MASCULINITY IN THE POST-WAR WESTERN: JOHN WAYNE AND CLINT EASTWOOD

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ABSTRACT

Together, John Wayne and Clint Eastwood are the most prominent defining icons of the Western genre. As resonant American cultural icons, their respective images are determined by, and signify, aspects of Americanism, the Western, and masculinity. By examining the gendered identities adopted by Wayne and Eastwood in their Westerns, I hope to identify the extent to which their characterisations, spanning the historical periods marked by the Western's prominence, decline, and ultimate fall, attest to the cultural underpinning of the genre's representation of gender, revealing the manner in which a definitively American genre offered portrayals of gender that resonated in the wider American culture.

Following a review of critical work undertaken on the genre, masculinity, and stars, I will proceed to examine the negotiation of masculinity in the roles played by Wayne and Eastwood in the Western from 1948 to 1976 in the case of the former, and 1964 to 1992 in the case of the latter. With reference to the structural approach adopted for each star, Eastwood's films invite a chronological analysis, owing to the chronological development of his screen persona, in which the Eastwood hero is variously typified as broadly parodic, castrated, vengeful, and paradoxical; Wayne's films evidence an oscillating type of characterisation, which for the most part defies a chronological analysis. Consequently, his films from 1948 to 1963 will be addressed in a non-linear, thematic fashion, based on the alternately 'good' and 'bad', or coherent and incoherent, representations of the paternal identity which formed the determining aspect of Wayne's persona. His post-1969 films, which invite a more chronological analysis, will be separately considered as evidencing a more stable representation of the paternal identity. *The Shootist*, as Wayne's last film, will be considered on an individual basis.

While Wayne and Eastwood portray very different 'types' of the Western hero, as the alternative structural approaches described above suggests, the resonance of their gendered representations unites them, and merits a sustained analysis of both.

PREFACE

While all but two of Eastwood's Westerns and sub-Westerns are analysed in detail, limitations were necessitated by the sheer number of Wayne's Westerns, many of which are of minimal academic interest. Therefore I have limited the analysis of Wayne's films to the main period of his career as an established star of 'A' Westerns, ranging from *Red River* in 1948 to *The Shootist* in 1976. I have excluded separate discussions of a small number of films from this period, because they essentially replicate the same aspects of characterisation and narrative found in Wayne's more significant films.[1]

Biographical information pertaining to films referenced within the main body of the thesis will be retained for a filmography at the end of the thesis, except for the specific Wayne and Eastwood films subjected to a sustained analysis, which will be marked under appropriate headings.

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[1] Wayne was a 'B' Western star for some fifteen years prior to the release of *Red River*, but I have omitted considering these films because of their broadly repetitive, simplified characterisation of Wayne, and their similarly consistent narrative structures. From both these perspectives, there is very little to distinguish Wayne's 'B' Westerns from other such Westerns of the same period. His eventual status as a (super)star of 'A' Westerns merits more substantial analysis because this period cemented his position as a national American icon, thereby rendering the films identified with this level of stardom more culturally resonant. For this same reason, I have omitted discussing *Stagecoach*, despite its critical status, because it arguably features Wayne in a role more analogous to his earlier films, rather than the type of persona he would come to adopt in the post-war period.

CONTENTS

1) CRITICAL REVIEW

From the early 1990s onwards, scholars with an interest in genre have renewed their interest in the Western. This development has resulted in a substantial increase in new criticism on the genre, much of which has evidenced the influence of one of the primary critical developments in recent years, the study of gendered representations. While Western criticism has been the subject of academic interest since the 1950s, gender studies - as a fully developed theoretical discipline, at least - has entered the arena of debate comparatively recently. Significantly, however, Western criticism has addressed the issue of gender from the outset, quite simply because it is very difficult to discuss the Western without making some reference to what Steve Neale has called its 'obsession with definitions of masculinity' (1980: 59). While other genres are similarly noteworthy for their representation of masculinity, the significance of the Western lies in the way it situates masculinity as part of, in Jim Kitses' words, 'a totalising system', at the heart of which is the 'iconic representation of America in the cowboy' (1998: 16). The representation of Western men is interlocked with the representation of American history, to the extent that the Westerner assumes the exemplary status of being among the simultaneously actual and mythical collective of men who 'made' America, who carved out a huge mass of harsh and unforgiving land and made it their own.

