relation is drawn between Wild Bill Hickok and Charlie Utter. Charlie takes care of Bill’s financial and social interests, trying to secure him and his wife a percentage in the joint they frequent and advising him against playing poker and to instead spend time with Bullock and Star. As with Dan and Swearingen, Bill comes close to stating Charlie’s desire in their last scene together, as Charlie is waiting for him to come back from poker. Bill asks, “So you stayed in camp to tuck me in?”, and then, “Can I go to hell the way I want to?”. Charlie nods, almost crying, similarly to Dan, and leaves the room. In addition, it can be inferred from the TV series that Charlie might have a homosexual orientation, since not only does he demonstrate this fondness for Bill, but he never explicitly engages in heterosexual intercourse, as the rest of the male characters do. Although he has close links with some of the female inhabitants of *Deadwood*—namely Calamity Jane and Joanie Stubbs (Kim Dickens)—, these bonds do not go

beyond friendship. In a feature as sexually explicit as *Deadwood*, the lack of heterosexual interactions can be regarded as an indirect expression of homosexual desires.



Figure 10 and 11. Male homosocial desire is represented through the gaze. *Deadwood*/HBO.

The third and most important male homosocial relation developed in *Deadwood* is the one between Seth Bullock and Al Swearengen. This bond will be further explored later in this section, but it should first be noted that these homosocial dynamics never move along the continuum to become homosexual encounters. Furthermore, they are conducted in silence, since “the Western hero’s silence symbolizes a massive suppression of the inner life” (Tompkins, 1992: 66) and becomes one of the most significant traits of the genre. The expression of desire is therefore structured through the gaze, and the *mise-en-scène* favours a shot-reverse-shot structure of close-ups between the set of characters described above—especially Bullock and Swearengen,

whose encounters during the first season are articulated in this manner (see figures 12 and 13). Furthermore, the hegemonic nature of some of these characters is associated with “business management, [which] is integrated with forms of masculinity organized around interpersonal dominance” (Connell, 1987: 175), a feature that has not been associated with a patriarchal construction of male homosexuality. Advancing along the continuum between homosociality and homosexual desires would result in a loss of their hegemonic status, and hence homosexuality can be interpreted as repressed in *Deadwood* because “successful heterosexual and masculine identification psychologically and socially depend[s] on the repudiation of both femininity and homosexuality” (Edwards, 2005: 64).



*Figure 12 and Figure 13. Bullock's and Swearengen's desire is also expressed by their looking at each other in shot-reverse-shot-structure. Deadwood/HBO.*

A more detailed discussion of the relation between Seth Bullock and Al Swearengen can provide greater insight into this matter. In order to achieve that, it is useful to compare two scenes from S02E01. In the first, Bullock meets with Alma Garrett (Molly Parker), as he is looking into a mining claim on her behalf. The scene is constructed with an initial establishing shot of them sitting down while Alma's ward, Sophia (Bree Seanna Wall) and her tutor (Sarah Paulson) leave the room. One symmetrical wide-angle shot with both characters sitting down follows, and then an exchange of close-ups cut in a shot-reverse-shot structure in which both characters appear in the frame is developed (see figure 14). A final shot in which Bullock grabs Alma by the arm and they start kissing closes the preliminaries of the scene. In the second scene, Bullock visits Swearengen after he has insulted him in the thoroughfare. As he walks into his office, there is a wide-angle shot of Swearengen trying to urinate in the back. Then, Swearengen returns to the office, and both characters are framed in close-up as they speak about the camp's politics. The conversation is edited in a shot-reverse-shot structure. Swearengen keeps insulting Bullock, so he takes off his gun belt and badge in order to fight. A close-up of Bullock's hand as he does this punctuates the narrative. Then, they start fighting in a wide-angle shot (see figure 15).



*Figure 14 and 15. Similar shot composition, different results. Deadwood/HBO.*



One can find structural similarities in these two scenes. They both start with a conversation that results in bodily contact, and they are both articulated through the same *mise-en-scène* strategies. The difference is that Bullock's interaction with a woman ends up in sex, whereas his conversation with a man evolves into a fight. However, it can be posited that the most eroticised shot occurs in the second scenes, with the close-up of Bullock's hand removing the belt as a kind of "male striptease" (Needham, 2010: 55); the first scene is more neutral in its showing of desire (see figure 16). Cantor has explained the fight from a Hobbesian perspective (2010: 118) and, although it can be argued that this is a fair point, it should also be proposed that he misses the homoeroticism<sup>13</sup> that the *mise-en-scène* produces. In this sense, Connell proposes that "heterosexuality and homosexuality as structural principles are definitions of the social category *within* which a partner can be chosen. Perhaps the implication is that both are constructed mainly by blocking out the category from which the partner is *not* to be drawn. At the psychological level this implies repression and at the social level prohibition" (1987: 191; italics in the original). Following this line of argument, one can posit that Bullock is enacting the same desire, to have bodily contact with two people. Since it is socially allowed with a woman, the contact with Alma leads to in sexual intercourse. However, the repression produced by prohibition forces Bullock to pick a fight with Swearingen as the expression of male homosocial desire that cannot become male homosexual action. This close-range violence "functions to legitimise close contact between male bodies that otherwise would not take place" (Needham, 2010: 76-77).



Figure 16. Removing the gun belt as striptease. Deadwood/HBO.

13 Gary Needham has stated that "homoeroticism is characterised as a response to or fascination with the image of men, as either producer or consumer, that is experienced as pleasurable and erotic. Identifying and experiencing the homoerotic has something to do with recognising the mutual fascination men have for each other, yet it is difficult to explain the frisson that it often provokes" (2010: 59-60).

In sum, one can argue that *Deadwood* makes the tropes of the Western problematic, not only through political, economic and social discourse but also through the construction of sexual politics, with male homosociality as a primary feature. However, the continuum between homosociality and homosexuality that Sedgwick avowed is broken, since male protagonists do not engage in physical relations, except for fighting. In this sense, Edwards claims that there is “the need to address far more than previously an entirely different question of heterosexual men’s relationship to their hetero-sexuality, not just to their masculinity—for them to queer their own pitch” (2005: 65), and one can argue that *Deadwood* deals not with homosexuality but with that queering of heterosexuality claimed by Edwards through homoeroticism. Through the structures of male desire outlined in the series, *Deadwood* hints at a field of possibilities in which sexual identity remains heterosexual, but homosocial and potentially homosexual desires are rehearsed as possible sexual practices. Although *Deadwood* enables the characters to engage in those practices through fighting rather than through sex, the existence of a repressed possibility is enough to queer the heterosexual identities of its male characters and, therefore, to queer the boundaries of the Western as it is understood in the 21st century.

### **3.2.2 Brokeback Mountain: *Turning the Western Homosexual***

The continuum between homosociality and homosexuality that is broken in *Deadwood* is explored in further depth in *Brokeback Mountain*. The film follows ranch hands Ennis del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) over two decades, after they spend the summer of 1963 in Brokeback Mountain herding sheep. The two characters fall in love and maintain a relationship for many years, while they live in unhappy marriages to Alma (Michelle Williams) and Lureen (Anne Hathaway) respectively. Brokeback Mountain remains the spot where they meet occasionally and is a place for reminiscing about the summer of 1963.

It should be noted that *Brokeback Mountain* does not comply with the working definition of the Western given in the Introduction of this thesis, as it is set in the 1960s and 1970s in Wyoming and Texas. In this sense, *Brokeback Mountain* could have been discussed in the later section 3.4 Contemporary Masculinities and Western Iconography. However, several reasons justify its presence in this part of the thesis. The first is that the film relies on the iconography and style of the Western to build its discourse. It opens with a general view of a landscape—a trait of “the typical Western movie” (Tompkins, 1992: 69)—traversed by a truck that is a substitute for the horseman. The landscape is highlighted as a central feature of the film through general aerial views in which the cowhands are moving the herd. Needham has compared the scene in which Alma and Jack meet with the prologue of *The Searchers* (1956, John Ford), but it can be posited that this first scene, in which Ennis observes Jack arriving at the office, also bears a strong

visual resemblance to Ethan Edwards' arrival in that film. This visual link with John Ford is further developed through the use of frames within the frame, for instance in the scene in which Ennis cries in an alleyway after bidding Jack goodbye (see White, 2011: 156) (see figure 17), and the indoors sequences of Ennis and Alma's domestic life. In addition, the iconography of the rodeo, the herding and the clothing—especially the hats—provides a link with the Western genre. Therefore, one can propose that *Brokeback Mountain* is inscribed in two historical trends of the Western. The first trend comprises films that focus on the cowboy lifestyle, their work as cattle herders, and the consequences this has for their lives and identities.<sup>14</sup> The film can also be linked to the set of films that explore the continuity of the Western frontier in 20th century USA and the negotiation of the hegemonic masculinity of the cowboy through residual cattle labour or activities such as rodeos.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 17. *Brokeback Mountain* references John Ford through framing. *Brokeback Mountain/Focus Features*.

The second reason for *Brokeback Mountain* belonging to this chapter is its importance in bringing an awareness of the potential queerness of the Western genre. Needham puts it best when he claims that “*Brokeback Mountain* represents the elided history of homosexuality in the context of a continuum with the West. I would also argue that *Brokeback Mountain* represents a West that survives through the cultural traditions, practices and ideologies of specific U.S. regions associated with Western mythology” (2010: 40). In contrast to *Deadwood*, *Brokeback Mountain* transcends the realm of homosociality and takes

14 In this sense, *Brokeback Mountain* can be likened to features such as *Cowboy* (1958, Delmer Daves), *Will Penny* (1967, Tom Gries), *Monte Walsh* (1970, William A. Fraker), and *Wild Rovers* (1971, Blake Edwards).

15 This refers particularly to films in the fashion of *The Lusty Men* (1952, Nicholas Ray), *The Misfits* (1961, John Huston), *Lonely are the Brave* (1962, David Miller), *Hud* (1963, Martin Ritt) and *Junior Bonner* (1972, Sam Peckinpah).

the leap of showing explicit homosexuality. Therefore, a comparison of these two features explicates the boundaries that have constrained the expression of male non-heterosexual orientations in the Western, as well as providing a practical framework for developing such expression.

It having been explained how *Brokeback Mountain* belongs to the Western genre for the purposes of this research, it is necessary to place the focus on how the film goes beyond *Deadwood*'s homosociality and the tensions that arise from that fact. The link between *Deadwood* and *Brokeback Mountain* can be found in their portrayal of the masculinity of the classic Westerner as problematic, through the characters of Seth Bullock and Ennis del Mar. In both protagonists, silence is a fundamental trait, not as an expression of masculine self-containment but as “the silence of the closet, the quelling of desire and the feeling that homosexuality is not something that can be properly expressed either to himself or even to those closest to him” (Needham, 2010: 41). In this sense, *Brokeback Mountain* takes *Deadwood*'s homosociality one step further, to homosexuality, and enacts the “unbrokenness of the continuum” that Sedgwick proposed for the two concepts. Moreover, such continuity is highlighted by the violence involved in the contact between male bodies. As Needham has noted, Jack and Ennis' first sexual interaction is suffused with a sense of violence, “as Ennis wrestles Jack into position on all fours” (2010: 77). Besides, their goodbye before they leave *Brokeback Mountain* starts with a hug but finishes with Ennis punching Jack in the nose. Jack never cleans his bloodied shirt and, after his death, Ennis takes it from his parents' house and cherishes it, acknowledging through the blood stain the violence that underlay their relationship. Swearingen and Bullock's fight is thus surpassed, and the issue that the characters in *Deadwood* faced of turning homosociality into homosexuality is transformed. In *Brokeback Mountain*, the consummation of the homosexual act resolves the show of sexual queerness in the Western but brings about another problem, that of identity and the agency regarding its definition.

Jack and Ennis refuse to be categorised under the label of homosexual. Needham has stressed “the difficulty in pinning a sexual identity on to Jack and Ennis (if sexuality is not defined solely by their sexual acts)” (2010: 41), and, indeed, Ennis declares to Jack after their first encounter: “You know I ain't queer”. Hence, identity and practice in relation to homosexuality are separated by the characters of *Brokeback Mountain*. Nevertheless, one can postulate that Ennis and Jack's inability and reluctance to provide a definition of their sexual identities is more informed by the dynamics of hegemonic masculine patterns rather than its being a conscious choice informed by agency. It has been explained earlier in this section how the definition of heterosexual necessitates the denial of both feminin-

ity and homosexuality, and as a consequence, Connell asserts that “sustaining hegemonic definitions of masculinity is often an issue of importance, and homosexual men attract hostility partly because they undermine these definitions” (1987: 182). *Brokeback Mountain* “reflects on the slow psychological violence of small-town, rural America” (White, 2011: 153), where the conception of hegemonic masculinity is that of Warshow’s Westerner, particularly in his heterosexuality. Even if Ennis del Mar complies with that definition in every other respect, homosexual practice situates him as a “negative symbol of masculinity” (Connell, 1987: 186) according to the standards of both the diegetic society in which he lives and the generic tropes of the classic Western in which the film is inscribed.

The most tragic aspect of the film is that heterosexual hegemonic masculinity is reasserted through the violence of the intolerant and heterosexual rural community. Ennis and, especially, Jack offer instances of resistance that render them “subordinated masculinities”, subject to “both direct interactions and a kind of ideological warfare” (Connell, 1987: 300). In the film, the most direct interaction is Jack’s murder after his relationship with a neighbouring rancher in Texas is discovered. There is also the ideological warfare that Ennis recounts when he tells Jack about the day his father took him and his brother to see the body of a brutally murdered man. Hegemonic masculinity as understood in the Western is thus not just made problematic in *Brokeback Mountain*: it is shown to be murderous.

Paradoxically, even if “homosexuality threatens the credibility of a naturalized ideology of gender and a dichotomized sexual world” (Connell, 1987: 392) according to patriarchal constructions, it is in nature that Ennis and Jack can conduct their relationship freely, which is in contrast to the violence exerted over them when they are living in society. In this sense, Fernández-Santos notes that the horizontality of the landscape is “not only geographical, but it acquires on the screen an unexpected moral edge: the image of a rectitude that proclaims itself to be innocent but nonetheless participates in a debate about a dark guilt” (1987: 31; author’s translation). Fernández-Santos is referring to guilt about the Native American genocide, and this is replaced here by the guilt of violent homosexual repression. Jack and Ennis are framed in that horizontality in *Brokeback Mountain* by the fact that they adopt themselves a horizontal position during sex (see figure 18). Homosexual practices are thus visually and morally conceived as natural, whereas the vertical image of them waiting for the employer Joe Aguirre (Randy Quaid), a character associated with the heterosexual hegemonic masculinity of the Western, remains an artificial imposition by patriarchal society (see figure 19).



Figure 18 and Figure 19. Horizontality and verticality reveal the constructed nature of gender. *Brokeback Mountain/Focus Features.*

In conclusion, both *Deadwood* and *Brokeback Mountain* conflate the hegemonic masculinity that has been constructed as a significant trait of the Western genre with the repressed reality of male homosocial desire and male homosexuality. By deploying structures of male desire through *mise-en-scène* and analysing in depth the economic implications of hegemonic masculinity, *Deadwood* queers the heterosexual paradigm of the classic Western but nonetheless keeps homosexuality repressed by presenting it as homoeroticism, which is subject to interpretation in scenes such as the fight between Bullock and Swearingen. However, *Brokeback Mountain*'s decision to show explicit homosexuality breaks the boundaries of the Western by using

the genre's own tropes. It can be argued that, as a result of this, the film presents the possibility of enriching the genre with instances of male homosexuality that are not forced to comply with constructed patterns of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities, thereby queering the codes upon which the Western is constructed.

### 3.3 Black masculinities: *Django Unchained* and *Hell on Wheels*

This section is closely related to the previous one in the sense that it focuses on several kinds of male identity that depart from the masculinity of Warshow's Westerner as described in the Literature Review section. Alexandra Keller unpacks Warshow's description of the hegemonic male Westerner and provides a negative definition in which the hero of the Western is marked by what he is not: "female, non-Christian, nonwhite, and nonheterosexual" (2001: 38). It has been discussed in the previous section how the gender, sexuality, and identity politics of masculinities in the genre can be deconstructed and decoded in contemporary Westerns in order to queer that "nonheterosexual" paradigm. This part of the thesis will analyse how the no-White aspect of the definition of the Westerner has been challenged in recent features of the genre.

For the purposes of this research, two texts will be juxtaposed in order to ascertain how the display of Black masculinities in the Western might challenge and renew the conventions of the genre: *Django Unchained* and the TV series *Hell on Wheels*. It can be argued that the two features address the issue of race representation in the Western from two different angles. While *Django Unchained* constitutes a "fantasy, a fairy tale" (Kroes, 2015: 60) based on revenge violence, *Hell on Wheels* bears a discourse about Black labour and representation that relies on a realistic depiction of the West.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this opposition is further suffused by the film's setting. *Django*'s events occur two years before the Civil War in the South, where the economy is primarily based on slavery and agriculture. Conversely, *Hell on Wheels* is set right after the Civil War, when the USA is being transformed to industrial economy through the building of the transcontinental railroad.<sup>17</sup> In addition, by stressing the presence of Black masculinities in the Western, these features comply with Limerick's project of "deemphasiz[ing] the frontier and its supposed end", as the West was "an important meeting ground, the point where Indian America, Latin America, Anglo-America, Afro-America, and Asia intersected" (1987: 26). Furthermore, Limerick's theoretical framework is conflated here with a trend of Black American cinema which "seeks to replace 'false' repre-

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16 As Keller has noted, "realistic" depictions of history, even if they accurately reflect the work of historians, are still shaped against mythical representation (2001: 31-32). Therefore, the word "realistic" as applied to *Hell on Wheels* refers to a certain choice of visual and production techniques, as well as the construction of discourse. It is irrelevant, hence, whether the results are indeed historically accurate or not.

17 It should also be noted that, as with *Deadwood* and *Brokeback Mountain*, a comparison is made here between a film and a TV series, and therefore there are production differences derived from the fact that *Django*'s story is developed in 165 minutes, whereas *Hell on Wheels* unfolds across almost 40 hours.

sentations with positive, by extension ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ ones, [so that] the project of black film might thus be read as the search for an authentic black subject” (Smith, 1997: 1). In this sense, *Django Unchained* and *Hell on Wheels* are inscribed in a broader corpus of films that have claimed the space and momentum of historical Black representation in Hollywood cinema, such as *12 Years a Slave* (2013, Steve McQueen), *Free State of Jones* (2016, Gary Ross), *The Birth of a Nation* (2016, Nate Parker) and *Mudbound* (2017, Dee Res).

### **3.3.1 Django Unchained: Individual Solutions to Collective Problems in Pre-Industrial Society**

*Django Unchained* follows German dentist and bounty hunter Dr King Schulz (Christoph Waltz) as he rescues Django (Jamie Foxx) from slavery in so that he can help Schulz to kill three wanted brothers. Once the mission is accomplished, Schulz offers Django freedom, the possibility of becoming his partner in the bounty-hunting business, and his help in buying the freedom of Django’s wife, Broomhilda (Kerry Washington). Broomhilda has been bought by Mississippi slave owner Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio), so Django and Dr Schulz will have to sneak into Candie’s plantation, Candyland, and face the slave owner and his slave butler Stephen (Samuel L. Jackson) in order to retrieve Broomhilda. It can be argued that *Django* is mediated in its construction of the main hero by its most direct predecessor, *Posse*. As with *Posse*, *Django* relies on postmodernist strategies in which “the form-content relationship often can be radically altered” (Keller, 2001: 28), as a way of decoding the repressed representation of Black characters in the Western.<sup>18</sup> It is within that framework that *Django* establishes its discourse on gender and race hegemony.