Given the multifaceted resonance of the Western, not least its overdetermined sense of 'Americanness', the genre has attracted a considerable amount of critical commentary, and in discussing this work I wish to focus on criticism which has implicitly or explicitly addressed the issue of masculinity, the volume of which, bearing in mind the then-absence of masculinity as a theoretical discourse, only serves to underline the centrality of gender as a constituent and determining feature of the genre. The surge in academic interest with regard to gender since the early 1990s has only served to add further issues, theoretical avenues, and complexities to debates surrounding the Western, and I will discuss this more contemporary work, and its impact on recent Western criticism, after addressing selected key debates in Western criticism from the 1950s to the 1970s. Given that the focus of this thesis is on the screen roles and star personae of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, issues pertaining to star studies will be incorporated into the discussion on contemporary work on gender, and in the latter part of this introduction I will discuss in specific detail the issues surrounding Wayne and Eastwood, in particular how they can be conceived in light of the arguments proposed by previous theorists. In providing something of a contextual background for

this work, it is first necessary to address the Western, and the relevance of initial work on the genre in relation to masculinity.

Selected Western Criticism 1950-1999

The first critical writers on the Western, André Bazin and Robert Warshow, effectively glossed over the issue of gender by referring to it in passing, although it would be wrong to criticise their work for not utilising the critical templates now widely in use. While Bazin, in 'The Western, or the American genre *par excellence*' ([1952] 1971), discussed the general archetype of the Western hero in an insubstantial manner, Warshow extended the parameters of debate by discussing representational issues in a more considered manner. Referring to the landscape of the Western milieu, Warshow suggests that a central element of pleasure in the Western is the 'apparent moral clarity' of the Westerner, a clarity 'which corresponds to the clarity of his physical image against his bare landscape' ([1954] 1974: 47). This latter element also surely represents one of the pleasures of the genre for audiences, as Paul Willemen has argued in reference to Anthony Mann's Westerns: 'The viewer's experience is predicated on the pleasure of seeing the male "exist" (that is, walk, move, ride, fight) in...landscapes or, more abstractly, history' (Willemen 1981: 16). Significantly, Warshow describes the landscape as 'his', an explicit suggestion that the Western milieu properly belongs to the male. For audiences, one of the central pleasures in experiencing a Western is surely that it represents an image of man in apparent control of his surroundings, natural, uninhibited. In addition to the landscape's accentuation of the presence of the hero, its very nature ultimately poses a physical - and thereby 'masculine' - challenge for the hero to overcome as much as it might represent a sight to admire. Furthermore, the relative marginality of women in the Western milieu ensures that the hero is left to define himself in an inherently masculine social environment.[1] His 'image' is set against a myriad of other 'images' of masculinity (other men), and mediated as such.

Before 1990s Western criticism specifically interrogated masculinity on a sustained basis, critical arguments of the 1960s and 1970s were inspired by structuralist theory and debates concerning the ideological content of the genre. Both strands of criticism ultimately laid a basis for the subsequent critical consideration of masculinity in the genre. As far as structuralist accounts of the Western are concerned, two prominent and interrelated binary oppositions inform the genre's negotiation of masculinity. The antinomies Garden/Desert and Civilisation/Wilderness, as usefully elaborated by Jim

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[1] Allan G. Bogue points out that 'the presence of large numbers of bachelors and men improving claims before they brought out families' characterised the frontier's overly male population (1994: 307).

Kitses in *Horizons West* (1969), said much for the genre's resonance, particularly with regard to the positioning of the hero in the antinomical equation. The Western landscape can be both awe-inspiring and intimidating, both suggestive of the 'freedom' of the West and the constraints of a barren, infertile landscape. As Kitses puts it: 'Is the West a Garden of natural dignity and innocence offering refuge from the decadence of civilisation? Or is it a treacherous Desert stubbornly resisting the gradual sweep of agrarian progress and community values?' (1969: 10). In discussing the Western in these terms, Kitses draws on the work of Henry Nash Smith (1950), whose analysis of Western history and its literary and cultural appropriation is underpinned by a reading of the mythical landscape as both a Garden of promise and a Desert fit only for uncivilised inhabitants. The Garden/Desert antinomy is most revealing, since it is inflected by ideology. Civilisation and progress are implicitly the prelude to modern capitalist America, but in Westerns their oncoming is often mourned and sometimes actively opposed. While civilisation brought law and order, community values, business growth, and the railroad, its advancement spelt the end of the Westerner's 'raw' sense of individualism, and in so doing implicitly carried the threat of feminisation, given the 'feminine' impulses behind the growth of civilisation - the spread of domesticity and religion, the pressure of settlement and conformity at the expense of 'free living'. In essence, civilisation spelt the end of not only the Westerner, but the West itself, inasmuch as the physical encroachment of civilisation - whether defined by the railroad or the expansive development of towns - came at the expense of the untrammelled landscape. There is a strong air of inevitability concerning the eventual 'taming' and 'end' of the West, but one of the pleasures and fascinations audiences have found in the genre has surely been the Western's historical setting: '...its being placed at exactly the moment when options are still open, the dream of a primitivistic individualism, the ambivalence of at once beneficent and threatening horizons, still tenable' (Kitses 1969: 12). The 'dream' Kitses writes of can be interestingly conceived in terms of gender, for if the coming of civilisation marks the 'end' of the West, the 'primitivistic individualism' could be said to represent the 'dream' of an independent masculine existence, especially given the generic alignment of civilisation with femininity. The Western, after all, posits men as living not just 'in nature and its beauty, but *their own nature*, their own beauty' (Horrocks 1995: 73; emphasis in original). Kitses himself addressed the issue of masculinity, in similarly delineating the ambiguities inherent in this particular Western archetype: 'Surely the only definition we can advance of the Western hero...is that he is both complete and incomplete, serene and growing, vulnerable and invulnerable, a man and a god' (1969: 19). Kitses does not explore the issue any further, but his work is as such only symptomatic of this period of film criticism, several years prior to the development of gender theorisation.

Subsequent critical accounts of the Western sought to relate the Western more specifically to the American culture - both of the past and the present - that produced its representations. Two prominent critics - John G. Cawelti and Will Wright - are worth addressing in this context. Originally published in 1970, and subsequently reissued and revised in 1984 and 1999, John G. Cawelti's *The Six-Gun Mystique* argued that the Western expressed 'some sense of the uniqueness of the American experience' (1999: 5), and in so doing formulaically portrayed the past as a resonant American myth. Underlining the necessity of defining genre 'both in terms of its structural patterns and in terms of its historical development' (ibid: 16), Cawelti discusses the archetypal elements of the Western within the context of what he sees as 'the ideological tendency of Americans to see the Far West as the last stronghold of certain traditional values' (ibid: 23), which ultimately revolve around a romanticised sense of the wilderness as the location for masculine regeneration. Cawelti reads the overpowering Western landscape as suggestive of 'the epic courage and regenerative power of the hero' (ibid: 24), its timeless grandeur providing the perfect geographical backdrop for narrative events marking the cusp of the American experience. The Westerner's relationship with his horse further underlines the synonymy of the hero with natural elements, suggesting untrammelled freedom, and, when linked with the hero's typical relationship with cattle, 'an ageless world of traditional work and pastoralism' (ibid: 38). This nostalgic impression of American life, a world of pastoral work prior to the onslaught of mass industrialisation, proved a resonant image for audiences in an increasingly industrialised and commercialised age, who could look upon the Western hero as a figure unburdened by (or antithetical to) the demands of conformity and excessive regulation. Expanding upon this, Cawelti makes the telling observation that the Western, in its portrayal of a powerfully efficient male hero with a definable basis in 'real' American history, reflects 'the sense of decaying masculine potency which has long obsessed American culture' (ibid: 39), the reflection of which Cawelti also notes as being present in such diverse twentieth century cultural phenomena as Ernest Hemingway, *Playboy* magazines, and mass sports. Cawelti suggests the symptoms of such 'decay' as being, variously, the spread of machine-operated work, the growth of the female workforce, and 'the decline of parental authority in the family (which) has undercut the basic source of masculine supremacy' (ibid). This last statement is revealing in the sense that it asserts, in a matter-of-fact fashion, the synonymity of parental authority in the family with paternal authority, in an account of the incessant post-war increase in family breakdown which often resulted in lone female parental households. Authority, from this perspective, would seem to 'naturally' reside in the figure of the father. While Cawelti does not pursue this line of