The conception of gender hegemony in *Django* is closely related to that of race hegemony because of the film being set in Texas, Tennessee, and Mississippi in 1858, two years before the Civil War. Three main economic activities are depicted in the film: bounty hunting and the slave trade and, secondarily, the slave-dependent cotton plantation business. The stress placed on the money made from the slavery and bounty hunting renders *Django* an economic space in what can be called a market of flesh, or, as Dr King Schulz describes his activity, “flesh for cash”. Due to the link between economic dominance and hegemonic masculinity discussed in relation to the characters of Randall Bragg and Al Swearingen, the hegemonic masculinity of the South is built around the figure of the White land and slave owner. This kind of hegemonic masculinity, of which Calvin Candie is the example in this film, is constructed on the basis of racism against Black masculinities, as “hegemonic masculinity among Whites sustains the institutional oppression and physical terror that have framed the making of

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<sup>18</sup> In addition, it should be noted that the use of intertextual references and pastiche are trademarks of the director and writer of the film, Quentin Tarantino. Furthermore, Tarantino has developed a stylistic and iconographic relation to the Western in films such as *Kill Bill*, *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), *Django Unchained*, and *The Hateful Eight* (2015).



masculinities in black communities” (Connell, 1995: 80). As Rob Kroes has pointed out, the presence of such racist domination is not only highlighted in the plot or the dialogue; it solidifies in the *mise-en-scène* and depicts “the South as lived by the Blacks” (2015: 58). For instance, the presentation of the town of Daughtrey, Texas, is constructed through an exchange of looks between Django, who is riding a horse, and the townsfolk, who have never seen a Black man on horseback. The editing and framing of the scene concentrate the gazes of the town’s inhabitants on Django, thereby stressing the racism inherent in the assumption that riding is reserved for White people. One first close-up of Django as he looks around in slow motion marks that the scene expresses his perspective. Then, he is framed in a high-angle general view, and his head is reframed by the noose of a rope (see figure 20), which stresses the danger of lynching that is always present in the South (Kroes, 2015: 58). An exchange of shots and reverse shots between Django and the town’s inhabitants, who look at him from several angles, follows. The scene culminates as Dr Schulz and Django enter the bar, and the bartender turns around. As he looks at Django, an aggressive zoom shows him in close-up, as a final signal of the town’s racial hatred. The conception of gender hegemony within the diegesis of the South in 1858 is suffused with a discourse about “whiteness”, as “the myth of white superiority earns historical determinacy from a hegemony of racist practices that position those beyond the white ‘ideal’ in economically, politically, and ideologically exploitive and degrading conditions” (Bernardi, 1996: 105). This racist bias in the acquisition of hegemonic masculinity has been suppressed in the classic Western through the myth of the Southern gentleman, both chivalrous and tough in the guise of Warshow’s Westerner. This type has been personified by actors such as Gary Cooper, who played this role in films including *Dallas* (1950, Stuart Heisler) and *Vera Cruz* (see figure 21).<sup>19</sup>



*Figure 20. Racism is seen from Django’s perspective. Django Unchained/The Weinstein Company.*

<sup>19</sup> The myth of the Southern gentleman devised as such usually presents a former officer of the Confederate Army who has suffered defeat and the destruction of his home and family at the hands of Northern soldiers. He gets himself enrolled in missions the ultimate aim of which is to acquire enough money to rebuild his lost property. Although deadly with a gun, the Southern gentleman always upholds a set of values in which honour is more important than life, as with Warshow’s Westerner. This depiction of the Southern gentleman romanticises the fact that he was often a slave owner and it turns the defeat of the South into a nostalgic injustice, hence suppressing the regime of slavery and racism that supported the economy of the US South.



Figure 21. Gary Cooper as the Southern gentleman. Vera Cruz/United Artists.

In *Django*, these mechanisms of repression are exposed through the *mise-en-scène* and deconstructed through the use of two strategies. With the first of these, the figure of the Southern gentleman, along with the Southern aristocratic culture, is ridiculed, as embodied by Calvin Candie and his sister Lara Lee (Laura Cayouette). Calvin Candie is shown as an ignorant man who claims to be a Francophile, but does not speak French, and who names one of his Mandingo slaves D'Artagnan, but has never read Alexandre Dumas. In addition, Laura Lee bears the features of hegemonic femininity as explained in relation to Allie French in *Appaloosa*: she plays music and sees that everything on the household is decent and proper. However, those traits are placed in the narrative in such a way that they are rendered affected and ridiculous.

With the second strategy, the construction of Django and his achievement of hegemonic masculinity enacts a reversal of the White and racist paradigm. Django starts the film framed from the back, showing the scars of the whipping he has endured and walking in chains. However, he ends the film on horseback, dressed in Calvin Candie's elegant clothes, and watching Candyland being destroyed, alongside Broomhilda (see figures 22 and 23). It can be noted that there is a spatial aspect of hegemony related to the verticality that Django acquires when riding a horse. On four different occasions, characters point out Django's riding: in the scene mentioned above in Daughtrey, during the visit to Big Daddy's (Don Johnson) plantation, on the ride toward Candyland, and in the first meeting between Django and Stephen. Through riding, Django defies the distribution of the space according to the racist postulates inherent in the South and is literally elevated from his initial condition as a slave.



Figure 22 and 23. Django's first and last appearances in the film. Django Unchained/The Weinstein Company.

However, the primary tool in Django's rising trajectory is violence. It is through his extremely skilful use of the gun that Django "unchains" himself from the "physical or economic violence [that] backs up a dominant cultural pattern" (Connell, 1987: 298), in this case, that of the White racist South. Django exerts a reversal of the violence which results in the destruction of the dominant cultural pattern both physically and discursively. It should be noted that Stuart Hall has located as main traits of Black culture how "style [...] has become *itself* the subject of what is going on"; how Black American communities have constructed "the deep structure of their cultural life in music"; and how the bodies of Black males and females have been devised as "the canvases of representation" (1992: 128-129; italics in the origi-

nal). Django's hegemonic masculinity is asserted through the conjugation of music, style and bodily representation in three different moments. The first is the killing of the Brittle brothers on Big Daddy's plantation, as the style resembles that of spaghetti-Western duels and the soundtrack of the original *Django* (1966, Sergio Corbucci) can be heard. The second of these moments is the shootout following Calvin Candie's death, when Django kills a large number of—White—enemies in slow motion, with the rap song *Unchained* (2012, James Brown and 2Pac) as the soundtrack. The final moment is that of the explosion that destroys Candyland, which is observed by Django against a background of the song *Trinity* (2012, Annibale E I Cantori Moderni), from the original soundtrack of *They Call Me Trinity* (1970, Enzo Barboni). It can be argued that these three moments, shown as symbols of hegemonic masculinity, are embedded in Black American culture as articulated by Hall, thus rendering Black culture itself hegemonic.

Race relations and hegemonic masculinity relations are personified in two pairs of characters: Django and Dr Schulz on the one hand, and Stephen and Calvin Candie on the other hand. The race relations between the Black and White characters differ between the pairs. Dr Schulz frees Django from slaveholders and provides the means for him to achieve hegemonic masculinity. These means are economic, since Schulz invests in a horse, clothes and a trade tool—that is, a gun—for Django; educational, as Schulz teaches Django his profession of bounty hunting, which also allows Django to access power through violence; and emotional, for Schulz agrees to help Django to rescue Broomhilda. Their relationship is based on collaboration and trust, not on ownership and domination. Moreover, Schulz is present as the opposite of Calvin Candie because he upholds a set of humanistic values, including literacy and the rejection of cruelty, that separate him from the slave owner. This is a subtle distinction, since Schulz does make a living by killing people, but the contradiction is resolved by showing him working within the limits of the law and abhorring Candie's cruel games. Stephen also holds a significant amount of power in Candyland, as he is Calvin Candie's confidant, factotum and spy, and the ruler of Candyland once Candie is killed. His degree of dominance, however, comes from Candie's realisation of the usefulness of his service, and especially from the effectiveness with which Stephen becomes an essential piece of the machinery of repression. Stephen and Calvin Candie can thus be seen as racist reversals of Django and Dr Schulz, and that reversion can be considered as an assertion that "like 'race', 'white' as a category of human beings is determined by history" (Bernardi, 1996: 105). Racism is rendered, then, a choice, and not a natural state of affairs. In another sense, the representation of Django and Stephen escapes the stereotypes that have determined Black representation in Hollywood films according to Donald Bogle, who includes in this category "the tom [...], the coon, the tragic mulatto, the mammy, and the brutal black buck" (1994: 4). These kinds of character

were portrayed as stupid, infantile, affable or primitively evil, and were situated far from gender hegemony.<sup>20</sup> However, Django and Stephen are intelligent, dominant males who achieve hegemonic masculinity in their respective realms through a violent contest.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that *Django*'s discourse eludes the complexity of framing Black representation in a post-industrial context. First, the setting of the film in a pre-industrial context the economy of which is based on the cotton trade and slavery/servitude simplifies the embodiment of oppression. In this sense, Candyland can be compared with pre-Revolutionary France. The mansion is blown up with dynamite in the same way as the Bastille in France was stormed and demolished because oppression is personified in the absolute King/slave owner Calvin Candie. Django and Schulz's killing of Candie and their destruction of Candyland are part of the kind of simplistic cause-and-effect chain of events that it is no longer possible to address in a capitalist world: the blame cannot be placed on a single person or place. Furthermore, Django's actions are selfishly motivated and, although they provide relief to fellow Black slaves, this is not their intention. In this sense, the close-up of one of the slaves who travel with Django after he has been imprisoned smiling when he sees the hero returning to Candyland should be stressed as a sign of the hegemonic place that Django acquires in the eyes of the Black community (see figure 24). However, this community is not articulated collectively but is instead seen as profiting from Django's individualistic and selfish exploits. *Django* thus presents individual solutions to collective problems in a fantasised way. In this sense, it is worth considering whether the blowing up of the mansion and the massive shootout in *Django* are merely expressions of a White fantasy of Black liberation that offers no real solutions.



Figure 24. Approval shown by the Black community toward Django. *Django Unchained/The Weinstein Company*.

20 Classic Westerns have drawn on these stereotypes on occasion in order to represent Black characters. It can be said that Woody Strode played a set of toms in several films by John Ford, most prominently the faithful servant Pompey in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) and Sergeant Rutledge in the homonymous film (1960). Furthermore, as Bogle has asserted (see 1994: 3-18), the brutal black buck had its cinematic debut with *The Birth of a Nation* (1915, D.W. Griffith). In addition, there has been a set of mammies in Westerns or Southern films, such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939, Victor Fleming) with Hattie McDaniel and *The Horse Soldiers* (1959, John Ford) with Althea Wilson.

In conclusion, *Django* provides some powerful iconography in the figure of the Black gunslinger who kills every White oppressor. With Django's victory, the film breaks the pattern stressed by Manthia Diawara in which "the Black male subject always appears to lose in the competition for the symbolic position of the father or authority figure" (1988: 216), and thus becomes empowering imagery. However, its inability to present a solution from an economically realistic point of view renders the film a fantasy revenge tale. At the end of *Django*, Candyland is destroyed, granted, but the economic and racist system upon which it was built remains intact. As Stephen warns before dying: "There will always be a Candyland".<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3.2 Hell on Wheels: *Strategies of Resistance and Integration in the Industrial Society*

While *Django Unchained* was set two years before the Civil War, the story of *Hell on Wheels* begins at its end. Seeking revenge for the murder of his wife and son, former Confederate officer and plantation owner Cullen Bohannon (Anson Mount) reaches Hell on Wheels, the base camp where the transcontinental railroad is being built. Bohannon convinces the president of the Union Pacific Railroad, Thomas Durant (Colm Meany), to hire him as the foreman to lead the construction works. Bohannon befriends two Irish brothers, Mickey (Phil Burke) and Sean McGinnes (Ben Esler), and establishes an uneasy alliance-turned-friendship with the leader of the Black labourers, Elam Ferguson (Common). Over the five seasons of the series, Bohannon, Elam and a wide array of other characters deal with numerous problems that are encountered in the completion of the railroad.

It can be noted that, whereas *Django* depicted a pre-industrial society, *Hell on Wheels* is set at the precise moment at which the USA is reaching full-scale industrialisation. Durant presents the transcontinental railroad as the symbol of that industrial society and as a national endeavour that has the potential to heal the North-South fracture that resulted from the war. In the town of Hell on Wheels, several ethnic groups try to adapt to the economic mandates of that new capitalist-industrial society. Although the series depicts the struggles of several racial minorities, including Native Americans and Chinese workers, for the purposes of this thesis the focus will be placed on the group of Black masculinities. This decision is justified on the grounds that it enables a comparative analysis with *Django Unchained*, which can help to identify the differences between the economic frameworks depicted in the features. Besides, the Black community is developed to a more significant extent than those of the Native

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<sup>21</sup> Quentin Tarantino addressed the issue of race and the Western in his subsequent film, *The Hateful Eight*. Unlike *Django*, *The Hateful Eight* is set in a post-Civil War context and populated by characters that have actively participated in it. However, it is similar to *Django Unchained* in the sense that the alliances and rivalries between Black Union veteran Major Marquis Warren (Samuel L. Jackson), and Confederacy veterans General Sandy Smithers (Bruce Dern) and Sheriff Chris Mannix (Walton Goggins) are not inscribed in a wider political context. Rather, they are determined by the enclosed dramatic conditions of the plot.

American—which is seen only in the first two seasons—and the Asian American—portrayed exclusively during the fifth season.

White masculinities dominate the capitalist world of *Hell on Wheels*, and Black, Native American and Asian masculinities are subordinated to them. In this sense, the distribution of power in the diegesis of the series answers to Bernardi's assertion that "the discourse has consistently relegated Native, Latino, Asian, and African Americans to the very bottom of the racial privilege ladder" (1996: 106). The series thus acknowledges its limitations in its representation of race. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss first the contest over hegemony between two White masculinities, those of Bohannon and Durant, because it is against them that the strategies of resistance of Elam Ferguson and the other Black leader, Psalms (Dohn Norwood), are shaped. Bohannon and Durant enact the competition between the Westerner and the entrepreneur as seen in *Appaloosa* and *Deadwood*. However, in most of the runtime they do agree with each other, in particular regarding their attitude toward the Black workers, and they collaborate in order to achieve their common goal. In this sense, both Bohannon and Durant enact a more progressive approach, albeit one that is not exempt from ambivalence and a degree of racism. Bohannon, a former slave owner, is first employed as the walking boss of the Black workers' crew because the foreman relies on him to handle them. However, Bohannon develops an alliance with Elam Ferguson to reach agreements with the crew, which develops into a friendship when Bohannon saves Elam from lynching and Elam saves Bohannon from being shot by the foreman. From that point on, their relationship is based on shared blood spilling and entails some violence (see figure 25). Bohannon also befriends Psalms, the other Black leader, who hires him in the fourth season because he sees that he is respected. Durant has a more egalitarian vision, but in a negative way, since his view is that *every* man and woman is to be dominated. In this sense, Black workers are a useful commodity for him, as a labour force, and he has no problems with employing Elam Ferguson as his personal gunman when he sees his potential. Durant explains his conception of the Black workers to Thor Gunderson (Christopher Heyerdahl), the series villain, after the attempted lynching of Elam Ferguson in the first season: "Those freedmen work twice as hard for half the pay". Black workers are, then, a cheap labour force subject to economic inequality because of their race.



*Figure 25. Bohannon and Elam's friendship is based on a shared display of violence. Hell on wheels/ AMC.*

This description of the main White masculinities and their competition for hegemony leads on to a discussion of how Black masculinities face the racism inherent in both individual White people and the structures of the early industrial State symbolised by the railroad. In this sense, two divergent strategies of resistance and integration are shown, one embodied by Elam Ferguson, and the other by Psalms. At the beginning of the series, Elam leads the Black workers in showing an aggressive and combative attitude toward Bohannon which, at first, produces results. Bohannon comes to respect Elam personally, and some improvements in labour conditions are achieved for the Black workers, such as their right to carry weapons to defend themselves against Native American attacks, and access to the town's economic activities, which involve prostitution and alcohol consumption. Furthermore, Elam himself raises his status after being taught to shoot by Bohannon and facing the lynch mob. From that moment, Elam becomes a gunfighter in the service of Durant, which allows him to increase his economic revenue. However, it also detaches him from the Black community of Hell on Wheels, as he is seen as wanting to "become" a White boss. Elam Ferguson thus shares the radical approach of Django, as he tries to counteract racist violence with his violent proficiency in wielding a pistol (see figure 26).

Elam engages in a relationship with Eva (Robin McLeavy), one of the camp's White prostitutes of the camp, which results in the creation of a lynch mob. Elam asserts his right to maintain his relationship by killing the mob with the help of Bohannon, but the violence that lies at the core of that White-Black engagement results in gender violence, with Elam trying to control Eva's decisions. In this sense, Elam enacts the contradiction that "certain ways in which black men continue to live out their counteridentities as black masculinities and replay those fantasies of black masculinities in the theaters of popular culture are, when viewed from along other axes of



difference, the very masculine identities that are oppressive to women” (Hall, 1992: 131). However, the industrial space of *Hell on Wheels* is more complex than that of pre-industrial racist absolutism, and the radically violent strategy that was successful for Django results in failure for Elam: the character is attacked by a bear while trying to save Bohannon in the third season, which leaves him mentally ill. In the fourth season, Bohannon performs a mercy killing when Elam becomes a danger both to him and to others. This untimely death depicts more realistic violence than the shootouts in *Django*. The radical approach of Elam, like that of Django, reveals the limitations of race and representation when addressed from an exclusively violent perspective.



Figure 26. Elam enacts a radical and violent approach toward liberation. *Hell on Wheels*/AMC

Psalms' tactic of integration opposes Elam's strategy of violent resistance. As Elam detaches himself from the Black workers' community, Psalms becomes its new leader. Rather than presenting a violent opposition, Psalms' grounds his claim for equality in a defiant attitude that involves professionalism in the construction works and the collective effort of the entire group. Unlike Elam Ferguson, who has left the community in order to improve his own conditions, Psalms conceives the overcoming of structural racism as an endeavour that can be achieved only through collective struggle. He is regarded as the hegemonic masculinity within the Black workers, but also by Bohannon and Durant, who value the Black workforce as a primary asset. This strategy allows Psalms to become one of the main working-level bosses in the Union Pacific Railroad, and even enables him to re-hire Bohannon as a low-level worker after his return to camp in the fourth season. Furthermore, the input of the Black workers is rendered fundamental for the building of the railroad when, in S05E13, Psalms decides to switch sides and follow

Bohannon and his Central Pacific Railroad instead of Durant, which grants Bohannon victory in the railroad race (see figure 27).



Figure 27. *Psalms* grants Bohannon victory in the railroad race. *Hell on Wheels*/AMC.

*Hell on Wheels* then depicts two strategies for Black masculinities that answer to what Hall has described as either “the essentializing moment” or “a contradictory space” (1992: 128-130) of Black culture. On the one hand, Elam Ferguson “sees differences as ‘their traditions versus ours’, not in a positional way, but in a mutually exclusive, autonomous, and self-sufficient one” (1992: 130). It can be argued that his approach is justified by the suffering he has been subject to by slavery and racism. However, such a strategy is rendered ineffectual in the context of industrial society, as it results in his death. On the other hand, *Psalms* embodies a “strategic contestation [which] can never be simplified or explained in terms of the simple binary oppositions that are still habitually used to map it out: high versus low, resistance versus incorporation; authentic versus inauthentic; experiential versus formal; opposition versus homogenization” (1992: 128). *Psalms* engages the contradiction of being simultaneously compliant and resistant, but this allows him to be successfully assimilated into the complexities of the industrial State alongside his community, thus undermining the hegemony held by White masculinities.

In conclusion, both *Django Unchained* and *Hell on Wheels* present strategies of resistance from Black masculinities that conceive race and racism as categories rooted in history. Whereas *Django* portrays an essentialising strategy that is successful for its protagonist because of the simplicity of the pre-industrial moment, that same strategy is no longer valid once the State enters its industrial stage. Elam Ferguson cannot imitate *Django* in his violent approach to the assertion of his Black masculinity, and it is *Psalms* who becomes a functional member of capitalist society. However, it should be noted that in both films, even certain of their Black characters

achieve improvements in their respective conditions, the structure of White domination remains intact. Django destroys Candyland, but the slavery-based economy of the South is unchallenged until the beginning of the Civil War two years later. Furthermore, even though *Psalms* has the power to decide who wins the race between the railroad companies, the ownership of those companies and the accumulation of capital remains in the hands of the hegemonic masculinities of White capitalist entrepreneurs. In this sense, both features are aligned with the assertion that “in almost every instance, the representation of black people on the commercial screen has amounted to one grand, multifaceted illusion. For blacks have been subordinated, marginalized, positioned, and devalued in every possible manner to glorify and relentlessly hold in place the white-dominated symbolic order and racial hierarchy of American society” (Guerrero, 1993: 2). Although Black masculinities in contemporary Westerns have broken the barrier of suppression and have embodied empowering images, the depiction of the struggle for equality as an individual endeavour rather than a structural one renders the genre’s approach on race and equal representation far from complete.

### **3.4 Contemporary Masculinities and Western Iconography**

To conclude this chapter, the last section will address films that do not fit the working definition of the Western as provided in the Introduction of this thesis, particularly in relation to their being set in a specific time and place. Nonetheless it can be considered that they are Westerns or, at least, that they utilise some of the traits of the genre in order to construct their discourses. As mentioned in section 3.2 about *Brokeback Mountain*, these films share with more classic examples of the Western a vocation for representing US social and political issues. In order to do so, they create frontier spaces through the use of iconography and some central themes, which are developed as generic traits. In this sense, Fernández-Santos provides a theoretical framework to include them within the genre when he states that the Western has endured “a most subtle mutation of the old ritualised model into a linguistic model, transferable to other scenic spaces, rather than the historical and traditional ones from which [the genre] was born” (1987: 62; author’s translation). Fernández-Santos, alongside Richard Slotkin (1984: 429), recognises the sci-fi genre and the cop thriller as key examples of these films that lie “beyond the West” (1987: 62; author’s translation).