argument on its own terms, he tellingly writes in the next sentence of the glamourised American self-image, based on a sense of their history 'as pioneers, men who have conquered a continent and sired on it a new society' (1999: 39). Such phraseology suggests the process of the (paternal) Westerner giving birth, in this case to 'a new society', but by implication to the development of modern American history, and the growth of the (White) American nation. This is a point I will develop towards the end of this chapter, as part of a discussion concerning the decline of the Western, so at this juncture I only wish to emphasise again the centrality of masculinity to the Western, something Cawelti identifies but does not pursue to a great extent. Although he ultimately acknowledges the work of recent critics who have engaged with the issue of gender, such as Jane Tompkins and Lee Clark Mitchell, Cawelti's principal interests lie outside the role of gender. Towards the end of his book, he revealingly states that an excessive concentration on gender 'can become as distorting and limited as the Western itself can be in its treatment of the relationship between the sexes' (ibid: 160). While it is true that a critic limits him/herself by discussing masculinity in a monolithic fashion, without reference to the significant issues encompassing the broader context of the genre, the essential point is that analysis often reveals the Western's representation of masculinity to be seldom as 'distorting and limited' as originally thought.

In his 1975 book *Six Guns & Society*, Will Wright addressed the significance of the Western formula as myth, in a somewhat overzealous attempt to link the transformations in the professional operation of American capitalism with changes in the Western, in particular the role of the hero in relation to the society in which he functioned. As Wright argues, 'the structure of any social myth, such as the Western, must symbolically reflect the structure of social actions' (1975: 130). His basis for making this argument rests on his view of the Western as myth - as 'part of the cultural language by which America understands itself' (ibid: 12) - and his view of the consumers of the Western as social types who recognise themselves in its mythical structure:

> ...the narrative structure offers a model of social action by presenting identifiable social types and showing how they interact. The receivers of the myth learn how to act by recognising their own situation in it and observing how it is resolved. ... the narrative structure must reflect the social relationships necessitated by the basic institutions within which they live. As the institutions change because of technology, war, migration, or depression, so the narrative structure of the myth must change (ibid: 186).

Specifically, Wright focused his argument on the figure of the corporate worker whose professional view of himself changed in accordance with the post-war transition of the

American economy from a market to a managed economy, which emphasised the role of the work-led professional to a greater extent (1975: 178-179). In turn, Wright argues, the Western became increasingly focused on professional groups of men who act outside of society. In contrast to the 'classical' hero who required a more substantial social connection, such as romantic affection, the 'professional' hero's 'need for a social identity is totally satisfied by membership in the group' (ibid: 180). Despite posing an interesting argument, Wright's study is flawed, principally on account of its monolithic approach. By arguing that the representations and reception of Western films is predominantly determined by economic changes, Wright avoids looking at some of the more 'direct' sociocultural phenomena which arguably impacted on the Western, such as the depression and the Vietnam war. In addition, in its focus on the professional outlook of managerial workers - a minority of the American population - Wright's study could be said to be lacking in its application of an accurate context, since much of the Western's popularity traditionally resided in rural areas (Buscombe 1993*b*: 16), where there existed a much greater working-class population than in urban areas (Haley 1971: 26). Significantly, Wright's analytical sample of films includes a number which are symptomatic of the Western's ultimately catastrophic decline (such as *Hombre*, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, *The Wild Bunch* and *Little Big Man*). While it would seem to be unfair to slight Wright's work for not attending to this issue, which is all too apparent with the benefit of hindsight, it is significant that contemporaries of Wright did attend to the decline of the Western in terms of its intensified problematisation (notably Kitses 1969, Nachbar 1974 and French 1977). While flawed, Wright's study does at least raise the significant issue of the Western's place in the ideological life of American culture, and, as a related point, the potential level of identification between the (masculine) spectator and the surrogate-like Western hero.

The ideological significance of Westerns became an increasing concern of 1970s genre criticism (Nachbar 1974; Braudy 1977; French 1977; Pilkington and Graham 1979; Lenihan 1980). As a very identifiably *American* genre, the Western was regarded as having a particular propensity to mediate ideology, including contemporary cultural developments, in a more resonant manner than other genres would allow. Part of the motivation behind this new criticism were the apparent changes in the Western form, which largely revolved around increasingly problematic representations of civilisation as irrevocably repressed and corrupt, and heroes who were more threatened and fallible; in short, the Western became more dystopian. That these changes became intensified during arguably the most problematic period in post-war American history - as predominantly epitomised by Vietnam - suggested a potential link between generic

representations and the similarly fragmented sociopolitical climate. While few Westerns were specifically identified as being 'about' Vietnam (although some clearly were[2]), the main thrust of criticism focused on the Western's mediation of the problematic effects evinced by the conflict (and developments such as the political assassinations and Watergate) on American culture. It was argued that such events had a problematic effect on American identity, particularly in the way they evidenced the disparity between the idealised myth of America and the rather brutal reality of an America torn within and without. The Western was identified as thriving on an affirmation of the idealised myth, and therefore the interest centred on whether the genre could continue to 'propagate' the myth in the face of such obvious fragmentation. 'If the Western is truly an indicator of American beliefs', argued Jack Nachbar, 'the American's vision of himself as an indomitable Adam in the new Eden, virtuous in doing God's work of taming the wild land, is gone forever' (1974: 112). As is clear now, Western production did indeed decline in the 1970s, to the point of its effective disappeance as a viable genre in the 1980s, and largely beyond. While I will provide a fuller account of this decline towards the end of this chapter, and in so doing emphasise the symptomatic relevance of gender as a factor of the decline, at this point I want to further explore the ideological significance of the genre *per se*, and in so doing address the specific relevance of ideology with regard to the Western's representation of masculinity.

From the perspective of ideology, there is much to be said about the American genre *par excellence*. The Western's ambiguous negotiation of civilisation - by which the hero facilitates its growth (through liberating the town of 'uncivilised' villainous elements) and simultaneously mourns its encroachment - is determined in part by the town's representation as something of a harbinger for modern America, which also helps to explain why the civilisation/wilderness opposition is so ideologically resonant. Specifically, the town's establishment of an ordered community, welcoming of 'progressive' developments such as the railroad, and ideal for the flourishing of business interests, characterises the development of capitalism; in the historical reality, the growth of Western towns marked the gradual near-replacement of completely agrarian