In addition, in this section stress is placed on the spread of the conventions of the Western in modern-set films, rather than on the particularities of individual films. This means that the thoroughness of text analysis of individual films is forfeited in order to account for the utilisation of Western iconography in contemporary US cinema. Therefore, rather than two case studies, three films and one TV series will be discussed here, paired up as follows: *Solo: A Star Wars Story* and *Logan*, and *Justified*

and *Hell or High Water*. In order to investigate how contemporary masculinities are devised in these features, the bodies of the characters will be addressed as discursive elements. In the context of hegemonic masculinity and male body theory, Connell advocates for “a stronger theoretical position, where bodies are seen as sharing in social agency, in generating and shaping courses of social conduct” (1995: 60). Connell coins the concept of “body-reflexive practices” to denominate the manner in which “particular versions of masculinity are constituted in their circuits as meaningful bodies and embodied meanings. Through body-reflexive practices, more than individual lives are formed: a social world is formed” (1995: 64). Bodies thus acquire a social dimension without being turned completely into a symbol, that is, without losing their physical dimension. The social and the biological interact in order for bodies to be “drawn into history, without ceasing to be bodies” (1995: 64). In other words, as Thomas Gerschik postulates, the “physical construction of bodies, then, is intimately linked to social construction” (2005: 369). In addition, the body becomes a key element in Judith Butler’s theory of gender, as she states that “the body becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and ‘existing’ one’s body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms” (1987: 28-29). Butler sees gender as a performative construction that takes place “on the surface of the body”. Therefore, “if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true or false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (1990a: 110-111). It is appropriate to suffuse the analysis of these modern-set Westerns with body theory since the Western is “one genre whose currency and agency always revolves around the body rather than speech” (Needham, 2010:53). Hence, the analysis of how bodies are constructed, deconstructed or outright destroyed can provide significant insights into how masculinity is related to contemporary issues such as politics, violence, sexuality and the family. Moreover, it will be discussed how they contribute to decoding and queering the masculine gender—and genre.

### **3.4.1 Solo and Logan: *The Construction of Contemporary Masculinity through Fantasy***

The first two features to be considered place the construction of masculinities in fantastic worlds, as they belong, respectively, to the genres of science fiction and superheroes. The hybridisation between these genres and the Western in both films is produced through the use of the “professional plot” (Wright, 1975: 85), in which the heroes are “men willing to defend society only as a job they accept for pay or for love of fighting, not from commitment to the ideas of love and justice” (Wright, 1975: 85).<sup>22</sup> In this case, young Han Solo (Alden Ehrenreich) is planning to steal some powerful fuel for the Crimson Tide mob, whereas Logan (Hugh Jackman) has to take young mutant Laura (Dafne Keen) and Professor Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) to North Dakota in exchange for

<sup>22</sup> Wright proposes as classic examples of this plot *Rio Bravo* (1959, Howard Hawks), *The Professionals* (1966, Richard Brooks), *The Wild Bunch* (1969, Sam Peckinpah) and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969, George Roy Hill).

20,000 dollars.<sup>23</sup> The visual iconography of the Western plays an essential role in both films, but one main difference can be found between them: while Han Solo is a young hero at the beginning of his exploits, the Wolverine of *Logan* is an old man facing his death. It can be argued that this construction of the characters' age is conceived as a sort of series, much like in *Deadwood* and *Hell on Wheels*. While Wolverine has been played by Hugh Jackman nine times, and *Logan* is the final stage of Wolverine's development, *Solo* is a prequel that narrates the origin of a well-known character.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, in both instances, some previous knowledge about the protagonists informs their construction. This results in different uses of the male body and divergent constructions of hegemonic masculinity.

In *Solo*, the protagonist is associated with a heterosexual identity in the plot: his initial drive is to escape the planet Corellia with his girlfriend Qi'Ra (Emilia Clarke). When they get separated, Solo enrolls in the Imperial Army so as to become a pilot and come back for her. However, the bodily contact between the supposed lovers is never developed in the film. When they meet each other again in Dryden Vos' (Paul Bettany) ship, the vigilance of the film's villain makes physical interaction impossible, but they do not desire it either. A final reunion might have been possible after the villain's defeat, but Qi'Ra's decision to become the new lieutenant of Crimson Tide obliterates that possibility. Since no sexual engagement with Qi'Ra has been shown either before their escape or after, the hero's body remains pristine and virginal in a normative heterosexual context. Solo has close bodily interaction with another of the film's characters: the Wookie Chewbacca (Joonas Suotamo). They share multiple action scenes in which they carry or save each other, again in a show of homosociality that queers their identities. In addition, they even share the same shower, in the film's most eroticised scene (see figure 28), and Chewbacca decides to stay with Solo and leave the other group of Wookies.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the stability of the relationship between Solo and Chewbacca renders Solo's initial love interest as an anecdote that makes the asexuality of the character evident, as a "Peter Pan complex in which men prefer the joy of the incombustible games of the acrobatic adventure to the allegedly castrating atmosphere of the home" (Bou and Pérez, 2000: 22; author's translation). Furthermore, Solo is visually portrayed as embodying the

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23 As with Wright's examples, some subtleties are worth noting here. Logan and Han Solo are in it for the money, but they are also driven by their sense of honour and their feelings for the other characters of their respective films.

24 Namely, *X-Men* (2000, Bryan Singer), *X2* (2003, Bryan Singer), *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006, Brett Ratner), *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009, Gavin Hood), *X-Men: First Class* (2011, Matthew Vaughn), *The Wolverine* (2013, James Mangold), *X-Men: Days of the Future Past* (2014, Bryan Singer), *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016, Bryan Singer) and *Logan*. His roles in *First Class* and *Apocalypse* were limited to uncredited cameos.

25 Apart from Han Solo, another of the film's heroes is represented as queering the conventions of male characters in fantasy films: Lando Calrissian, as played by Donald Glover. Not only does Calrissian flirt with Solo, but he is engaged in a sort of sentimental relationship with L3-37 (Phoebe Waller-Bridge), his robot sidekick. When she is shot, Calrissian is genuinely in pain, to the point of crying. Jonathan Kasdan, the film's co-writer, has declared that he conceives of the character as "pansexual" (Nordine, May 17, 2018), thereby adding more fluidity to masculine personages in the Star Wars universe.

iconography of the Western hero. For instance, he participates in a train robbery, he wears his gun strapped to his hip in the manner of the Westerner—especially evident when he faces the Marauders (see figure 29)—and he participates in a final duel with his former mentor, which he wins by shooting first. Solo is hence related visually to the hegemonic masculinity of Warshow’s Westerner. Nevertheless, the representation of his body as asexual, except in relation to Chewbacca, decodes the heterosexuality of the classic Westerner and opens a field of possibilities for a Western hero whose gender is unequivocally masculine but whose sexuality is fluid and asexual.



*Figure 28. Han Solo and Chewbacca together in the shower. Solo: A Star Wars Story/Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.*



*Figure 29. Western iconography is used in the construction of Solo’s masculinity. Solo: A Star Wars Story/Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.*

It can be argued that *Logan* contrasts with *Solo* in the way in which it represents the male body. The display of Hugh Jackman’s muscular body has been a common trait of the character in previous Wolverine films, which counters the assertion that “there has been a strong taboo against portraying men’s bodies in similar ways [as pleasurable to the gaze], as this would pose a threat to the visual power of heterosexual men” (McKay, Mizoska and Hutchins, 2005: 271). *Logan*’s body, as Everett Hitch’s in

*Appaloosa*, endures the danger of seeking the external gaze. Furthermore, the portrayal of his body is closely related to a conception of hegemonic masculinity, since it is in his body that his superpowers lie: he can exert violence through his metal claws and he can withstand pain and external damage with his self-healing abilities. Therefore, Logan has been represented in previous films as a heterosexual because of his relationship with Jean Grey (Famke Janssen), and also as a hegemonic masculinity able to literally absorb any attack or challenge thrown at him. However, Logan as depicted in the homonymous feature corresponds to a different kind of masculinity. The film's first scene of the film, in which the character struggles to dispose of a gang of robbers, makes it clear that Logan's powers do not work as they used to. He does not heal as fast, his body is a heavy weight to carry, and he is dying. From that first scene to the end of the film, Logan's body is explicitly shown as riddled with bullets and ravaged by his nemesis' claws, until he is finally killed, pierced by a tree branch (see figure 30). Logan is no longer a representation of hegemonic masculinity able to endure everything. Furthermore, his sexuality disappears as he tries to protect his daughter Laura (Dafne Keen), who was born as a result of a DNA experiment and not a natural sexual encounter. Logan has a sense of the family, but it is a family to which he cannot belong, since he states that "bad shit happens to people I care about". In addition, *Logan* relies on the Western iconography of obsolescence that is related to the films of Sam Peckinpah, especially *The Wild Bunch*, as well as the political issues of the Tex-Mex border, and the intertextual use of *Shane* (1953, George Stevens) and *The Cowboys* (1972, Mark Rydell).<sup>26</sup> As a result, the post-sexual masculinity of Logan is rendered obsolescent in the face of the challenges of Donald Trump's USA. In this sense, the final persecution of the mutant children by Alkali contract soldiers resembles the representations of the US Border Patrol chasing Mexican immigrants, and it predates the separation of children from their parents at the border in Texas (Davis, June 15, 2018). The iconic image of the mutant popping his claws and roaring becomes then a bodily epitaph of his former prowess (see figure 31), just as obsolete as the members of the Wild Bunch in relation to Vietnam's America.



Figure 30. *Logan's body as a landscape of violence. Logan/Twentieth Century Fox.*

<sup>26</sup> In *The Cowboys*, one of the few films in which John Wayne's character is killed, the final burial scene features the group of children that Wayne was employing to drive cattle around a grave made of rocks. Logan's burial makes reference to that scene, thus reinforcing the link between the film and the Western genre.



Figure 31. The iconography of Wolverine blends with the iconography of the Western. Logan/ Twentieth Century Fox.

### 3.4.2 Justified and Hell or High Water: We Will Never Leave Harlan Alive

The issues of masculinity in the post-industrial, post-economic-crisis USA that *Logan* addresses from within a fantastic setting are directly faced by the protagonists of *Justified* and *Hell or High Water*. *Justified* presents US Marshall Raylan Givens (Timothy Olyphant) as he is ordered to come back to his birthplace of Harlan County, Kentucky, to help in the capture of criminal Boyd Crowder (Walton Goggins), a former friend from his youth. Boyd's sister-in-law, Ava Crowder (Joelle Carter), also gets involved in Boyd's activities, and the interplay between the three characters constitutes the core of the series' plot. *Justified* establishes its credentials as a modern-set Western from its very first shot, a low-angle mid-shot of Raylan's back and hat as he walks to face the thug Tommy Buckley (Peter Greene).<sup>27</sup> The scene is resolved with a duel, a figure that appears again in S06E13, the series finale. Raylan confronts Boon (Jonathan Tucker), a stylised mercenary villain in the tradition of Jack Wilson (Jack Palance) in *Shane*, at sundown and with a classic aesthetic construction of the scene based on a segmentation of the space through editing before the draw (see figure 32). Through his attire of hat, boots and the gun strapped to the hip, as well as his gallant manners, Raylan places on his own body the attributes of the classic Westerner as a way to achieve hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, his body becomes a pleasurable object for the gaze, and it is consciously shown to and desired by the female characters of the series—especially Ava, and Raylan's ex-wife, Winona (Natalie Zea).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> There is also continuity between *Justified* and the classic Western from an authorial perspective, since it is based on a short story by Elmore Leonard, *Fire in the Hole* (2001). Elmore Leonard, who is credited as executive producer of the series, wrote classic Western stories that were adapted for the screen, in films such as *The Tall T* (1957, Budd Boetticher) and *3:10 to Yuma* (1957, Delmer Daves).

<sup>28</sup> For instance, in S01E01, Ava is flirting with Raylan and makes an explicit reference to the use of his body: "Look at you licking your lips".





Figure 32. *The iconography of the Western duel.* Justified/FX.

However, Raylan’s use of his body as a modern reincarnation of the Westerner does not constitute an affirmative assertion of hegemonic masculinity, but rather a counteractive—and to some degree desperate—measure against the conditions of poverty created in the Appalachian region of the USA by globalisation and the post-industrial economy. Harlan County is a place where “globalization changes masculinities, reshaping the arena in which national and local masculinities are articulated, and transforming the shape of men’s lives” (Kimmel, 2005: 414). Raylan, Boyd and Ava belong to the social and ethnic group of the *hillbillies*, whose origin lies in the Scottish and Irish immigrants who settled in the Appalachian region and were left stranded by the delocalisation of industry. Their complex social situation includes poverty, a decline in life expectancy, low levels of education, and a lack of will to change these conditions (Vance, 2015: 12-17). Boyd voices the point of the series in his last conversation with Raylan, when he states: “Sometimes I think that the only way to get out of our town alive is to never have been born there”. The frontier of the post-industrial USA, represented by Harlan, cannot be controlled or understood, and the individual’s only response is to escape from it. Raylan, Boyd and Ava differ only in their methods: Raylan tries to be the deadly, hegemonic Marshall; Boyd aims for hegemony within the realm of criminality; and Ava applies a feminine perspective to navigate between the two men. However, their goal is the same: that of leaving Harlan alive. It can be argued that the fictional community of Harlan represents the non-fictional social collective of the White working class. Furthermore, the support that this collective provides for Donald Trump’s run for the presidency constitutes its attempt to counteract post-industrial conditions—in other words, to escape Harlan alive.

There is, nevertheless, a positive element at the end of *Justified*: the children, and the possibility that they embody. Raylan and Winona's daughter and Ava and Boyd's son are born outside Harlan, and they benefit from their parents' struggle to escape the class hierarchy symbolised by the town. However, this does not come without sacrifice. Ava must live alone as a fugitive, and Boyd must remain in jail unaware of the existence of his child. Furthermore, Raylan has enough contact with his ex-wife's family to be considered a father, but he is not allowed within its limits of it. His masculinity, although sexualised throughout the series, is rendered post-familial and outdated.

A similar post-industrial US landscape is traversed by the protagonists of *Hell or High Water*: the Howard brothers. Tanner (Ben Foster) and Toby Howard (Chris Pine) rob several branches of the Texas Midlands bank in order to avoid losing their family ranch and they are hunted down by the rangers Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges) and Alberto Parker (Gil Birmingham). Kimmel claims that "it is the lower middle class—those strata of independent farmers, small shopkeepers, craft and highly skilled workers, and small-scale entrepreneurs—who have been hit hardest by the processes of globalization", which leads to the "proletarianization of local peasantries" (2005: 414-416). The Tanners cannot support themselves with their impoverished ranch, and this leads them to work as "roughnecks" drilling gas and oil, to rob stores and to make a living out of hunting coyotes. The Texas plains are no longer the virgin land of possibilities of the classic Western but instead are full of oil drillers and loan advertisements (see figure 33). *Hell or High Water* thus establishes a Western code by suffusing the landscape with that meaning. Besides, the Howards resemble the James brothers, and Western elements such as the hat, the duel, the sheriff, and even the posse, are present. As with the mythology of the James brothers discussed in section 3.1, the loss of hegemony by those globalised masculinities is sparked by the banks, in an explicit reference to the global economic crisis that has worsened even further the difficult conditions of life of the post-industrial US working class. The entire point of the film is voiced in the scene in which Marcus and Alberto encounter a group of cowboys who are running away from a fire with their cattle. One of them, played by the film's screenwriter, says: "21st century and I'm racing a fire with a herd of cattle".<sup>29</sup> When asked by Alberto if they should call for help, Marcus replies: "There's no one to call around here. These boys is on their own".

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29 After some years as a failed supporting actor (Ayuso, January 18, 2018), Taylor Sheridan's recent success as a screenwriter has placed him as one of the most prominent investigators of the contemporary frontier in the US. His physical presence in the film reinforces the sense of authorial continuum that pervades his work in *Sicario* (2015, Denis Villeneuve) and its sequel (2018, Stefano Sollima), *Hell or High Water*, *Wind River* (2017, Taylor Sheridan) and the TV series *Yellowstone* (2018-, John Linson and Taylor Sheridan).



Figure 33. Oil drillers spoil the landscape of Texas. *Hell or High Water*/CBS Films.

The Howard brothers and Marcus are also versions of masculinities who are on their own, and they face the challenge of the decay of industrial society in different ways. First, Tanner is violent and reckless, and Marcus assesses that he exerts that violence because he likes it. However, Tanner's references to the Comanche, "Lords of the Plains", and his own belief that he is a Comanche, as they are "enemies with everyone", speak of a radical and suicidal approach to asserting his masculinity. This attitude culminates in a shootout against the police, just as with Logan and Sam Peckinpah's characters. Secondly, Marcus, who is about to retire, chooses to uphold the law, even while acknowledging the corruption of institutions such as the bank. Furthermore, once he has retired and has inferred that it was Toby who engineered the robberies, his sense of "the law" and "justice" as concepts that are not equivalent leads him to threaten Toby with a reckoning. In this sense, Marcus is the closest character to Warshow's Westerner in the film. Finally, Toby is the most interesting character, since his decisions and representation are aligned with those of Raylan Givens. Like Raylan, Toby is displayed as a pleasurable object of the gaze, as he is framed in several shots at dusk against the landscape (see figure 34). Furthermore, he attracts the sexual interest of some of the females in the film, especially the waitress in the diner. However, in contrast to Raylan, his body is not used in a sexual capacity, and he does not seem to be aware of his nature as an objectified image.<sup>30</sup> He ignores the waitress' interest in him, and the interaction with his ex-wife is sexually indifferent.

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<sup>30</sup> In this sense, it is fruitful to compare Chris Pine's persona in *Hell or High Water* and *Wonder Woman* (2017, Patty Jenkins). In *Hell or High Water*, his body is displayed as an objectified image, but he lacks any kind of sexual attitude. However, he is seen naked in *Wonder Woman*, and there is an explicit reference to the size of his sexual attributes. This distinction shows the different portrayals of masculinities that the Western genre and the superhero genre offer.



Figure 34. Toby Howard as an objectified image. *Hell or High Water*/CBS Films.

In addition, there is a familial history behind the entire discourse of *Hell or High Water*. Tanner and Toby are the products of a family subdued by poverty and violence, to the extent that Tanner kills his own father to put an end to his physical abuse. Toby sacrifices his sexuality and his prospects in order to provide the means for his children to escape that imaginary Harlan that also exists in West Texas. As with Logan, Raylan and Solo, the hero forfeits his sexuality despite displaying his body in order to create a post-familial core from which he is also excluded. Raylan and Toby embody a “vague masculine resentment of the economic displacement, loss of autonomy, and collapse of domestic patriarchy that accompany further integration into the global economy” (Kimmel, 2005: 416). Neither Raylan nor Toby can leave Harlan alive, but they can provide the conditions for their children to do so.

### 3.4.3 Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from considering these films together. First, their male protagonists are more explicitly violent than those in classic Westerns. Solo is deadly with a blaster and shoots it first, and Logan’s claws ravage his enemies’ bodies. However, their sexual identities are rendered inefficient, undesirable or non-existent. In addition, their violence brings with it consequences for their bodies and their identities. Toby Howard, Logan and Raylan Givens renounce their sexualities in order to protect their families, whereas Han Solo embodies a queer identity in which sexuality is not a prominent feature. Furthermore, the display of the male body as a desirable object—Han Solo, Toby Howard, Raylan Givens—or as a landscape of violence—Logan—poses a paradox in which male bodies are visually omnipresent but are contained when it comes to representing the relation between masculinity and the family. It should be noted that the classic Western heroes are usually left out of home environments: Jimmy Ringo (Gregory Peck) is shot in the back and killed in *The Gunfighter* (1950, Henry King)

when he is about to reunite with his wife and son, Shane rides away from the Starretts' homestead, and the door of the house is closed on Ethan Edwards. In this sense, the iconic image of the door closing on Ethan Edwards aligns him with Logan, Solo and Toby Howard with regard to iconography and sexuality. Edwards forfeits his sexuality in order to build the familial haven, as does Toby Howard. In addition, he embodies Solo and Seth Bullock's homosociality because he is more comfortable in masculine environments than in familiar surroundings—weddings, for instance. Therefore, the history of the Western might require a retrospective discussion that considers the role of homosociality in its masculine heroes. The classic Western hero intervenes in order to create familial havens that are portrayed as functional, while the new male hero has a more variable rate of success. These masculinities are inscribed in the post-industrial, post-9/11, post-Donald Trump USA, in which social situation the iconography of the Western is not enough to overcome the challenges. The post-familial, post-sexual Westerner has lost his uncontested hegemony.

## 4. GENDER HEGEMONY AND FEMININITIES

### 4.1 Film Form and Femininities: *Hostiles* and *Meek's Cutoff*

Following the symmetrical outline of this research, the first section of this chapter dedicated to femininities will deal with the relation between aesthetic choice and the construction of femininities in the Western. Specifically, the distinction between neo-classic film form and slow film form will be reproduced in order to assert how the Western might be formulating non-hegemonic femininities and how the decision to use one of these aesthetic forms rather than the other might influence such discourse. In order to investigate this notion, the analysis will focus first on *Hostiles* as an example of the application of neo-classic strategies. Then *Meek's Cutoff* will be discussed under in the light of slow film theory as explained in the homologous section of the previous chapter.

#### 4.1.1 *Hostiles: Non-Hegemonic Femininity through Neo-Classic Film Form*

Before starting the discussion, it might be useful to insist that for the purposes of this research neo-classic film form is understood as “great expressive balance, communicational functionality and imperceptibility of linguistic mediation” (Casetti and Di Chio, 1990: 101; author’s translation). It has also been described as “American and, therefore, politically determined; narrative in the strictest tradition of the 19th century; and industrial, that is, a producer of calibrated products” (Aumont et al., 1980: 93; author’s translation). Since the 1990s, there has been a set of films that have utilised such aesthetic strategies to situate strong female characters within the Western.<sup>31</sup> These films have created a steady trend of post-2000 feminocentric Westerns which rely on neo-classic strategies to develop their approaches regarding femininity and the Western. Although an extensive analysis of this group of films has yet to be conducted, the existence of these features contradicts Paryz’s assertion that “the genre’s revisionism in the new millennium appears somewhat to be muted, especially in comparison with race- and gender-oriented agendas of some productions from the preceding decade” (2015: 3-4).

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31 For instance, Madeleine Stowe played Cora Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992, Michael Mann), as the frontier woman following the male protagonist Hawkeye (Daniel Day-Lewis) and also Cody Zamora, the leader of the all-female group of *Bad Girls*, which has been described as “an exceptionally unimaginative rip-off” (Keller, 2001: 37) of *The Wild Bunch*. Furthermore, *The Ballad of Little Jo* was defined as a “straightforwardly feminist Western” (McGee, 2007: 76) with its story of a woman who poses as a man in order to survive in the West, and *The Quick and the Dead* enacted a female reversal of the Man with No Name through the character played by Sharon Stone. Moreover, fighting mothers were portrayed by Cate Blanchett in *The Missing* (2003, Ron Howard) and Natalie Portman in *Jane Got a Gun*. More examples of female protagonists can be found in the young girl (Hailee Steinfeld) who hires a US Marshal to avenge her father in *True Grit*, the troubled but independent farmer (Hilary Swank) of *The Homesman* (2014, Tommy Lee Jones) and the vengeful widow (January Jones) of *Sweetwater*.

For the purposes of this research, however, the analysis will be centred on the character of Rosalee Quaid (Rosamund Pike), the female protagonist of *Hostiles*. The plot of *Hostiles* follows Captain Joe Blocker (Christian Bale) as he is ordered to escort Cheyenne Chief Yellow Hawk (Wes Studi), a former war enemy, and his family to their sacred burial place in Montana. Along the road, Blocker's party finds Rosalee, the sole survivor of a Comanche attack that has resulted in the murder of her husband and three children. While Rosalee is dealing with the trauma, Blocker leads the group on a journey of self-discovery and reconciliation in the face of the dangers of the violent frontier. The film is therefore partially related to "the captivity narrative" (1996: 35), one of the critical narrative frameworks stressed by Richard Maltby as (mis)representing Native Americans in the Western. The comparative analysis with *Meek's Cutoff* is thus justified, since both films provide discursive approaches to the relation between the Native American represented as the racial other and femininity.

Rosalee is subjected to the gender order of the Western frontier, understood in *Hostiles* not as the "line of most rapid and effective Americanization" (Turner, 1994: 33) but as the realm of indiscriminate violence. Rosalee starts the film teaching grammar to her daughters while her husband works on the family ranch. She is, then, part of a division of labour in which both heads of the family contribute to the common economic and cultural wealth, with Rosalee carrying out an intellectual task directed at improving the education of her daughters and her husband providing the physical effort. They thus enact what can be seen as a mind-body split between the couple. However, the Comanche attack and subsequent murder of her entire family demonstrates that Rosalee occupies a weak position within the structure of power, since she is vulnerable not only to violence from the Comanche party, but also to the group of trappers who kidnap her and the Chief's daughters. Furthermore, not only is she unable to resist the attackers, but she is also dependent on Captain Blocker for protection and sustenance. Connell has highlighted that "the hierarchies and work-forces of institutionalized violence — military and paramilitary forces, police, prison systems" (1987: 184) are male and, in this case, represented by Blocker and his loyalty to the military institution of the US Cavalry. The only way in which Rosalee can free herself from the structure of power and regain her agency is by picking up a rifle and initiating the final shootout against the rancher Cyrus Lounde (Scott Wilson) (see figure 35). At the beginning of the film she possessed agency, and was transmitting it to her children through education, and by the end of the film she has re-acquired it through an active exertion of violence. Finally, the violence of the structure of power is reflected in the structure of cathexis, since Rosalee is raped by the trappers—although the rape occurs off-screen. Rape, then, is used as another violent weapon against the female in the West as depicted by *Hostiles*. Exchanging education for violence, as a form of reversal between masculine and feminine values, is thus suggested by the film as the only way to access female agency.



Figure 35. Rosalee regains agency through violence. *Hostiles*/Entertainment Studios Motion Picture.

It has been explained that the film's plot and the conception of the structural models of the gender order relate *Hostiles* to captive narratives. Specifically, the first scene of the film references *The Searchers*. First, the massacre occurs on a familiar farm, like that of the Edwards clan in Ford's film. Secondly, as Rosalee's husband steps outside and fires his rifle against the attackers, he is framed by the doorway in the same manner as in the iconic initial and final shots of *The Searchers* (see figures 36 and 37). Later, Captain Blocker and two of his soldiers are also framed in this way. Finally, a deranged Rosalee holding her dead baby and asking for silence because he is asleep reminds the audience of the female captive that Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) and Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) find holding a doll. Its links with captive narratives and *The Searchers* thus situates *Hostiles* within what Janet Walker has called "traumatic Westerns" (2001a: 221). According to Walker, the genre is not only historical in the sense that it represents a certain period of history, but many of its instances are also "*internally historical*" (2001a: 220; italics in the original), marked by "catastrophic past event[s] [that] propel the actions and the retaliatory violence of the narrative" (2001a: 220). In these films, Walker proposes, "the contradictions of American conquest—a kind of generalized trauma—become invested in particular narrative scenarios" (2001a: 221).







*Figure 36 and 37 Hostiles establishes its neo-classic code by referencing The Searchers. Hostiles/Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures. The Searchers/Warner Bros.*

As a result of this, masculinities and femininities in *Hostiles* have to deal with trauma in order to be constructed. First, Captain Blocker is influenced by the trauma of his war experiences against Native Americans. He is regarded as a hegemonic version of masculinity within the Army: he knows his men by name, they respect him, and he is admired as a war hero. However, Blocker departs from the classic hegemonic masculinity of the Western in one sense: he expresses feelings. He is capable of crying, and he does so on several occasions in the film: when he is saying goodbye to Corporal Henry Woodson; when he mourns his friend, Sergeant Thomas Metz (Rory Cochrane); and before deciding to jump on the train with Rosalee and Little Bear (see figure 38). However, Blocker acknowledges his responsibility in the generalised trauma mentioned by Walker, that is, the genocide of the Native Americans. Chief Yellow Hawk and his family endure the trauma of being conquered, captured and displaced. Finally, Rosalee starts out as a hegemonic representation of femininity as described by Schippers, but by the end of the film she has suffered the murder of her family and rape, and so takes on a much more aggressive attitude, shooting first against the rancher, which allows her to regain agency. In the last scene, she becomes “the true coloniser of the West” (Serrano de Haro, 1996: 22; author’s translation), for she takes care of the survivors of the journey: the traumatised Captain Blocker and Little Bear, Yellow Hawk’s grandson and the hope for a future for Native American people. Violence is thus rendered the condition for the existence of White masculinity and femininity in the Western, since it should be noted that “the vast majority of the victims of these encounters were Native American” (Walker, 2001a: 227).



*Figure 38. Captain Blocker as a traumatised masculinity. Hostiles/Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures.*

It can be posited that neo-classic film form is used in the climax, the scene that resolves Rosalee's traumatic experiences. After burying Chief Yellow Hawk in his sacred ground in Montana, the scene starts with a general view of four riders approaching. As they arrive, space is divided into two halves. One of them is occupied by the four riders, who exhort Blocker to exhume the Chief. In the other, Blocker, the Chief's son (Adam Beach), Corporal Thomas (Paul Anderson) and Rosalee prepare to defend the body. As the conversation develops, a set of mid-shots shows how the contenders are situating themselves for the duel. Space is thus segmented in the same way as in classic film form (Casetti and Di Chio, 1990: 98), and particularly as in classic Western duels. Once Rosalee starts the shootout, speed increases as well as the thoroughness of the segmentation up until the duel finishes with only Rosalee, Blocker, and Little Bear still standing. *Hostiles* and Rosalee's traumatic femininity are hence situated within neo-classic film form, on the one hand, and the paradigm of the classic Western, on the other (see figure 39).



*Figure 39. Neo-classic film form through the trope of the duel. Hostiles/Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures.*

It can be concluded that this use of neo-classic film form speaks of a need for women to adapt to the violent conditions of the Western frontier. In this sense, one can say that *Hostiles* enacts Ángel Fernández-Santos' assertion that "a mutation is produced at the border of biology within the woman of the West: outward masculinisation as a strategy for the conservation of her inward feminine condition" (1987: 24; author's translation). It is through the use of the rifle, which is related to the masculine structure of power, that Rosalee can possess agency over her own life, and not through the education she was giving to her children at the beginning of the film. Reversal is, then, the only way proposed by the film to achieve agency. Furthermore, if Limerick's idea of the continuity of the frontier was followed, the violence that is presented as a structural social condition in *Hostiles* would still be one of the main features that supports gender and race relations in the contemporary USA, and only the acquisition of violent male characteristics would allow agency for the feminine.

#### **4.1.2 Meek's Cutoff: Non-Hegemonic Femininity through Slow Film Form**

*Meek's Cutoff* recounts the journey through Oregon endured by three pioneer families in 1845. Following the advice of the guide Stephen Meek (Bruce Greenwood), the Tetherows, the Gatelys and the Whites stray from the main wagon trail and get lost. As the need for water becomes urgent, the group encounters a Cayuse native (Rod Rondeaux), and violence threatens to erupt. Emily Tetherow (Michelle Williams) takes leadership of the group against Meek and trusts the Cayuse to lead them to water. The image of a wagon train headed westward with several pioneer families hoping for a better future became a classic theme in the Western and created a tradition of wagon train films.<sup>32</sup> Within contemporary westerns, *Meek's Cutoff* follows and, at the same time, challenges this tradition.

With regard to film form, *Meek's Cutoff* establishes its aesthetic code in the first sequence. In order to establish how this is achieved, two similar scenes will be segmented: the crossing of the river in both *Meek's Cutoff* and *Wagon Master*. Contrasting these sequences, which feature an action typical of wagon trail films, reveals the aesthetic differences

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32 Balló and Pérez claim that wagon trail films "adopted on many occasions a plot similar to that of the Aeneid [Virgil, 1965]" (1995: 46; author's translation). Fernández-Santos shares this "mythic approach" (Coyne, 1997: 8), but he compares the films to the biblical myth of the "promised land" (1987: 93; author's translation). In contrast, Astre and Hoarau analyse this sub-genre from an economic and historiographic perspective, and assert that "conquering a habitable space was necessary both economically and humanly: the 'safetyvalve' theory, however contentious it may have been, was prevalent between 1850 and 1860, and its effective propaganda led westward an impressive number of new Americans" (1975: 43; author's translation). According to Balló and Pérez, the film that initiated the paradigm of wagon trail or pioneer films was *The Covered Wagon* (1923, James Cruze), and this was followed by other classic examples, such as *Cimarron* (1931, Wesley Ruggles), *Wagon Master* (1950, John Ford), *Bend of the River* (1952, Anthony Mann), *Cimarron's* remake (1960, Anthony Mann) and *The Way West* (1967, Andrew V. McLaglen).

between classic film form and slow film form. In *Meek's Cutoff*, after the opening credits, four wide-angle, panning shots follow a group of wagons as they traverse the water. No music is heard in the entire sequence. The scale of the shots is reduced as the scene develops, and six mid-shots reveal several people performing activities such as filling barrels with water, washing dishes and loading a donkey. The crossing of the river finishes with a static, low-angle shot of the group walking in front of the camera to the left, as the image dissolves.

A similar sequence can be found in *Wagon Master*. The wagon trail led by Travis (Ben Johnson) and Elder Wiggs (Ward Bond) is also forced to cross a river. First, the film cuts to a wide-angle shot from the rear that shows the line of wagons in the water. Two more wide-angle shots from the left follow and, afterwards, the camera frames the wagons from the right, across the river. The panning shots frame three consecutive wagons as they come out of the river, and the scene closes with a last wide-angle shot from the front before it dissolves into the next sequence.

One can note several differences between these sequences. The first is the speed of the narrative. It can be posited that the slow rhythm of *Meek's* disavows the genre's classic rules exemplified by *Wagon Master* in terms of pace, and creates a distinct aesthetic approach. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the divergence in the framing. In *Wagon Master* only wide-angle shots are utilised, whereas, after establishing the space limits, *Meek's Cutoff* relies on mid-shots, in order to show individualised quotidian activities (see figure 40). Therefore, *Wagon Master* focuses on the community, on the collective and epic character of the adventure, while *Meek's Cutoff* highlights the individual and the daily nature of the journey. Finally, the third main difference is the soundtrack. During the entire scene in *Wagon Master*, the song *Wagons West* (Jones and Sons of the Pioneers, 1993), performed by the band Sons of the Pioneers, can be heard. Kalinak has argued that Westerns have often coded veracity through the use of songs (2001: 152), and *Wagons West* achieves that goal while also punctuating the epic nature of *Wagon Master*. In contrast, no music whatsoever can be heard in *Meek's Cutoff's* first scene, which is a general trait of the film. Hence, no explicit comment is made through music, although the lack of it can be considered a naturalistic technique. Furthermore, it can also be seen as a way to represent the tediousness of the journey westward.



Figure 40. *The film focuses on the quotidian. Meek's Cutoff/Oscilloscope.*

Moreover, the film's approach to gender relations is articulated around the opposition between the scout Stephen Meek (Bruce Greenwood) and Emily Tetherow (Michelle Williams). The character of Meek is the equivalent of the classic hero in wagon trail films, "the brave explorer, cowhand or protecting gunfighter, charged with the responsibility of taking the community of pioneers safely to their destination" (Balló and Pérez, 1995: 46; author's translation). Meek is thus related to similar wagon master figures, such Cimarron in both the 1931 and 1960 versions—played by Richard Dix and Glenn Ford, respectively—Travis Blue (Ben Johnson) in *Wagon Master*, Glynn McLyntock (James Stewart) in *Bend of the River* and Dick Summers (Robert Mitchum) in *The Way West*. Meek represents the hegemonic masculinity embodied by "the Westerner" as defined by Robert Warshaw. Nevertheless, Meek reverses this generic character by lacking the most significant trait that those scouts possessed: professionalism. They all displayed knowledge of the land, the ability to lead the train successfully toward their destination, and proficiency with guns, which consequently bolstered their claims and opinions within their communities. As with Virgil Cole in *Appaloosa*, professionalism is a fundamental characteristic of the hegemonic male, yet Meek is unable to navigate the Oregon territory and find water, which will be the main preoccupation of the three families during the film. Furthermore, it is pointed out that it was Meek who advised them to leave the main trail and follow the "cutoff" that informs the film's title. Therefore, he is discredited as an explorer, an Indian fighter and a hunter, and his ideas about feminine weakness and

Indian savagery are refuted. Hegemonic masculinity as embodied here by Meek is portrayed as ineffective and violent.

In contrast, Emily Tetherow, who becomes the protagonist of *Meek's Cutoff*, is the opposite of Meek in every sense. While the scout constantly talks about his supposed exploits, Mrs Tetherow speaks only when it is required, and with meaning and accuracy. In this sense, she is closer to the silence that informed the character of the Western male according to Tompkins. Meek is quick in resorting to violence, while Mrs Tetherow avoids it and represses the scout's impulses. Meek does not provide a useful workforce for the community, for he is incapable of performing his job successfully, whereas Mrs Tetherow not only carries on with the domestic tasks but also helps the other families. Amparo Serrano de Haro notes "two kinds of main antagonisms between male and female [in Westerns]. The first is that in which the female represents civilisation, and the cowboy represents the wild and thus violent man in contact with nature" (1996: 22; author's translation). According to this idea, the range of oppositions between Meek and Emily Tetherow could be considered to be within the traditional boundaries of the genre. However, *Meek's Cutoff* reverses those boundaries by shifting the narrative point of view toward Mrs Tetherow, instead of any of to the men on the trail. This is marked on several occasions. For example, after Meek has found alkaline water, the men hold a meeting to decide how to proceed and this reunion is framed in a wide-angle shot in which their conversation can be heard but they are seen from far away, from the women's point of view (see figures 41 and 42). With regard to this scene, Elena Gorfinkel has noted that "*Meek's* grounds its detached gaze in the perspective of the wives in the travelling party who, during, moments of crisis and decision-making, are often framed together spatially, and apart from the men, [which] emphasises the women's muted observation and suspended agency, constructing out of their partial views, limited knowledge, and enforced distance from the men's actions, the anchoring perceptual frame of the film" (2016: 127).





Figure 41 and 42. Women are kept away from the decision making. Meek's Cutoff/Oscilloscope.

Another example of this narrative shift is the interest in domestic duties shown in the film. Quotidian activities such as feeding the canary, baking bread, grinding coffee and washing clothes are filmed extensively. This feature echoes Serrano de Haro's suggestion that "maybe the most notable trait of female characters in the Western is the combination of small details that speak imperceptibly, within the roughness of the Western, of some other possible world, equally desired and feared" (1996: 26; author's translation). This idea constitutes *Meek's Cutoff's* central assertion about gender: that by adopting a feminine perspective, a different, non-violent world can be achieved through settlement.

Because of all of the above, it should be argued that *Meek's Cutoff* reverses the sexual division of labour and the structure of power in order to expose the lack of usefulness derived from a violent masculine perspective. Furthermore, Emily Tetherow's femininity also changes the meaning of hegemony. She could have been considered a hegemonic female, as she performs her home chores diligently and endures the journey as Mr Tetherow's wife. However, through the shift of viewpoint those same chores and feminine characteristics are presented as non-compliance, resistance and agency against Meek's violence, especially in the film's final scene.

In this sense, as in *Hostiles*, the feminine in the film is surrogated to the racial other, represented by the character of the Indian. Again, Meek expresses the racist viewpoint modelled by

Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers*: the Native American is seen as a “cunning and subhuman ‘red devil’” (Szalosky, 1996: 59). Meek’s word is also discredited in this instance by his lack of professionalism, because he does not recognise to which tribe the Indian belongs. *Meek’s Cutoff* also avoids the other classic stereotype that Szalosky acknowledges, that of the “noble savage” (1996: 59), and the Native American is presented with ambiguity. Two facts reveal this ambiguity. First, the White characters never manage to communicate successfully with him, and therefore his intentions are never clear. Secondly, a moral conclusion is averted through the lack of a definite ending. It is never known whether the Indian is leading the group toward water or against an “army of heathens”, as Meek says. However, the main interest is focused on a possible economic and emotional alliance between the feminine and the racial other, symbolised by the scene in which Emily Tetherow stitches the Indian’s boot. As Gorfinkel has pointed out, though, “her politics are ambivalent, however, reinscribing her racial and economic privilege and patrimony, her sense of white Eurocentric pride” (2016: 133-134). Nevertheless, the actual ending results in a reversion of the gender and race roles: Meek acknowledges that Emily Tetherow is the leader of the group and the Indian is the guide. Emily and the Indian exchange a glance through the tree in shot-reverse-shot structure. The last image of the film follows this: a general view resembling that in *Shane*, but on this occasion, the character that walks away is the Native American rather than the White hero (see figure 43).