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[2] Such critics as French (1977), Hoberman (1991), Lenihan (1980), Neve (1992), Slotkin (1992) and Coyne (1997) have suggested that the 'Indian Westerns' of the period *directly* alluded to the Vietnam conflict, not only because it evidenced a particularly resonant cultural disruption, but also because the Western form lent itself to addressing the war on a metaphorical level. Films such as *Little Big Man*, *Soldier Blue*, and *Ulzana's Raid* fundamentally overturned the myth of the beneficent US cavalryman that had determined the vast majority of previous representations, particularly in emphasising the indiscriminate slaughter of Native Americans. The Western's historical distance arguably divorced the genre from the more 'immediate' contemporary settings of other genres, thereby rendering problematic allusions 'safer', and its archetypal specificity allowed the Indian to 'stand in' for the Vietnamese subject to 'aggression' by American soldiers in a different epoch (Coyne 1997: 163).

values with capitalist values. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Western hero had to be seen to ease the way forward for the expansion of civilisation, especially given the very identifiably 'American' nature of the genre. As Jean-Louis Leutrat has argued, the Western is 'an expression so to speak of the ideology of the United States, it is at the same time a fantasy process born of that country, as well as a means of looking at it' (quoted in Tuska 1985: 37). The image of civilisation in the Western can thus be understood as a representation of America itself, which ensures that the representation of civilisation carries much resonance at the level of ideology.

The role of the hero in the wilderness/civilisation opposition is central, and as such at the heart of the profound ideological contradiction that defines the opposition. In being 'contradictorily committed to incompatible values of wilderness and civilisation' (Pye 1996*a*: 15), the hero finds himself encouraging the latter, but in undertaking his heroic 'duty', he brings upon himself the possibility of his own marginalisation. Given that the 'civilised' future will be defined by a lack of villainy, the value system which forms the basis of the Western suggests that the more 'civilised' a community becomes, the more dispensable is the role of the hero. As Durgnat and Simmon point out, 'though the Western believes in the America which is to come, it's fraught with nostalgia for the West as the crucible of *becoming*' ([1980] 1998: 76; emphasis in original); the irony in this is that the America to come is dependent on the *un*becoming of the hero, his fate sealed not only by an absence of villainy but also by the negative consequences of civilisation as previously outlined, including the spread of such 'feminine' values as domesticity and religion. The ideological requirement to validate civilisation forces upon the Western a contradictory strategy of representation; to celebrate the Old West and its passing, and to celebrate the individual dynamism of the hero and yet condemn his existence to a marginal future. As a consequence of such representational demands, masculinity becomes an identity marked by conflict, whereby the hero's behavioural traits are primarily balanced between the need to be an individual (to express the qualities of the wilderness) and the need to be conformist (to express the qualities of a potentially feminised civilisation). If many Westerns are unable to make a coherent statement about masculinity, then it is partly because ideological requirements prevent them from doing so.

Ideology also underpins the centrality of masculinity in the Western, through the genre's ideologically-determined negotiation of 'history'. The historical resonance of the Western surely accounts for much of its popularity, charting as it does, however mythically, the 'history' of a great nation. Even for non-American audiences, the evocations of Western history - the encroachment of civilisation, the 'birth of a nation'