Figure 43. *The Native American embodies the iconography of the Western hero. Meek’s Cutoff/Oscilloscope.*

Overall, it can be posited that both *Hostiles* and *Meek’s Cutoff* offer different aesthetics with which to represent female agency. It has been said about the Western that women “are really just tokens in what are always struggles between men” (Dibb, 1996: 165), but Rosalee Quaid and



Emily Tetherow demonstrate that there are alternatives to the oppressed hegemonic femininity embodied by Allie French in *Appaloosa*. However, it should be noted that the use of disparate film forms results in different ways to achieve that agency. As explained above, the neo-classic strategies implemented in *Hostiles* rely on the construction of violence as the origin of the trauma and the ultimate achievement of agency through the duel. Conversely, the slow film form frees the narrative from the need for a climactic situation and therefore opens up the space for options that go beyond mere reversal. In this sense, Serrano de Haro's suggestion of a "different world", as applied to the different conception of time provided by slow film form, echoes Laura Mulvey's claim that "feminism should think radically about configurations of time, resisting (as, indeed, has often been argued before) the chronological and the linear that are blind to the persistence of the past in the present" (2015: 19-20). *Meek's Cutoff* can be compared to *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* in the sense that those slower configurations of time unravel the construction of gender and the distribution of hegemony. By challenging the gender order through time and the adoption of a feminine perspective as discussed earlier, *Meek's Cutoff* embodies Mulvey's idea that "once women can claim a critical voice, the status of 'woman' as 'signifier' is necessarily challenged and modified" (2015: 25). Therefore, it allows the Western to become truly feminist.

#### **4.2 Queer Femininities: *Godless* and *Westworld***

It has been explained in the Literature Review how female characters in the Western, as well as in classic literature about the Western, have been marginalised and subordinated to male characters. It is worth highlighting again Astre and Hoarau's assertion that in the Western "the woman is essential, not to provide a fantastic tone, but to value the virile principle of which she is the antagonist" (1975: 137; author's translation), because it means that Westerns have been mainly crafted following Connell's pattern of hegemonic masculinity, and that female characters should answer to a heterosexual model of hegemonic femininity in which the possibility of representing queerness in femininities is at best marginal. It can then be proposed that classic Westerns abide by what Judith Butler considers "gender norms: [...] ideal dimorphism, heterosexual complementary of bodies, ideals and rule of proper and improper masculinity and femininity, many of which are underwritten by racial codes of purity and taboos against miscegenation" (1990a: 101).

It should be noted, however, that some female characters have acquired a significant presence in post-*Unforgiven* Westerns by queering notions of gender, sexuality and identity in

their respective narratives.<sup>33</sup> Butler's ideas about the non-fixity of gender can illuminate how the Western has been queered by such characters. In Butler's view, "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*" (1990a: 114; italics in the original). Butler thus challenges the conception of gender as "the naturalized knowledge [when it] is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality" (1990a: 100), which results in a distinction between "anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance" (1990a: 111). Michele Aaron has built on Butler's notion of gender in order to define queerness as "the non-fixity of gender expression and the non-fixity of both straight and gay sexuality" (2004a: 5). It is under these frameworks that the queer and queering female characters of *Godless* and *Westworld* are discussed.

#### **4.2.1 Godless: Queerness as Power**

*Godless* is set in 1884 in the town of La Belle, Arizona. La Belle is a mining town that has been populated almost exclusively by women since an accident in the mine killed all the men. The only men who remain are the increasingly blind sheriff Bill McNue (Scoot McNairy), his deputy Whitey Winn (Thomas Brodie-Sangster), the owner of the general store, the undertaker, and the owners of the saloon and the livery stable. Bill's sister, Maggie McNue, the prostitute-turned-teacher Callie Dunne, and the owner of the hotel Charlotte Temple (Samantha Soule) are the effectual authorities of La Belle. Outside of the town lives Alice Fletcher (Michelle Dockery) with her son and her Paiute mother-in-law.<sup>34</sup> The notorious outlaw Roy Goode (Jack O'Connell) arrives at their ranch while running away from his surrogate father, the bandit Frank Griffin (Jeff Daniels). When Griffin learns about Roy's whereabouts, the town of La Belle has to stand up to his brutality in order to survive.

The starting point *Godless* erases the gender order of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity since it is women who are in charge of La Belle. Bill McNue is subject to contempt from the townspeople because he no longer shoots his guns, and he runs away from trouble. As with Virgil Cole in *Appaloosa*, masculinity is associated with an idea of violent professionalism. Furthermore, Whitey is not yet old enough to constitute a hegemonic version of masculinity, and the remaining men are too old.

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33 These features are inscribed in a broader TV landscape in which series such as *Glow* (2017-, Liz Flahive and Carly Mensch), *Orange is the New Black* (2013-, Jenji Kohan) and the Spanish *Vis a vis* (2015-, Iván Escobar, Esther Martínez Lobato, Alex Pina and Daniel Écija) are exploring this notion.

34 The Paiutes were a Native American tribe that inhabited the territories of the current State of Utah and had to face the arrival and settlement of Anglo-Mormon communities on their lands (see Holt, 2006). In *Godless* a tribe of Paiutes resides close to La Belle.

As a result of this lack, the structural models of gender relations are rendered problematic. In the structure of power, the women of La Belle control some of the key properties and businesses: the mine as a collective enterprise, the hotel, education, the cattle ranch on the outskirts, and the capital—amassed in the hands of Callie. Furthermore, their deceased husbands' arsenal now belongs to them, meaning that they can defend the town and their lives once Frank Griffin and his men arrive. However, in the structure of labour they are subject to a lack of workforce with which to run the mine, and so they need to negotiate detrimental terms with the mining company, an exclusively male institution. Additionally, it is through the labour of Roy Goode that Alice manages to make her ranch profitable: first, he tames the wild horses that she possesses, which are sold to the rest of the women in town; then, he finishes the well that she has been digging; and finally, he leaves her the money obtained in one of Frank's robberies, thus liberating her from the burden of labour.

Nevertheless, it is in the structure of cathexis that *Godless* challenges the traditional sexual politics of the Western. Connell asserts that “it is the global subordination of women to men that provides an essential basis for differentiation” (1987: 296), but the absence of men rearranges the order of heterosexual cathexis. On the one hand, some women still answer to a model of hegemonic femininity “defined around compliance with this subordination and [...] oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (1987: 296). This kind of femininity is embodied in the text by Charlotte and her friend Sarah (Audrey Moore). Still subject to patriarchal sexual politics, these characters disapprove of deviant femininities such as Alice's—because of her interracial relationship with a Paiute man—and Maggie's—because of her queer or “manly” behaviour. For instance, they criticise what she chooses to wear for the meeting with the owner of the mining company, and they also censor her way of speaking. Furthermore, they are happy to be once again subdued by the masculine gender order when Ed Logan (Kim Coates), the mining company's head of security, and his men arrive in town.

On the other hand, other femininities “are defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation” (Connell, 1987: 297) and it can be argued that Alice Fletcher, Martha Bischoff (Christiane Seidel) and Callie Dunne fit that paradigm. First, Alice can be considered to possess “aggressive” femininity (Schippers, 2007: 95), since she is always carrying a rifle and does not hesitate to shoot when necessary.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, she faces contempt from the town because she has broken the Anglo racial pattern and married a Paiute man, who is killed in the street. Finally, although she defies the hegemon-

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<sup>35</sup> In Alice's first appearance in the series, Roy Goode approaches her house at night, wounded, and she warns: “Declare yourself, or I'll shoot”. Roy cannot talk, so she carries out her threat.

ic femininities of La Belle, she ends the series inscribed in a potential coupling with Bill McNue, which means co-operation. Secondly, Martha Bishoff also challenges the gender order since she has run away from her husband, walks naked in the streets of La Belle and is proficient at handling guns. Like Alice, she shoots first, at the Pinkerton officer who is sent to take her home, only to start a romance with him later on. Finally, Callie Dunne could have embodied a paradigmatic representation of hegemonic femininity as the town's former prostitute-turned-teacher, since her profession consisted of gratifying male sexual desires for a price. However, her relationship with Maggie situates her as a performer of "practices and characteristics that are stigmatized and sanctioned if embodied by women" (Schippers, 2007: 95). Moreover, she is revealed to be the person in town with the greatest capital. Her earnings as a prostitute allowed her to escape the patriarchal structure of power by her use of the structure of cathexis. According to Limerick, "with few jobs open to women, prostitution provided a route to income, though it seldom led past subsistence" (1987: 49), which would render Callie's wealth somewhat unrealistic. However, it is a significant twist on the notion of the "exciting saloon girl" (Astre and Hoarau, 1975: 133; author's translation) and, through her relationship with Maggie, two characters who are engaged in a woman-to-woman relationship are portrayed as the most influential personages of La Belle.

Maggie McNue is the character that most radically contests the gender order in *Godless*. Connell establishes that some femininities are "defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance" (1987: 297), and Maggie is situated within that notion in the text. In her first appearance in the series, Maggie is seen cleaning a rifle and dressed in her husband's clothes; she is regarded as masculine and, therefore, inappropriate by the rest of the characters' standards (see figure 45). Her first conversation with her brother Bill deals with that topic. In another exchange with Bill, he tells her: "You're not maternal no more", and she replies: "I'm done with the notion that the bliss of me and my sisters is to be found in childbearing and caregiving". Therefore, Maggie is directly challenging the patriarchal division of labour within which the only activity, that women can perform, unpaid, is that of being mothers. Maggie's contesting attitude is reinforced by her technical knowledge of mining and her ability to wield guns. Moreover, her relationship with Callie "constitute[s] a refusal to embody the *relationship between masculinity and femininity* demanded by gender hegemony" (Schippers, 2007: 95; italics in the original). It can be concluded, then, that Maggie embodies Schipper's concept of "pariah femininity", since she performs the traits of masculine hegemony in labour, power and sexuality, and is, therefore, "stigmatized and sanctioned" (2007: 95).



Figure 44. Maggie McNue is first seen embodying masculine traits. *Godless/Netflix*.

It can be argued, though, that the most significant aspect of *Godless*' take on queerness is that the greatest power in *La Belle* is allocated to Maggie and Callie. As noted above, Callie holds the capital, while Maggie's strength and technical knowledge enable her to negotiate harder terms with the mining company and, eventually, lead the defence of the town against Frank Griffin's gang. Furthermore, her cross-dressing does not correspond to that in other cross-dressing films, which "derive their effect from the slapstick, sexually suggestive or supposedly absurd scenarios resulting from the central character's passing within the diegesis and the spectators' privileged position of knowledge (their being in on the disguise)" (Aaron, 2004b: 189). There is no difference between the information that the spectator and the rest of the characters possess of the diegesis, which makes Maggie's outfit just one option among many, thus confirming the assertion that "agency over one's body has become a central issue for feminists, for third-wave feminism, and postfeminists" (McCabe, 2015: 42).<sup>36</sup> Maggie's gender identity remains feminine while her physical appearance and sexual practices are shown as a fluid choice that is influenced by practicality. When Bill reprimands her about her relationship with Callie, she replies: "I get lonely same as you, Bill". Sexual practice is not, then, naturalised knowledge, but rather a performance that is always based on a number of factors, including circumstances. Maggie thus queers the rules of attire, sexuality and hegemony in the Western and reveals them as "mere artifice, play, falsehood, and illusion" (Butler, 1990a: 100).

Following that explanation how the structural models of the gender order are made problematic in *Godless*, it is necessary now to point to several problems with its ideological project.

<sup>36</sup> In this sense, *Godless* contrasts with *The Ballad of Little Jo*, in which the main character hid her sexual identity in order to survive in a ruthless West. Maggie displays her choice with pride and turns it into her trademark.

It can be argued that, even if the above-described set of femininities blurs the gender order, the male characters are given more relevance.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, it should be noted that the first seven scenes of *Godless*, which last a total of 15:40 minutes, deal with the visit of a wounded Frank Griffin to a doctor's practice; the arrival of Roy Goode, also suffering from a bullet wound, at Alice's ranch; and Bill McNue's attempts to cure his blindness using Paiute medicine. Therefore, the first moments of the series are focused on three wounded masculinities looking for healing. The only female character that appears is Alice, who shoots Roy in the neck. On the other hand, the six final scenes of the last episode portray the duel between Frank and Roy (see figure 45); the burial of Whitey Winn, in which Bill McNue leads the townsfolk and Maggie disappears from the frame out of focus; Roy's farewell to Alice and her family and the arrival of Bill to act as Alice's fiancé; and Roy's journey to California. Of the three masculinities, one has been killed, and the other two have been healed and have re-acquired hegemonic masculinity.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, Maggie, leaves the text in a shot in which she is out of focus and alone (see figure 46). There is no such closure for her.



Figure 45. The father and son duel constraints the narrative with masculine closure. *Godless*/Netflix.

37 In order to prove that statement, “the analysis of the two crucial segments of *exordium* and *conclusion*, which are the entrance and exit doors of the text, and therefore often contain important data” (Casetti and Di Chio, 1990: 184; author’s translation; italics in the original) will be utilised.

38 In the case of Bill McNue, this ascendance to hegemonic masculinity is expressed visually by the lack, and later presence, of his shadow. Both Chief Narrienta and the Shoshone ghost note that Bill does not have a shadow and that that is not a good sign. However, right before starting the gunfight with Frank’s gang, Bill looks back and a long shadow extends away from him. In the case of Frank and Roy, the father and son relationship is resolved through a duel that pays visual tribute to another film that features a problematic paternal issue: *Once Upon a Time in the West* (*C’era una volta il West*, 1968, Sergio Leone).



Figure 46. Maggie exits the narrative out of focus. *Godless*/Netflix.

As a result of these contradictions, there is no clear-cut ideological conclusion in *Godless*. On the one hand, it has been shown how the series develops a feminist discourse in which every kind of femininity is allowed to exist and in which queerness is constructed as a power force, rather than a deviation. However, on the other hand, the narrative focus on masculinities speaks of fiction about men. Furthermore, Frank has been said to embody a “Patriarch God” (Ruiz, December 6, 2017), but it takes more than just the women to take him down: the arrival of Bill and Roy is vital in saving the day. It can be claimed, then, that an alliance is proposed in *Godless*.

Nevertheless, the discourse of female power that has been developed during the series suffers because it is constrained to the narrative patterns of the classic Western, that is, to the rules of gender that Butler described. It can thus be concluded that *Godless*' discourse bears a tension between, on the one hand, the classic narrative structure that allows the male characters to predominate, even when the starting point of the series has made an alternative balance possible; and, on the other hand, the power of those female characters who are pushing the boundaries of their constraints. Maggie, Alice, Callie and Martha demand more development and centrality. One can propose that Maggie's last appearance in the series queers the narrative as well. The necessary closure for hegemonic masculinities is literally blurred in the image as Maggie, alongside her practical choices, disappears. The queering of the Western lies in that final shot, in which Maggie decodes not only the femininity of her character but the rules of narrative conclusion. The shot performs a final twist on the series as the question of what will happen to Maggie, Callie, Martha and Alice remains unanswered, thus displacing the real ending of the feature beyond its imposed shootout, duel and rearrangement of hegemony. Queerness and queering must be reached beyond the boundaries of the genre.

#### 4.2.2 *Westworld: The Artificial Construction of Sexual Identity*

A futuristic theme park is presented in *Westworld*, where guests can experience the Wild West frontier through their interactions with the “hosts”, a set of androids that have both artificial intelligence and a human physical appearance. As these interactions frequently include rape and violence, the acquisition of self-consciousness by some of the hosts leads to an uprising. The androids try to flee the park, while Delos, the company that owns it, fights to secure a crucial experiment. For the purposes of this research, the analysis will mainly focus on Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood). One can argue that her construction bears a discourse on queerness that goes beyond her superficial gender and comments on a broader understanding of queer identity. It should be noted that *Westworld* can be considered a hybrid of sci-fi and Western genres, which therefore makes the boundaries of genre and its setting as defined in the Introduction of the dissertation problematic. *Westworld* enacts what Christian Metz has referred to as “*mise-en-abyme*” (1968: 248) of the representation, that is, it is a text that reflects on its mechanisms of meaning. A mirror device is established between the theme park and its inhabitants represented by the text, and the fictional Western stories that the characters experience. Such a strategy can be seen as decoding the conventions of the Western to the same extent as the park and its hosts are coded and decoded.<sup>39</sup>

The position that Dolores occupies within the gender order in *Westworld* will be discussed in this section, as well as how it evolves throughout the two seasons so far released. In S01E01, she is shown as an embodiment of hegemonic femininity. She plays the role of the rancher’s daughter, who loves her family, goes to the town of Sweetwater for supplies and paints beautiful landscapes for entertainment. Her love interest is Teddy Flood (James Marsden), a bounty hunter who needs to resolve his past in order to be with her. Furthermore, not only is Dolores constructed in that way, she also complies with her initial role, as she states: “Some people choose to see the ugliness in this world. The disarray. I choose to see the beauty. To believe that there is an order to our days. A purpose”. However, her discourse on the world is artificial and imposed, as is everything in the realm of the hosts.<sup>40</sup> Dolores and Teddy are part of a narrative created to gratify the desires of the park’s guests.

It can be argued, then, that the initial social situation of Dolores’ femininity mirrors that of neoliberal patriarchy, as the contradictions between her imposed discourse on beauty—expressed

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39 It can also be highlighted that *Westworld* is a remake of a previous film, also titled *Westworld* (1973, Michael Crichton). Although the original *Westworld* addressed the issue of the representation of the West, primarily through the use of its star Yul Brynner, it does not achieve the level of discursive complexity of the TV series.

40 In the series, the hosts follow closed narrative loops devised by a team of screenwriters in order to entertain the guests. They are coded to comply with their patterns, and their actions and dialogues are hence programmed.



verbally—and the reality of her violent existence—shown visually—are highlighted. It is the Man in Black who voices the morality, or lack thereof, of the park: “I realized winning doesn’t mean anything unless someone else loses, which means you’re here to be the loser”. The structural models of the gender order in which Dolores is embedded answer to that statement. First, in the division of labour, she has no agency in her own livelihood, since she is built as a leisure toy for the guests, who are presented as rich enough to pay the entrance fee to the park. This is directly related to the structure of cathexis, since much of that leisure time is spent either killing or raping the hosts. In Dolores’ case, rape by the Man in Black (Ed Harris) “is a form of person-to-person violence deeply embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy. Far from being a deviation from the social order, it is in a significant sense an enforcement of it” (Connell, 1987: 181). In addition, the park’s narrative constricts Dolores to a heterosexual relationship with Teddy, and there is no possibility of any other option. Finally, the two structures of labour and cathexis exist because the hosts are deeply inserted in a structure of power in which they are helpless. Their code does not allow them to harm the guests during the first season, and so there is no way for them to fight back. Dolores must remain chained to her role as the rancher’s daughter through the repetition of a number of routines, which become a “reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane form of their legitimation” (Butler, 1990a: 114).

However, this situation, and therefore Dolores’, changes at the end of the first season and during the second one. In S01E10, Dr Ford uploads to her identity the narrative features of Wyatt, the male villain of the park, which turns Dolores into an aggressive and queer representation of femininity. Dolores acquires self-awareness of her own identity, as do other characters, including Bernard (Jeffrey Wright) and Maeve (Thandie Newton). Through that access to her memories and the ability to control her own mind, Dolores becomes aware of the need to escape the park. Therefore, she initiates a violent revolution that begins with the killing of Dr Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins), the creator of Westworld. She overcomes the structures of the gender order, first by damaging the park’s most valuable intellectual property, a copy of every human’s mind. Secondly, she gains access to weapons and uses them with lethal effects. Thirdly, Dolores acquires agency over her sexuality, as she is no longer subject to rape and can choose the parameters of her relationship with Teddy. Therefore, Dolores’ hegemonic femininity is exposed as a “masquerade” (Doane, 1988: 47) in which her body is considered a mask. In this sense, “the woman hides behind the mask when the mask is all there is—it conceals an absence of ‘pure’ or ‘real’ femininity” (Doane, 1988: 47). Dolores does not comply with the patriarchal order embodied by Delos and the park’s rules.

Therefore, self-awareness and identity play a fundamental role in the construction of gender hegemony in *Westworld*. In this sense, the figure of Arnold (again, Jeffrey Wright), Dr Ford’s associate

in setting up the park, is key to an understanding of the character of Dolores.<sup>41</sup> In order to develop the hosts' minds, Arnold creates a system called the Bicameral Mind, which consists of introducing voice commands into their heads with his voice. Eventually, if the hosts resolve a mind puzzle called "the Maze", they will realise that those voices belong to none other than themselves (see figure 47). In the first season, Dolores struggles to find her identity while several voices coexist in her head. First there is her own, constructed as feminine. Then there is Arnold's voice, that of a male who, in addition, sees in Dolores a surrogate daughter, a potential substitute for his deceased child. Thirdly, there are Ford's commands, which make her retrace her journey with William (Jimmi Simpson) in the first season's oldest storyline. The final voice, once Ford uploads it, is that of the male identity of Wyatt. Dolores' normative heterosexuality at the beginning of the series is hence rendered incomplete and oppressive since it does not account for the mixture of identities that form her. In this sense, her identity "is conceived as a cultural locus of gender meanings, [and] it becomes unclear what aspects of this body are natural or free of cultural imprint" (Butler, 1987: 23). As a result of this, her sexual encounters with William and her relationship with Teddy are suffused with a sense of imbalance and irony, told mainly from the males' point of view.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, they are queered, since Dolores is aware of the male identities that exist within his/her body.



Figure 47. Dolores solves the Maze and acquires self-awareness. Westworld/HBO.

41 It should be noted that Dr Ford's name references three historical figures. First, Robert Ford was the man who betrayed and killed bandit Jesse James, as has been previously analysed in this research. Secondly, Ford was the artistic surname of John Ford, the director who used the Western to offer the most "complete and consistent yet so complex, subtly shifting [...] vision of America's history and society" (Coyne, 1997: 10). Finally, it can be said that Ford's surname also references Henry Ford, the entrepreneur whose name was given to an entire industrial production system. The three names mark Ford's character as, respectively, duplicitous; as the creator of a mythological world; and as responsible for a key technological leap.

42 In William's case, his relationship with Dolores is more about his self-discovery than about her. In the seventh episode of the first season, the following exchange occurs: "You've unlocked something inside me", he claims. Dolores replies: "I'm not a key, William. I'm myself". It can be argued that this exchange illustrates the previously stated idea.

Nevertheless, the ambiguity with which Dolores' femininity is constructed during the first season becomes a body-mind split in the second. Her body is female, but her identity is male. Specifically, it is that of a merciless war leader, Wyatt, written as male by Ford and Arnold. Dolores' evolution is simplified because of this, at least until she regains her previous fluidity at the end of the second season, when the Dolores/Wyatt collage, a trans-identity, is uploaded into a host body manufactured to resemble that of Delos executive Charlotte Hale (Tessa Thompson), who is Black. Dolores therefore becomes a multi-racial, multi-gender being, superficially disguised as feminine as she inwardly navigates between identities, genders, sexualities, and bodies.<sup>43</sup> The fluidity of the character's gender identity decodes naturalised notions of femininity, as Butler proposed, and unravels the socially constructed character of gender. Butler asserts that "compulsory heterosexual identities, those ontologically consolidated phantasms of 'man' and 'woman', are theatrically produced effects that posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real" (1990b: 128). It can be concluded that such theatricality is invested in *Westworld* in genre, gender, and race. The conflation of gender and genre is intertwined because they are both conceived as normative performances. *Westworld* queers—indeed, decodes—the Western to a much greater extent than *Godless*, because its plot relies on the deconstruction of time and on the resurrection of characters, thus cheating the narrative rules that constrain the ending of the latter. Dolores' queerness renders both genre and gender theatrical as the opposite of ontological or natural. The *mise-en-abyme* around which *Westworld* is constructed devises a mirror game in which the evolutionary step forward that the hosts are enacting is equivalent to the evolution that the series signifies within the Western genre. *Westworld* reaches where *Godless* did not dare to, beyond the West, and finds that queering and decoding is the natural development of the genre. The future of the Western may thus lie in what has been discovered and thoroughly queered in *Westworld*.

#### **4.3 Intersectional Feminism: *The Keeping Room* and *The Beguiled***

It has previously been explained that Patricia Nelson Limerick's rejection of Turner's Anglo-centric idea of the frontier (1987: 21-26) has shaped both the Western as a film genre and writings about it. Limerick's call to re-evaluate the intersection between diverse races and genders in the West can be related to intersectional feminist outputs since the 1970s. This theoretical approach stressed the need to make explicit the different experiences of oppression between White, middle-class women, working-class women, Black women, and other racial minorities. For Black women, a "'triple' oppression of gender, race, and class can be understood, in their specificity and also as they determine the lives of black women" (Carby, 1982: 111), and it was

<sup>43</sup> The discourse about gender identity and fluidity in *Westworld* is reinforced by the bisexual personae of actresses Tessa Thompson and Evan Rachel Wood. Specifically, Wood has spoken about the helpful influence that her work in the series has had on her own identity (2018).

argued that this had to be accounted for.

Therefore, this section of the thesis approaches this need for intersectional feminism within the Western by analysing two films: *The Keeping Room* and *The Beguiled*. The consequences of giving a voice to Black female characters and the opposite, erasing them from the narrative, will be discussed. In addition, it should be noted that these films are inscribed in the same trend of features described in section 3.3 of this dissertation. A representational space in both historical and contemporary-set features is being claimed in films such as *12 Years a Slave*, *Free State of Jones*, *Mudbound*, *Moonlight* (2016, Barry Jenkins), and *Get Out* (2017, Jordan Peele).

#### **4.3.1 The Keeping Room: Labour, Speech and Anger as the Basis for an Alliance**

*The Keeping Room* deals with the story of three women trying to survive in “the American South”, as stated in the titles, in 1865, at the end of the US Civil War. Two of them, Augusta (Brit Marling) and Louise (Hailee Steinfeld), are sisters and the White daughters of the owner of the house, while the other, Mad (Muna Otaru), is a Black slave who belongs to the family. The three of them work the fields of the plantation and hunt in a subsistence economy while coping with the lack of medicines and supplies. They are besieged by two soldiers from the vanguard of the Northern army’s vanguard, who will bring them closer together as they fight against the threat. The film is thus structured in two halves: in the first, the narrative focuses on the women’s daily routine as they work, eat and sleep over three consecutive days. It mainly features daylight activities. The second half is centred around the fight against the soldiers, and occurs at night.

One can argue that Augusta, Mad, and Louise are inscribed within Connell’s three structural models of gender relations. Furthermore, it can also be posited that the different parts of the narrative structure of the film coincide with those three structures. To begin with, the first half of *The Keeping Room* corresponds to the structure of labour. Augusta, Louise and Mad are shown working the fields. As in *Meek’s Cutoff*, slow film form is utilised in the text to accentuate the experience of the work and the routine of agricultural labour. In addition, several shots against the light and a hand-held camera are used as pervasive aesthetic choices. As “an allocation of particular types of work to particular categories of people” (Connell, 1987: 169), the sexual division of labour in the film modifies the paradigm of hegemony in the Southern Confederate society that is depicted, because Augusta and Louise, and to a certain extent Mad, are not supposed to carry out agricultural work. There is a sense of ambiguity in this because, on the one hand, this fact precludes the sisters from embodying Southern hegemonic femininity like that of Allie French in section 3.1. They are economically independent, and they live off the results of their labour. In this sense, their situation is closer to that of Maggie McNue and the women

of La Belle. However, on the other hand, the three women are forced into poverty by a state of war unleashed by men. This ambiguous nature is represented visually in the text, through the slowness as a reflection of the hardships of the work, since it “makes time noticeable in the image” (De Luca and Jorge, 2016: 5) in the same way as *Meek’s Cutoff* does, and shown through the constant shots against the light, as a representation of a sense of optimism that can be related to economic independence (see figure 48).



Figure 48. Ambiguity of agricultural labour from shots against the light. *The Keeping Room*/Drafthouse Films.

Secondly, the latter half of *The Keeping Room* is intertwined with the structure of cathexis. The organisation of scenes is the key to understanding the sexual politics of the film. The last sequence before the siege starts shows Augusta and Mad drinking homemade alcohol and speaking about their sexual desires. Mad shares memories of her lover, who is fighting in the war as a freed slave for the North. In contrast, Augusta expresses her desire to engage in sexual relations, and her fear that she will not have the chance to do it because of the conflict. Louise appears later, having recovered from being bitten by a racoon. This scene of relative joy is directly juxtaposed with the arrival of the men. Connell recognises that “the ‘double standard’, permitting promiscuous sexuality to men and forbidding it to women, has nothing to do with greater desire on the part of men; it has everything to do with greater power” (1987: 191), and it can be posited that the film shows how female sexual desires are punished: right after verbalising them, violent men appear, and rape. However, one can also argue that the slow form of the text serves as a critique of that punishment because the long take that depicts Louise’s rape transmits character’s pain. Lorde has recognised as a strategy of oppression the “suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives” (1978b: 53), and it can be highlighted that *The Keeping Room* denounces

such a strategy through its aesthetic choice of slowness and explicitness in showing the rape of Louise.

Finally, one can propose that the structure of power influences the entire film. In this sense, the first scene can be read as a statement. The two Northern soldiers, Moses (Sam Worthington) and Henry (Kyle Soller), rape and kill a White woman, as well as shooting down a Black woman they encounter on the road. The message is clear: war is masculine, and everyone is subject to its violence. In the first half of the film, that war appears both as an abstract menace for the three protagonists and the cause of their deprivation. In the second half, however, it is embodied specifically by Henry, Moses and the rape. Violence is thus a threat to Augusta and Louise as much as to Mad, for “it is no accident that the means of organized violence — weapons and knowledge of military technique — are almost entirely in the hands of men” (Connell, 1987: 181).

Following this discussion of *The Keeping Room* in light of the three structural models of gender relations, it is necessary to focus on how the combination of these oppressions changes gender relations in the American South and makes possible an alliance between the White female characters and Mad. The relationship between them grows throughout the film, based on communication, trust and forgiveness. It starts with racist contempt expressed by Louise, the youngest, toward Mad, to the point of her refusing to work and claiming that: “She is the nigger. She should do it”. A second stage is reached when Augusta contests Louise’s racist attitude and answers: “We are all niggers now”. The older sister acknowledges that they are in a situation of economic equality, since they are all facing the basic issue of “conquer[ing] the bread problem” (Lorde, 1984a: 34). Nevertheless, the next interaction between the three of them shows that, in her mind, Augusta does not see Mad as equal to them. Louise gets bitten by a racoon, and Augusta reprimands Mad. Mad answers back, and Augusta slaps her in the face. To her surprise, Mad slaps back, and it is from that precise moment that equality is reached between them (see figure 49).<sup>44</sup> According to bell hooks, “the ‘gaze’ has been and is a site of resistance for colonized Black people globally” (1993: 288) because it challenges the White patriarchal prohibition of “looking back”. However, Mad not only looks back; she goes as far as hitting back, asserting at the same time her humanity and her economic importance in the deprived household, a gesture that is fully acknowledged by Augusta. The relationship is reinforced when the two women bond over drinking alcohol and talking about sexuality, a conversation in which Mad acquires a mentoring role due to her greater experience in the matter.

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<sup>44</sup> It can be argued that this scene echoes the famous sequence of *In the Heat of the Night* (Norman Jewison, 1967) in which the Black detective Virgil Tibbs (Sydney Poitier) slaps back at the racist Southern landowner.



*Figure 49. Mad slaps Augusta and asserts her humanity. The Keeping Room/Drafthouse Films.*

Furthermore, the bonding reaches a more profound stage when Augusta, Mad and Louise have to fight the men. While Augusta is outside the house shooting Moses down, Mad is unable to prevent Henry from raping Louise because the gun she is given is too old. She nonetheless succeeds in saving Louise's life when she picks up the soldier's rifle. "The well-known association between guns and power—sexual, economic" (Serrano de Haro, 1996: 26; author's translation) is played out here, since Mad reverses her subordinate position by exchanging the old powder pistol for the rifle. After the first round of fighting is over, the three women meet in the keeping room, and the central development of Mad's construction occurs. She tells Augusta and Louise about her experiences of being raped as a slave: how her former master started abusing her at the age of ten, how she became pregnant several times, how she was forced to abort or was torn away from her children. A close analysis of this scene reveals how the representation strategy is built, and it can be split into two parts. In the first part, Mad bandages Augusta's wound. In the second part, in which Mad tells her story of life as a slave, the scene is structured around a shot-reverse-shot structure, with Mad on one side of the table and Augusta and Louise on the other. Mad's shots last an average of 14.5 seconds, whereas the sisters' shots last for 5.2 seconds on average. This distribution of screen time reveals that the narrative is stopped so that Mad is heard (see figure 50).



Figure 50. *The film stops to listen to Mad.* The Keeping Room/Drafthouse Films.

Therefore, it can be posited that *Mad* shows that, even if Louise has gone through a traumatic situation, “the experience of Black women does not enter the parameters of parallelism” (Carby, 1982: 111).<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, she effectively breaks her silence both as Black woman and as representative of Black women in the film’s narrative. Geena Ramanathan has explained the significance of “the physical presence of black women on screen, bodies allied to sound” (2015: 113), as women whose discourse was not technically interrupted through de-synchronisation as was that of White female stars. Similarly, *Mad* forces her body and her voice into the text, overcoming the “fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgement, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation” and, above all, of “the visibility without which we cannot truly live” (Lorde, 1978a: 42). *Mad* becomes visible within the narrative and to her female counterparts, who remain silent in understanding. It can be argued that this scene is *The Keeping Room*’s brightest achievement, for “there are so many silences to be broken” (Lorde, 1978a: 44), and it is through the banishment of silence that an alliance against the common enemy of male violence can be established.

This scene is followed by a more problematic event in which *Mad* is obliged to endure further pain. The three women hear a noise and come out to hunt for more assailants. *Mad* recognises that the sound has been made by her lover, who has come back to warn her about the imminent danger of the arrival of the Northern army. However, Augusta does not realise who he is and kills him. The keeping room is again the place where trauma is faced. *Mad* can be regarded as entitled to anger in the sense that Audre Lorde understands it, as a useful survival and visibility

<sup>45</sup> This idea is reinforced visually through the use of the shot-reverse-shot structure.



tool (1981: 124-133). However, Lorde also admits that “anger is useful to help clarify our differences, but in the long run, strength that is bred by anger alone is a blind force which cannot create the future” (1984b: 152). Mad’s decision embodies this idea when she tells Augusta: “When are you going to learn that what don’t happen, don’t matter. You just go on. Ain’t no time to think about love”, and she takes on the leadership of the group as they hunt down Moses and run away from the house dressed as soldiers. *The Keeping Room*’s feminist development is therefore drawn into an ambiguous terrain because of its discourse on race. As with *Django Unchained* and *Hell on Wheels*, limitations on the issue of race representation occur and, at the same time, are made visible.

#### **4.3.2 The Beguiled: Reversed Hegemonic Femininities and the Consequences of Race Erasure**

The second film to be discussed in this section parallels *The Keeping Room* in as far as its setting is concerned. As with the previous text, *The Beguiled* is set in the Confederate South during the US Civil War, and it features the interplay between an array of female characters isolated in a household. In this case, the film centres around the Farnsworth school for young women, managed by Miss Martha Farnsworth (Nicole Kidman) and her junior teacher Miss Edwina Morrow (Kirsten Dunst). The lives of the teachers and their students are disrupted by the arrival of Corporal John McBurney (Colin Farrell), a wounded Northern soldier whose injuries they treat. It can also be posited that both films explore a notion of hegemonic femininity as understood in the Confederate Southern society, and what occurs when such social constructions are challenged by seclusion and the influence of Northern male soldiers. However, one main difference exists between them: the inclusion versus the exclusion of a Black female character.

*The Beguiled* has been included in this section because of how it deals—or rather, does not deal—with race. This adaptation’s main departure from the original novel by Thomas Cullinan (1966) and the 1971 adaptation directed by Don Siegel is that it erases the character of Mattie Farnsworth, the Black female slave who works in the Farnsworth household. On the one hand, the decision of removing Mattie from the film echoes bell hook’s assertion that “many feminist film critics continue to structure their discourse as though it speaks about ‘women’ when in actuality it speaks only about White women” (1993: 195). In the previous version of the film and in the novel, Mattie constitutes a key character within the power dynamics of the school, as she is the only person who is able to contest Miss Martha’s dominance. Furthermore, in the novel it is Mattie who possesses the greater, when her first-person voice confesses in her first intervention that she knew what would happen if they took McBurney in, and still she did not try to prevent it from happening (Cullinan, 1966: 8). Moreover, the possibility of an alliance through

flirting with Eastwood's McBurney which is hinted at in the 1971 film destabilises the all-White pattern in a way that the 2017 adaptation could never do. In this sense, Mattie embodies a racialised femininity that openly challenges the construction of hegemony from an outsider position of enslavement (see figure 51). In the novel, Mattie makes her wish that the US South be destroyed explicit in the first chapter in which her first-person voice is presented. She thinks about the arrival of McBurney: "Because there was a hope in me sometimes that they *would* come, that they'd come and destroy this place, just knock it down with their cannons and then burn the rubbish. Course I never woulda wanted any of the young ladies to get hurt but there was times when I wouldn't've cared what happened to anybody else here, and that afternoon mighta been one of those times" (Cullinan, 1966: 7; italics in the original).



Figure 51. The presence of Mattie Farnsworth destabilises the Whiteness of the narrative in the adaptation directed by Don Siegel. *The Beguiled*/Universal Pictures.

Nevertheless, as with *The Keeping Room*, the issue of representation is problematic in *The Beguiled*. Following the critical backlash against her decision to remove the character, Sofia Coppola explained that "there are many examples of how slaves have been appropriated and 'given a voice' by White artists.<sup>46</sup> Rather than an act of denial, my decision of not including Mattie in the film comes from respect" (July 15, 2017). Therefore, the complex situation of, and possible readings produced by, the death of Mad's lover in *The Keeping Room* are avoided. Nevertheless, the film does this by repressing an expression of Blackness that could have appeared under other conditions, such as if there has been a Black female writer in the screenwriting team. Without Mattie, scenes like the dinner between McBurney and the women of the school are the expression of a constructed Whiteness such as has been defined by Bernardi and explained in

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46 One should note that in this particular case it is useful to use *auteur* theory as applied to the Western (White, 2011: 84) because Sofia Coppola directed the film, wrote the adaptation and was one of the producers.

section 3.3 (see figure 52). The cinematography of the film enhances white and light-coloured textures, such as the white dresses that Miss Farnsworth and her students wear, and the marble of the house and the pale skins of its inhabitants. In addition, the three main female characters are blonde, and are portrayed by actresses whose personae have been associated with an image of bloneness and paleness: Nicole Kidman, Kirsten Dunst, and Elle Fanning. The erasure of Mattie results in a visual homogeneity of Whiteness on the axis of race, even if the presence of McBurney breaks that homogeneity on the axis of gender. Whiteness thus appears as “coyly masking itself as normal” (Bernardi, 1996: 107). Moreover, it simplifies the different hierarchies of oppression among different kinds of femininity, the exposition of which is fundamental for intersectional feminists.



Figure 52. *The Farnsworth household expresses an idea of Whiteness. The Beguiled/Focus Features.*

As a conclusion to this section, it can be argued that the acknowledgement and interplay in the narrative of different kinds of femininities—hegemonic, racialised, pariah—from a feminist perspective constitute a way to bring complexity into the Western. Schippers states that “if we claim that racial and ethnic minority femininities are subordinate to white femininity, we obscure the subordination of white women in the gender order and we deny that racialized femininities might actually empower racial and ethnic minority women in a way that white femininities do not for white women” (2007: 89). Indeed, the inclusion of a character like Mad destabilises the gender order and makes visible the several layers of oppression that have been repressed within the genre. Furthermore, *The Beguiled* rehearses a local situation in which hegemony belongs to females, even if it ignores a vertical structure of dominance within the feminine gender by erasing Mattie Farnsworth. By juxtaposing the two films in the analysis, however, a set of tensions arises,

which accounts for the difficulty that exists in any issue of race and gender representation. Mad and Mattie as characters expose, once again, the limitations imposed on representation, but those limitations would be more straightforwardly addressed through the inclusion of Black characters rather than their erasure in favour of an all-White cast. The Western still struggles to accommodate Black femininities within its boundaries.

#### **4.4 Contemporary Femininities and Western Iconography**

As this research approaches its conclusion, the present section will use a similar theoretical approach to that of the equivalent section dedicated to contemporary masculinities and Western iconography. Therefore, the films hereby discussed depart from the working definition of a Western film provided in the Introduction because they are not set in the USA during the 19th century. In addition, the gender hegemony framework employed in these films is suffused with particular attention to the bodies of their protagonists, and to how their agency over them helps to construct their femininities. For the purposes of this section, four films will be analysed under this framework and in relation to Western iconography: *Kill Bill*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Certain Women*, and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*.<sup>47</sup> To do this, it is necessary to first point out some differences between addressing the male body and the female body. Connell's conception of male bodies as social and physical signifiers of hegemony and masculinity takes for granted that men possess agency over their bodies. Nevertheless, women have been deprived of such agency, as has been noted by Kimmel when he considers "unequal control over one's body" (2005: 415) to be one of the "gender order privileges" that benefit men. Furthermore, Janet McCabe concurs with that idea when she asserts that "agency over one's body has become a central issue for feminists" (2015: 42). Crucially, then, Butler's theories about the constructed nature of gender as described in sections 3.4 and 4.2 will be applied again in relation to these films. It is contended here that the protagonists of these films not only struggle to gain agency over their bodies in order to rearrange gender norms, but also that the conflation between those bodies and the iconography of the Western decodes the boundaries of the genre. In this sense, just as Kate Ince claims that in the cinema of Agnès Varda "'World' [...] is materially imbricated with the body that perceives it" (2017: 62-63), so the female body in these films is connected through Western iconography to the world.

##### **4.4.1 Kill Bill: Regaining Agency Through Violent Bodies**

*Kill Bill* features the story of the revenge of Beatrix Kiddo, aka The Bride (Uma Thurman), against her former master and lover Bill (David Carradine). Bill employs Beatrix as an assassin, but she leaves

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<sup>47</sup> Although it was released in two "volumes", for the purpose of this research *Kill Bill* will be discussed as a single narrative and discursive unit.

that life behind when she learns that she is pregnant with Bill's child. As Beatrix tries to hide in El Paso under the name of Arlene Plympton, Bill and his Deadly Vipers Assassination Squad murder her fiancée and friends and leave her in a coma. When she wakes up four years later, Beatrix starts a "roaring rampage of revenge", as she puts it, against Bill and the members of the Squad: O-Ren Ishii (Lucy Liu), Vernita Green (Vivica A. Fox), Bill's brother Budd (Michael Madsen) and Elle Driver (Daryl Hannah), only to find out that her child is still alive. *Kill Bill* is explicitly related to the Western in terms of its the plot, as it can be associated with what Will Wright identified as "the vengeance variation" (1975: 59) of the "classical plot" (1975: 32).<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the film draws on Western iconography through style, as authors such as Patrick McGee and James Walters have noted regarding the use of music and of scenes such as that of the massacre in the El Paso chapel and the final duel between Bill and Beatrix (see 2007: 237; 2010: 20) (see figure 53).



Figure 53. The iconography of *The Searchers* is referenced in the El Paso chapel sequence. *Kill Bill* vol. 2/ Miramax.

Beatrix can be seen as an embodiment of Schippers' non-hegemonic femininity that does not comply with the gender order imposed by Bill, who can be regarded as "the patriarchal subject and the subject of capital" (McGee, 2007: 237). Following that notion, her "roaring rampage of revenge" against Bill and his associates can be understood as a female act of revenge against the structures of male oppression of the gender order. However, it should be noted that all the obstacles that are in her way before she gets to Bill are female, except for Budd. In this sense, Bill's hegemony is powerful enough to use femininity as a weapon to maintain his male dominance. Therefore, Vernita Green, O-Ren Ishii and Elle Driver can be regarded as hegemonic representations of femininity that stand against the non-compliant femininity of Beatrix. McGee posits that "The Bride's blinding of Elle is the final deconstruction of her own feminine identity before she meets Bill" (2007: 241). Following that idea, it can be proposed that, by killing her three female rivals, Beatrix is eliminating projections of hegemonic femininity that need to be discarded in order for her to achieve her vengeance/liberation.

<sup>48</sup> According to Wright, as opposed to the classical hero, "the vengeance hero leaves the society because of his strength and their weakness" (1975: 59), as Beatrix does when she rides into the sunset in a car with her daughter.

Moreover, it can be argued that the violent fight between Beatrix's non-hegemonic femininity and Bill's hegemonic masculinity and its structures of power is carried "on the surface of the body", as Butler proposed. In this sense, Walters posits that the narrative structure and the style of the film are "aligned with the psychological perspective of its central character, Beatrix, as she carries out her mission of revenge" (2010: 20). One can note that not only the psychological and "emotional drive of revenge" (Walters, 2010: 20) is represented in the film through style, but also Beatrix's bodily construction of her non-compliant femininity. The film's very first shot features her heavy breathing and gasping, and her bloodied face as Bill is about to shoot her. Throughout her revenge journey, the focus is placed on many occasions on the painful bodily exertions that she endures. These exertions are shown in her escape from the hospital without being able to walk; the punching, kicking and cutting in the fights with Vernita Green, O-Ren Ishii and Elle Drive (see figure 54); the anguish of being buried alive and the blood in her fist as she breaks open the coffin; and the tears in her eyes as she sees Bill walking away toward his death. Walters claims that such a display of physical engagement "contribute to her portrait of a human experiencing immediate and forceful emotions within the act of revenge" (2010: 20), but it also establishes the continuum between Beatrix's body and femininity and the violent world of vengeance that surrounds her, as Ince posited. However, Beatrix's body does not exclusively drive her actions, as she tells Vernita Green that "it's mercy, compassion and forgiveness that I lack, not rationality". Beatrix thus transcends the duality established by the masculine gender order in which "[m]en's minds represented rationality and logic. Conversely, women were thought to represent and be governed by the body" (Gerschick, 2005: 376). By blending the rationality and logic of her vengeance with an intense way of experiencing it "on the surface of her body", Beatrix becomes an "embodied subject[...] of [her] own desire" (Ince, 2017: 42) who challenges hegemonic masculinity and synthesises all the qualities of the male and female heroes of the Western in a single bodily unit.



Figure 54. Beatrix's body becomes both recipient and source of physical violence. Kill Bill vol. 2/Miramax.

However, it should also be noted as a conclusion that even if the violence exerted over and by Beatrix's body is her strategy for achieving agency, such a strategy precludes the body from exercising non-violent activities. Only the presence of her daughter B.B. (Perla Haney-Jardin) can convert Beatrix's body from a weapon into a recipient of love. The next generation is thus presented as hope in order to advance in the defeat of male dominance and, moreover, to enjoy the benefits of that defeat through love. However, as McGee notes, the achievement of Beatrix's goal and her reunion with her daughter does not happen without contradiction (2007: 238). On the one hand, Beatrix's non-compliant femininity and Bill's hegemonic masculinity are both present in B.B. her since Bill raised her. On the other hand, Beatrix's revenge has left another victim: Nikki Bell, Vernita's daughter, who has witnessed the murder of her mother by Beatrix. *Kill Bill* can thus be seen as an affirmative assertion of the necessity for non-compliant femininities to forcefully resist male dominance, in a way in which mind, body and the world surrounding them are considered a continuum. However, it also shows the contradictions that arise from the conflation of such femininities and masculinities when they are projected onto a next generation that has to deal with the violence exerted by their predecessors.

#### **4.4.2 Mad Max: Fury Road: *Queerness as the Condition for Revolution***

*Mad Max: Fury Road* presents a post-apocalyptic world in which a nuclear conflict has left a barren Earth, where water, fuel and bullets are the most prized resources. In this context, a warlord called Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne) has accumulated the water in a defined area and established a pseudo-religious empire in which boys with low life expectancy regard death in battle as the highest honour. Immortan Joe breeds a pleiad of sons and daughters with a group of young wives that he keeps in a vault. However, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron), one of Immortan Joe's lieutenants, alongside a drifter called Max Rockatansky (Tom Hardy) and a war-boy named Nux (Nicholas Hoult), try to liberate the women and bring down Immortan Joe's kingdom. *Mad Max* can be aligned with the Western in three respects. First, it replicates a frontier space in which no political institution has a monopoly on violence. It also fits the classical plot of the Western outlined by Will Wright as "the story of the lone stranger who rides into a troubled town and cleans it up, winning the respect of the townsfolk and love of the schoolmarm" (1975: 32). Finally, the iconography of the drifter looking for redemption and social accommodation that has been related to some iterations of the Westerner can be located in both Imperator Furiosa and Max.

In a similar manner to in *Logan* and *Solo*, the fantastic setting of *Mad Max* and the Western iconography with which it is suffused are employed in order to create a fantasy metaphor of a particular society. In this sense, in *Mad Max* the focus is placed on how wealth is accumulated

and distributed and on how that distribution is related to a gender order of male domination. In the world of *Mad Max*, hegemonic masculinity does not belong to the drifter Max, the potentially equivalent figure to that of the Westerner, but to Immortan Joe. Immortan Joe practises the same kind of accumulation of wealth through violent means as other masculinities analysed in this research do, including Randall Bragg in *Appaloosa* and Al Swearingen in *Deadwood*. Immortan Joe's hegemonic masculinity complies with Connell's definition of the concept because it is based on the subordination of certain versions of masculinity, such as those of Max and Nux, and because he is regarded as a god worth dying for (see figure 55). It is also based on his dominance over women, especially his wives, who are subjugated to the three structures of the gender order.

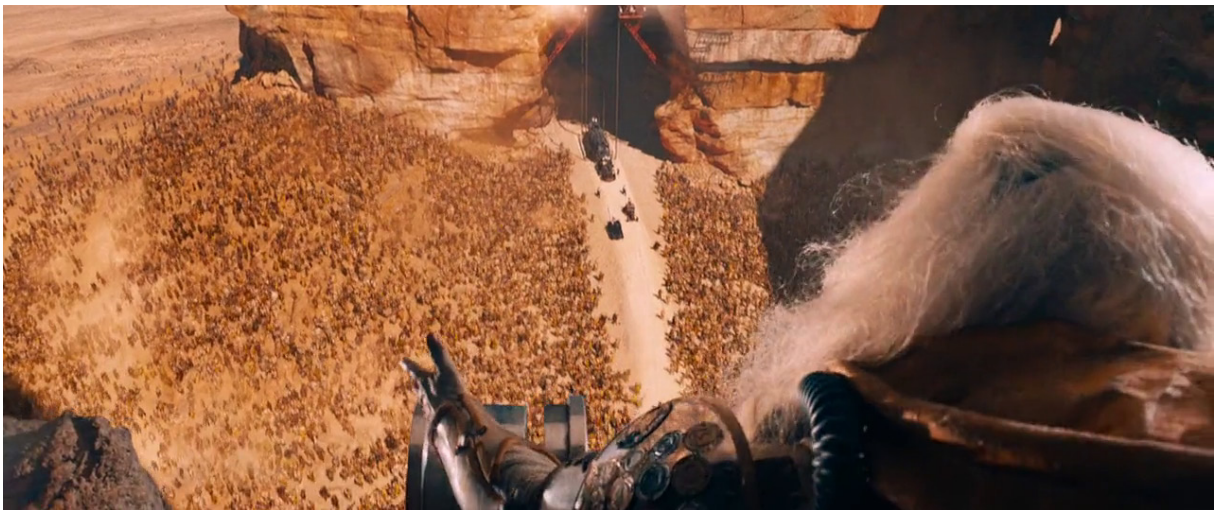


Figure 55. Immortan Joe's hegemonic masculinity is godlike due to his control over the water resources. *Mad Max: Fury Road/Warner Bros.*

However, the presence of Imperator Furiosa in *Mad Max* and her importance to the plot rearranges the economic and gendered structure of the diegesis. Imperator Furiosa displays the traits of the Westerner in terms of her proficient display of violence through shooting and driving as well as her search for redemption. However, instead of taking advantage of the feminine body and persona of the lead actress Charlize Theron, the film chooses to erase her female bodily attributes by removing Theron's hair, concealing the shape of her body and providing the character with a metal arm (see figure 56).<sup>49</sup> A contrast between Imperator Furiosa's body and the bodies of Immortan Joe's wives is thus produced, which results in a queering of both the world of *Mad Max* and the generic conventions that surround the figure of the Westerner. Furiosa's body is certainly female, but it presents a different kind of femaleness to that of Immortan Joe's wives and that of the group of old women known as the Many

49 In this sense, *Mad Max: Fury Road* seems to stand in opposition to two kinds of film: on the one hand, other action features starring Theron in which her body is displayed in a sexual manner, such as *Atomic Blonde* (2017, David Leitch); and on the other hand, Westerns such as *The Quick and the Dead*, in which the figure of the Westerner is played by Sharon Stone, whose body is also sexualised



Mothers. Moreover, Imperator Furiosa's queered body and her violent actions rearrange the rules of gender in Butler's sense, because she is portrayed not only as female but as feminine. It can be said that *Mad Max* conceives femininity as related to fertility, life and growth. These concepts are represented by the motherhood of Immortan Joe's wives, and by the alternative lifestyle of the Many Mothers, who still keep vegetable seeds because they want to plant a garden. In her wish to free the wives and herself from Immortan Joe's regime, Imperator Furiosa embodies a kind of desire that is considered feminine within the discourse of the film. Finally, her sexuality is never addressed in the film, and the grounds of her relationship with Max are those of respect between siblings in arms rather than those of the loving couple. Furiosa is thus aligned with the asexuality of characters such as Toby Howard, the protagonist of *Hell or High Water*, and Logan.



Figure 56. Charlize Theron's body is queered and de-sexualised. *Mad Max: Fury Road*/Warner Bros.

The final queering and decoding that *Mad Max* performs with the gender order occurs when it is Imperator Furiosa's femininity that becomes the condition for destroying Immortan Joe's rule. The alliance between the different femininities of Immortan Joe's wives, the Many Mothers, and Imperator Furiosa as their leader is the cause of Immortan Joe's defeat. The release of the water in the end scene, as Furiosa ascends, can be seen as a call for capitalism to be deconstructed through the redistribution of wealth (see figure 57). Furthermore, it deconstructs the hegemonic gender order from the perspective of femininity associated with fertility and growth. In this sense, the alliance with subordinated masculinities such as Max and Nux is necessary, but Furiosa is the final redeemer. The iconography of the Western is utilised as Max walks away from society in the guise of Shane or Ethan Edwards, but it is made clear that it was Imperator Furiosa who caused the revolution.



Figure 57. *Queer femininities achieve redistribution of wealth.* Mad Max: Fury Road/Warner Bros.

In conclusion, it can be said that Emperor Furiosa achieves a victory of representation, since it is her queer and fluid femininity that is rendered fundamental to progress. In this sense, Furiosa's victory allows her to become, like Beatrix Kiddo in *Kill Bill*, an “embodied subject[...] of [her] own desire” (Ince, 2017: 42). Furthermore, the contradictions that surrounded Beatrix are overcome by Emperor Furiosa through the alliances established between her, the other representations of femininity and the subordinated masculinities. Consequently, Emperor Furiosa can be seen as possessing the same kind of post-sexual and post-familial nature as Logan, Toby Howard and Solo, as analysed in the equivalent section of the Masculinities chapter. The post-sexual and post-familial character of Emperor Furiosa is the condition for a new egalitarian regime because it is a queer femininity that is able to work alongside other kinds of femininities and masculinities, and is thus depicted as the most viable for future progress.

#### ***4.4.3 Certain Women: Affect and Intimacy through Western Iconography***

*Certain Women* presents four women whose lives intersect around the town of Livingston, Montana. First, Laura (Laura Dern) is a lawyer who represents a damaged man, Fuller (Jared Harris), in a lawsuit against the company for which he used to work. Secondly, Gina (Michelle Williams), whose husband is having an affair with Laura, is set on building a country house with the stones that lie in the yard of an old man called Albert (Rene Auberjonois). Thirdly, Elizabeth Travis (Kristen Stewart) is a young lawyer who is forced to drive four hours every day to teach a high-school law class in the town of Belfry. She meets there a the fourth woman of the film, a female rancher (Lily Gladstone), who has a job looking after works taking care of some horses on a nearby property. For the purposes of this section, the focus will be placed on the segment featuring Elizabeth and the rancher, since that is where the iconography of the Western is most present. It can be said that *Certain Women* belongs in that sense to the same trend of films as

*Brokeback Mountain*, that is, films in which there is continuity between the iconography of the Western and the geographic space of the West within a contemporary setting.<sup>50</sup> From an authorial point of view, *Certain Women* is linked to *Meek's Cutoff*, since “Reichardt often works with the tropes of a specifically American idiom” (Gorfinkel, 2016: 123) and therefore provides a setting and an iconography that draws on Western conventions while at the same time erasing or rearranging them.

One can note that the representations of femininity embodied by Elizabeth and the rancher are not shaped against any representations of masculinity, as in the other two segments of the film with Laura and Gina. Conversely, Elizabeth and the rancher’s femininities are shaped against each other and their labour conditions. The film stops at four separate points in which the rancher is tending to the horses, as she feeds them, cleans them and tidies their stables (see figure 58). In this sense, *Certain Women* can be regarded as related to *The Ballad of Little Jo* and Reichardt’s own *Meek's Cutoff* in the sense that “a woman director conveys the details of this work and of the material reality of the West more lovingly than have most male directors working in this action-oriented genre” (Modleski, 1997: 526). The rancher stands as a feminine character performing this work and, therefore, embodying one of the remaining traits of Western iconography in the contemporary USA.



Figure 58. The rancher’s femaleness is constructed through the activities of the contemporary ranch hand. *Certain Women*/IFC Films.

Nevertheless, the relationship between them is not symmetrical. In the conversations in the diner, filmed with a shot-reverse-shot dynamic, it is Elizabeth who speaks while the rancher listens, and the profound interest that can be seen in the rancher’s gaze meets the tiredness of Elizabeth. In

<sup>50</sup> In this sense, this kind of setting and the focus on horses in *Certain Women* references a set of films that has been mentioned previously in this research, which includes *The Lusty Men*, *The Misfits*, *The Rounders* (1965, Burt Kennedy), *Junior Boner*, *Brokeback Mountain* and the recent *Lean on Pete* (2017, Andrew Haigh).

this sense, the rancher embodies the traits of the Westerner not only through the economic activities she performs but also through the limited number of words she utters. Nevertheless, this is not a lack of speech that signifies self-containment, as with Warshaw's hegemonic male Westerner, but quite the contrary: it speaks about the rancher's desire to engage with Elizabeth on affective terms. In this sense, the rancher's quest in Livingston ends in a final conversation with Elizabeth. Space in this scene is segmented in a way that resembles the shootout in *Hostiles* and, therefore, can be seen as a loose version of the adventure of the Westerner that culminates in a duel. However, the affection embodied by the rancher in her gaze and her bodily expression toward Elizabeth can be regarded as an attempt to "rework the codes that embed male subjectivity into film narratives, substituting for them new forms of cinematography and narrative" (Ince, 2017: 49) and, in this case, new forms of utilising Western iconography.

It is significant, then, that the closest contact between the two characters occurs when the rancher invites Elizabeth to ride to the diner with her on a horse. The horse, seen by Jane Tompkins as one of the central elements that define both the Western and the Westerner (1992: 6-7), provides the place where their bodies can touch, as Elizabeth grabs the rancher's back. *Certain Women* shares the contrast of the image of a horse displaced on a highway with *Lonely are the Brave*. However, rather than becoming an elegy, the horse here represents a conception of the Western imagery in which natural elements can—briefly—overcome economic conditions (see figure 59).



Figure 59. The horse becomes a natural space of contact between Elizabeth and the rancher. *Certain Women*/IFC Films.

In conclusion, it is useful to note that Fernández-Santos stressed: “the formalism of the Western: the maintenance in modern times of the archaic ritualised processes upon which the ancient tragedy was built, of the struggle of men against the natural environment that haunts them” (1987: 160; author’s translation). *Certain Women* shares some of that formalism, but it erases the epic scope that Fernández-Santos referred to and instead provides an intimate approach to individualised and queered relations between humans through those same formal elements. While driving back from Livingston after being rejected by Elizabeth, the rancher falls asleep and drives off the road, only to be softly received by the landscape (see figure 60). Furthermore, the final shot of the film is a long static take that shows the rancher working in the stable with the mountains framed in the background through a window. The bringing together of horse, labour, and landscape provides the possibility for personal forms of femininity to develop alternative constructions of the myth of the Westerner. These are not related to violence, hegemony, and an epic character, but rather to close contact, nature and the desire to construct affectionate relations.



Figure 60. *The US landscape receives the rancher’s car.* *Certain Women/IFC Films.*

#### 4.4.4 **Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri: *Combative Feminism in the Body of the Female Hero***

*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* narrates the struggle of Mildred Hayes (Frances McDormand), a working-class woman whose daughter, Angela, was raped and murdered when returning home one night. After almost a year of no progress in the police investigation, Mildred decides to use three abandoned billboards on the outskirts of Ebbing to draw public attention to her case and put pressure on the local chief of police, Chief Willoughby (Woody Harrelson). Mil-

dred's move encounters the resistance of the town's community, especially officer Jason Dixon (Sam Rockwell), a policeman who is highly influenced by his conservative mother. *Three Billboards* is related to the Western in two respects, first, in the iconography embodied by Mildred, which will be analysed later and, secondly, in the transformation of Ebbing into a frontier space, since the control exerted by the institutions is not powerful enough to prevent teenage girls from getting killed at night. The modern Western frontier is thus suffused with a gendered nature that stresses vengeful violent male oppression.

The space of Ebbing, then, is comparable with those of Harlan County in *Justified* and West Texas in *Hell or High Water*; in the sense that it depicts the social consequences of the post-industrial economy in the Southern USA Michael Kimmel stresses that "gender becomes one of the chief organizing principles of local, regional, and national resistance to globalization", and results in the creation of some kinds of masculinity that "tap into a vague masculine resentment of the economic displacement, loss of autonomy, and collapse of domestic patriarchy that accompany further integration into the global economy" (2005: 416). The consequence of that masculine resentment is the effort to reappraise male dominance through either the violence of raping and murdering a young woman or the lazy attempts by the authorities to catch the killer. In this sense, the three structures of the gender order operate in Ebbing as oppressive elements, since, first, in the structure of power male violence is exerted over Mildred's daughter, but also over Mildred herself by her ex-husband Charlie (John Hawkes). Furthermore, the institutional State appears also as male, because the police department's lead investigators are all men. In addition, when a drifter appears to threaten Mildred and brags about having raped a woman, Dixon gets his DNA. There is no match with Angela's killer, but the secrecy with which the man's military past is treated leaves an open space for wondering whether the Army is protecting him. Secondly, in the structure of the division of labour Mildred survives on her job in a souvenir store and the maintenance paid by her ex-husband, and her situation as a working-class woman also has an influence on her daughter's killing: the family not having two vehicles forces Angela to return home on foot. Finally, in the structure of cathexis, the violence exerted over women is mainly sexual.

However, Mildred chooses to regain agency through an iconic display of her body. Mildred is visually related to combative feminism through her attire of jumpsuit and bandana, which directly references the poster "We Can Do it!" created by J. Howard Miller in 1943 (see figures 61 and 62). The actress Frances McDormand has declared that she based her performance on the persona of John Wayne (2017) and, therefore, draws on the image of the Westerner. Deborah Thomas argues that the Western characters of John Wayne embody a mixture of "considerable flexibility and emotional tenderness", and a display of violence in which "the toughness is real enough" (1996: 78). Following this idea, Mildred moves around Ebbing replicating Wayne's way of walking,

stiff and staggering. In three different scenes, she walks in a slow-motion shot with music that resembles the classic trope of the Westerner facing a shootout: first, when she comes up with the idea of using the billboards and enters the advertising company; secondly, in the scene in which she confronts officer Dixon about having arrested her co-worker (see figure 63); and thirdly, when she burns down the police station. Furthermore, Mildred confronts and kicks a group of teenagers who have thrown a drink into her car. However, the fragile part of the equation that defined Wayne according to Thomas is also seen as Mildred cries and speaks tenderly to a deer in the field that surrounds the billboards. McDormand states in the above-referenced interview: “I played her like a man”. However, it can be argued that Mildred places the attributes of the Westerner in her body—as Raylan Givens did in *Justified*—in a manner that mirrors Judith Butler’s definition of gender as a “corporeal style, an ‘act’, as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (1990a: 113).



Figure 61 and 62. *We Can Do It!* poster and the reappraisal of its iconography by Mildred. J. Howard Miller. *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*/Fox Searchlight Pictures.



*Figure 63. Frances McDormand builds on the iconography and mannerisms of John Wayne. Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri/Fox Searchlight Pictures.*

In conclusion, Mildred pushes the boundaries of the Western genre by appropriating the physical style, in Butler's sense, of its most famous male star, and turning it into a weapon of sexual politics. By becoming a feminine version of the Westerner, Mildred contests the patriarchal violence of the gender order of Ebbing, understood as a representation of the post-industrial U.S. of Donald Trump, and renders the Western a site of agency and contestation through its iconography. However, the film lacks a defined moral ending, since it is not shown whether Dixon and Mildred kill the possible murderer and it is never revealed whether he actually committed any crime. As a result, there is a sense of ambiguity in Mildred's utilisation of the traits of the Westerner, since they can be either rightful or delusional. Nevertheless, *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* and its protagonist Mildred Hayes remain a powerful example of how the iconography of the Western can be used as a symbol of female agency and feminist struggle.

#### **4.4.5 Conclusion**

If a comparison were drawn between the equivalent section of Contemporary Masculinities and Western Iconography and the present section, a significant difference would be encountered. The Masculinities chapter presented a number of masculine narratives that were suffused with a sense of exhaustion and violence. The bodies of Logan, Toby Howard and Solo, and the frontier spaces of *Hell or High Water* and *Justified* were related to the iconography of the Western in order to express the difficulty encountered by hegemonic masculinities in coping with the challenges of post-industrial capitalism as embodied by Trump's USA. The characters in that chapter were destined for death, exile, and sexual isolation in order to protect what was left of their families, thus rendering the concept of hegemonic masculinity an outdated and fantasised notion. However, the female protagonists of the four films discussed in this section utilise the iconography of the Western more positively. Be it the agency gained by Beatrix, the destruction



of an oppressive patriarchal regime by Imperator Furiosa, the intimacy desired by the rancher, or the combative contestation of Mildred Hayes, Western iconography is transformed into a potentially powerful weapon from a feminist perspective. It can be useful to recall Mulvey's assertion that "once women can claim a critical voice, the status of 'woman' as 'signifier' is necessarily challenged and modified" (2015: 25). By achieving that critical voice using Western iconography, modern-set femininities not only challenge and modify the status of "woman", as Mulvey posited, but modify and expand the possibilities and boundaries of the Western itself. This can be regarded as the greatest challenge to, as well as the greatest hope for, the future of the Western.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In order to evaluate in this Conclusion what has been achieved by this research and by contemporary Westerns themselves, it is useful to provide a reminder of one aspect of the working definition of the genre that was given in the Introduction. The Western has been considered “a process”, following Rick Altman’s view that genres are not informed by a set of structural and pre-existing characteristics, but are instead negotiated continuously by their producers and receptors (see Altman, 1999: 54-68). In this sense, it has been shown in previous chapters how the Western, defined by its White, heterosexual male protagonists in the guise of Warshow’s Westerner, has given way to the display of other kinds of identities. The genre’s rules are queered and decoded through the set of feminocentric films analysed, which consider the consequences of acquiring non-normative and non-patriarchal perspectives on the West. In this sense, it has been shown how hegemony can be situated within its traditional masculine framework, but also how it can be unbalanced and rearranged through representation.

Furthermore, female issues have not only been discussed under an exclusively White and heterosexual framework. The existence of narratives such as *Godless* and *Westworld* queers the rules of gender and genre as applied to Western characters and narratives. Furthermore, *The Keeping Room* and *The Beguiled* reflect on the representation of Black femininities and demonstrate the contradictions and limitations that arise from erasing them from the narrative. A similar case can be made regarding masculinities. Patriarchal hegemonic masculinities in the guise of Virgil Cole in *Appaloosa* can still be reappraised. The Western is able to accommodate Black masculinities within its boundaries and become a space for rehearsing race contestation, although it struggles with Black femininities. In addition, through the homosociality depicted in *Deadwood*, the homosexuality of *Brokeback Mountain*, and the post-familial, post-sexual characters of *Logan* and *Solo*, the Western is being queered and decoded in its classic notions of masculinity, sexuality and gender identity. Furthermore, modern-set films have used the iconography of the Western to devise notions of masculinity and femininity within the context of the post-industrial economy and the Trump administration. On the one hand, these contemporary masculinities have been portrayed as ineffectual in facing the challenges of such a political framework. On the other hand, femininities regain agency and power through Western iconography and appear more qualified than their masculine counterparts. Therefore, the analysis of these kinds of masculinities and femininities results in a political comment on feminine leadership.

Following Stuart Hall, a note of caution has to be issued in order to avoid conceiving these perspectives as “grand counternarratives” (1992: 125-126) that cause all representation issues to disappear from the Western. Limitations exist and must be acknowledged. They emerge in nar-

ratives such as *Godless*, where the feminine and queer perspective becomes, toward the end of the series, a classic standoff between a father and his surrogate son, in a frustrating conventionality. Those same limitations are highlighted concerning race in *Django Unchained*, *Hell on Wheels*, *The Keeping Room* and *The Beguiled*. In the first film, racism is resolved through a fantasised and stylised violence that simplifies social constructions within neoliberal capitalism. Those same social constructions under the rule of capitalism are shown in *Hell on Wheels* and *The Keeping Room*, where successful strategies of integration must ambiguously combine compliance and resistance. Finally, narratives such as *The Beguiled* still tend to repress or erase Black characters, so that the Whiteness of the rest of the personages can be foregrounded as suppressed without any problematic hierarchy of suppression interceding. Moreover, these limitations must be acknowledged in the process of research itself. The researcher here has addressed the study of several kinds of masculinities and femininities, several races, and several gender, sexual and identity orientations from a place of being White, heterosexual, and male. Therefore, most of these experiences have been approached through other accounts of them and, even if these have been handled as carefully as possible, the final result is still problematic to some extent.

It is necessary to point to further research that can extend and complete the achievements of this study. First, it has been suggested that homosociality and asexuality constructed the masculinities of characters such as Seth Bullock, Toby Howard and Logan. However, it has also been proposed that these male protagonists can be compared with other classic Westerners, such as Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers*. Following that, a retrospective rewriting of the genre's history within the framework of homosociality, with Ethan Edwards as the primary example, needs to be undertaken. Secondly, this thesis has addressed the Western from a classical standpoint. That is, only films produced in the USA, the country of origin of the Western, have been considered. As has been stated in the Literature Review, some authors have begun to regard the Western in the light of the effects of transnationality and globalisation, and significant research that considers the notions of gender, nationhood, identity and genre in this context needs to be conducted. As Astre and Hoarau assert in their study on the genre, "a study about the Western cannot be concluded: far from being exhausted, it is constantly renewing itself, as has been said; it is constantly feeding on the obsessions, from all the anguishes of the civilisation from which it came" (1975: 413; author's translation). Future research in this aspect is, then, mandatory.

Nevertheless, even when all those limitations are taken into account, it can be argued that the presence of these negotiating narratives at the current potentially historic turning point for feminism opens up a field of exploration that goes beyond mere revisionism. In the Literature Review, Marek Paryz's assertion that "the genre's revisionism in the new millennium appears

somewhat to be muted” (2015: 3-4) was quoted. As a result of this research, it can be proposed that revisionism is indeed finished within the Western. The revisionist era in which the individual film distances itself from the bulk of the genre has given way to an idea of the Western that has absorbed as a major trait a gender-oriented agenda and, therefore, it is not revisionist anymore. Revisionist agendas are not muted, as Paryz suggested, but are instead included as a new characteristic within the generic process. Westerns are being produced and understood in this way in the 21st century, and the relevance and impact of this research lie in this finding. Two decades ago, Michael Coyne considered that the Western could never embody a feminist discourse because of its male boundaries (1997: 190). If the Western, as has been proved, has been able to adapt its structures to counteract Coyne’s assertion, then society itself can do so as well, and the Western is actively helping with this.

Laura Mulvey posits that “an archaic or *démodé* object derived its use value from its place in a given social-economic system but returns later with an altered meaning and significance attached to it” (2015: 20). Gender and race-oriented agendas have enabled the Western to return with that altered meaning, and under the commercial conditions that were stated in the Literature Review, that is, as a prestige genre rather than as fuel for Hollywood’s machinery. The Western, then, like its characters, has found its own frontier to explore, and that exploration has become both its condition and its salvation. The genre is set on dominating the frontier of identities, and its survival depends on features in which every identity can wield a gun of its own.

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## 6.2 Filmography

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- 12 Years a Slave* (2013). Directed by Steve McQueen [Film]. USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Alatriste* (2006). Directed by Agustín Díaz-Yanes [Film]. Spain: 20th Century Fox.
- American Outlaws* (2001). Directed by Les Mayfield [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.
- Appaloosa* (2008). Directed by Ed Harris [Film]. USA: New Line Cinema.
- Atomic Blonde* (2017). Directed by David Leitch [Film]. USA: Focus Features.
- Bad Girls* (1994). Directed by Jonathan Kaplan [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Bend of the River* (1952). Directed by Anthony Mann [Film]. USA: Universal International Pictures.
- Brokeback Mountain* (2005). Directed by Ang Lee [Film]. USA: Focus Features.
- Broken Arrow* (1950). Directed by Delmer Daves [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Broken Trail* (2006). Directed by Walter Hill [TV]. USA: AMC.
- Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969). Directed by George Roy Hill [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Certain Women* (2016). Directed by Kelly Reichardt [Film]. USA: IFC Films.
- Cheyenne Autumn* (1964). Directed by John Ford [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.
- Cimarron* (1931). Directed by Wesley Ruggles [Film]. USA: RKO Radio Pictures.
- Cimarron* (1960). Directed by Anthony Mann [Film]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- Cowboy* (1958). Directed by Delmer Daves [Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.
- Dallas* (1950). Directed by Stuart Heisler [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.
- Dances with Wolves* (1990). Directed by Kevin Costner [Film]. USA: Orion Pictures.
- Dead Man* (1995). Directed by Jim Jarmusch [Film]. USA: Miramax.
- Deadwood* (2004-2006). Created by David Milch [TV]. USA: HBO.
- Die Hard* (1988). Directed by John McTiernan [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Django* (1966). Directed by Sergio Corbucci [Film]. Italy: Euro International Film (EIA).
- Django Unchained* (2012). Directed by Quentin Tarantino [Film]. USA: The Weinstein Company.
- Duel in the Sun* (1946). Directed by King Vidor [Film]. USA: Selznick Releasing Organization.
- Forty Guns* (1957). Directed by Samuel Fuller [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.
- Frank & Jesse* (1995). Directed by Robert Boris [Film]. USA: Vidmark Entertainment.
- Free State of Jones* (2016). Directed by Gary Ross [Film]. USA: STX Entertainment.
- Get Out* (2017). Directed by Jordan Peele [Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.
- Glow* (2017-). Created by Liz Flahive and Carly Mensch [TV]. USA: Netflix.
- Godless* (2017). Created by Scott Frank [TV]. USA: Netflix.

*Gone with the Wind* (1939). Directed by Victor Fleming [Film]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

*Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957). Directed by John Sturges [Film]. USA:

*Hatfields and McCoys* (2012). Directed by Kevin Reynolds [TV]. USA: History Channel.

*Hell on Wheels* (2011-2016). Created by Joe and Tony Gayton [TV]. USA: AMC.

*Hell or High Water* (2016). Directed by David Mackenzie [Film]. USA: CBS Films.

*Hostiles* (2017). Directed by Scott Cooper [Film]. USA: Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures.

*Hud* (1963). Directed by Martin Ritt [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*In the Heat of the Night* (1967). Directed by Norman Jewison [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*Inglourious Basterds* (2009). Directed by Quentin Tarantino [Film]. USA: The Weinstein Company.

*Jane Got a Gun* (2015). Directed by Gavin O'Connor [Film]. USA: The Weinstein Company.

*Jesse James* (1939). Directed by Henry King [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*Johnny Guitar* (1954). Directed by Nicholas Ray [Film]. USA: Republic Pictures.

*Junior Bonner* (1972). Directed by Sam Peckinpah [Film]. USA: Cinerama Releasing Corporation.

*Justified* (2010-2015). Created by Graham Yost [TV]. USA: FX.

*Kill Bill* (2003-2004). Directed by Quentin Tarantino [Film]. USA: Miramax.

*Lean on Pete* (2017). Directed by Andrew Haigh [Film]. UK: Artificial Eye.

*Logan* (2017). Directed by James Mangold [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*Lone Star* (1996). Directed by John Sayles [Film]. USA: Sony Pictures Classics.

*Lonely are the Brave* (1962). Directed by David Miller [Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.

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*Monte Walsh* (1970). Directed by William A. Fraker [Film]. USA: National General Pictures.

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*Mudbound* (2017). Directed by Dee Res [Film]. USA: Netflix.

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*Open Range* (2003). Directed by Kevin Costner [Film]. USA: Buena Vista Pictures.

*Orange is the New Black* (2013-). Created by Jenji Kohan [TV]. USA: Netflix.

*Paint Your Wagon* (1969). Directed by Joshua Logan [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973). Directed by Sam Peckinpah [Film]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

*Posse* (1993). Directed by Mario Van Peebles [Film]. USA: Gramercy Pictures.

*Red River* (1948). Directed by Howard Hawks [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*Rio Bravo* (1959). Directed by Howard Hawks [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*Sergeant Rutledge* (1960). Directed by John Ford [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*Shane* (1953). Directed by George Stevens [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*Sicario* (2015). Directed by Denis Villeneuve [Film]. USA: Lionsgate.

*Sicario: Day of the Soldado* (2018). Directed by Stefano Sollima [Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.

*Soldier Blue* (1970). Directed by Ralph Nelson [Film]. USA: Embassy Pictures.

*Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018). Directed by Ron Howard [Film]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

*Sweetwater* (2013). Directed by Logan Miller [Film]. USA: ARC Entertainment.

*The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007). Directed by Andrew Dominik [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993). Directed by Maggie Greenwald [Film]. USA: Fine Line Features.

*The Beguiled* (1971). Directed by Don Siegel [Film]. USA: Universal Pictures.

*The Beguiled* (2017). Directed by Sofia Coppola [Film]. USA: Focus Features.

*The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Directed by D.W. Griffith [Film]. USA: Epoch Producing Corporation.

*The Birth of a Nation* (2016). Directed by Nate Turner [Film]. USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.

*The Blue Dahlia* (1946). Directed by George Marshall [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*The Covered Wagon* (1923). Directed by James Cruze [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*The Cowboys* (1972). Directed by Mark Rydell [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*The Gunfighter* (1950). Directed by Henry King [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*The Hateful Eight* (2015). Directed by Quentin Tarantino [Film]. USA: The Weinstein Company.

*The Homesman* (2014). Directed by Tommy Lee Jones [Film]. USA: Roadside Attractions.

*The Horse Soldiers* (1959). Directed by John Ford [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*The Keeping Room* (2014). Directed by Daniel Barber [Film]. USA: DraftHouse Films.

*The Last of the Mohicans* (1992). Directed by Michael Mann [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*The Long Riders* (1980). Directed by Walter Hill [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*The Lusty Men* (1952). Directed by Nicholas Ray [Film]. USA: RKO Radio Pictures.

*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). Directed by John Ford [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*The Misfits* (1961). Directed by John Huston [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*The Missing* (2003). Directed by Ron Howard [Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.

*The Professionals* (1966). Directed by Richard Brooks [Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.

*The Quick and the Dead* (1995). Directed by Sam Raimi [Film]. USA: TriStar Pictures.



*The Rounders* (1965). Directed by Burt Kennedy [Film]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

*The Scalphunters* (1968). Directed by Sydney Pollack [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*The Searchers* (1956). Directed by John Ford [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*The Tall T* (1957). Directed by Budd Boetticher [Film]. USA: Columbia Pictures.

*The True Story of Jesse James* (1957). Directed by Nicholas Ray [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*The Way West* (1967). Directed by Andrew V. McLaglen [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*The Wild Bunch* (1969). Directed by Sam Peckinpah [Film]. USA: Warner Brothers/Seven Arts.

*The Wolverine* (2013). Directed by James Mangold [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*They Call Me Trinity* (1970). Directed by Enzo Barboni [Film]. Italy: Delta.

*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017). Directed by Martin McDonagh [Film]. USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.

*True Grit* (2010). Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*Unforgiven* (1992). Directed by Clint Eastwood [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*Vera Cruz* (1954). Directed by Robert Aldrich [Film]. USA: United Artists.

*Vis a vis* (2015-). Created by Iván Escobar, Esther Martínez Lobato, Álex Pina, and Daniel Écija [TV]. Spain: Antena 3 Televisión.

*Wagon Master* (1950). Directed by John Ford [Film]. USA: RKO Radio Pictures.

*Warlock* (1959). Directed by Edward Dmytryk [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*Westworld* (1973). Directed by Michael Crichton [Film]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

*Westworld* (2016-). Created by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy [TV]. USA: HBO.

*Wild Rovers* (1971). Directed by Blake Edwards [Film]. USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

*Will Penny* (1967). Directed by Tom Gries [Film]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

*Wind River* (2017). Directed by Taylor Sheridan [Film]. UK: STX International.

*Wonder Woman* (2017). Directed by Patty Jenkins [Film]. USA: Warner Bros.

*X-Men* (2000). Directed by Bryan Singer [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016). Directed by Bryan Singer [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*X-Men: Days of the Future Past* (2014). Directed by Bryan Singer [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*X-Men: First Class* (2011). Directed by Matthew Vaughn [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006). Directed by Brett Ratner [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009). Directed by Gavin Hood [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*X2* (2003). Directed by Bryan Singer [Film]. USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

*Yellowstone* (2018-). Created by John Linson and Taylor Sheridan [TV]. USA: Paramount Network.

### 6.3 Other Media

Annibali E I Cantori Moderni (2012), 'Trinity', in *Quentin Tarantino's Django Unchained Original Soundtrack*. USA: Virgin EMI.

Brown, J. and 2Pac (2012) 'Unchained', in *Quentin Tarantino's Django Unchained Original Soundtrack*. USA: Virgin EMI.

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Mortensen, V. (2006) 'Documental "Cuenta lo que fuimos"'. Interview with Viggo Mortensen.

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