trope - retain considerable power and interest. The idea of American history thus provides something of a framework by which certain aspects of the genre become more resonant. Elements of the Western myth are derived from that specific history, and a number of Westerns are praised for their perceived 'authenticity'.[3] It remains the case, however, that 'the way it really was in the old West is not nearly so important as the way twentieth century audiences *think* it was' (Pilkington and Graham 1979: 9; emphasis in original). It is clear that aspects of the generic representation of masculinity were determined by both 'real' Western history and more mythical elements. It is wholly conceivable that certain Western men, in an age when the fairness or even presence of the law could not be relied upon, had an interest in possessing firearm dexterity. The Western's elaboration of a violent milieu which necessitated a 'tough' masculinity does thus have a partly historical basis, although in actuality the West was much less violent than many North-eastern cities (Slotkin 1993: 233). The myth, in this case, is obviously more potent than the reality; the fact that American ideology considers the successful use of violence to be a requirement of masculinity both testifies to the ideological significance of gender representation in the genre and explains in part why the Western is so concerned with negotiating masculinity. Similarly, the presence of women in the Western is also determined primarily by the myth of the androcentric Western milieu. While the female population in the historical West was less than that of the male population (Bogue 1994: 307), women are nonetheless under-represented in the Western in relation to their actual numbers (as are, even more so, Blacks; Pines 1993: 68). The genre relies on an image of women that marginalises their existence, confining them to the usual stereotypes - demure rancher's daughter, schoolmarm, or prostitute. As Budd Boetticher once argued, 'What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. ...In herself the woman has not the slightest importance' (quoted in Cook 1993: 241). The woman is marginalised in the genre because what *has* more than a slight importance is the figure of man in the Western, his relative lack of romantic attachments serving to cement a particular image of male independence. The Western's mythicisation of history thus serves to create an 'ideal' image of masculinity, the hero's competence with firearms underlining his potency (at least by the logic of dominant American ideology), and the marginalisation of ethnic and gendered Others serving to centralise the role of the White male. Given the clear centrality of this role, it is readily apparent that the critical analysis of masculinity should form a significant point of reference in analysis of the Western, as it has, to a degree, in relatively early work on the genre. More recent

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[3] As Jane Marie Gaines and Charlotte Cornelia Herzog argue, Western costume often forms the basis of such critical accounts, as part of the film's effort to mark itself with the tag of 'unimpeachable authenticity' (1998: 173). Key films in this context include *Red River*, *The Culpepper Cattle Co.*, *The Long Riders*, *Silverado* and *The Quick and the Dead*.

Western criticism has expressed a greater interest in masculinity, as a consequence of the development of the subject as a critical tool. Before I go on to address this more recent Western criticism, which highlights some of the principal issues to be engaged with in the ensuing analysis of the representations of masculinity embodied by Wayne and Eastwood in the Western, I want to address some of the key issues raised in connection with masculinity and stardom, since these theoretical discourses form the essential basis of the principal analytical work of this thesis.

Masculinities Criticism 1975-2002

As a prominent focus of contemporary critical interest in film studies, the issue of masculinity has been the subject of intense assessment and reassessment, particularly since the early 1990s. Much of the scholarly work produced in this period has focused on gendered representations in specific genres (such as *film noir* (Krutnik 1991); the Western (Tompkins 1992; Mitchell 1996; Cameron and Pye 1996; Kitses and Rickman 1998); the road movie (Cohan and Hark 1997), and of specific stars (Smith 1993 and Bingham 1994 on Eastwood; Thomas 1996 and Wills 1998 on Wayne). In essence, the underlying thesis behind such work has been to open up the issue of masculinity and representation in such a way as to problematise it, extending the parameters of debate by drawing upon useful genre studies of the past. Over the next few pages, I will discuss some of the key theoretical work that has been recently undertaken in relation to masculinity, before moving on to discuss the issue of stars and star performance, an issue which is inextricably linked with notions of gender and identity.

The study of masculinity within film studies has undergone a number of developments since the first work on the area surfaced in the early 1980s (Cook 1982; Neale 1983). In early work on film and representation, useful frameworks are established for discussing the basic issue of how masculinity is defined on the screen, and how it is problematised. Laura Mulvey has noted the inherent power in the figure of a man who holds an 'active' role, that of 'forwarding the story, making things happen' ([1975] 1992: 28). The narrative role of a protagonist confers further authority upon him when he occupies a classically authoritative role, such as a figure attached to the law; in whatever characteristic guise, the male protagonist should assume a leadership role of sorts. In 'making things happen', the male lead will carve out a creative role which might involve forming romantic attachments, and/or getting involved with violent conflict; in either scenario, the authority of the hero is typically cemented by his victory in the narrative resolution. In Pam Cook's account of *Raging Bull*, the rise and fall of its protagonist is traced in such a way as to underline a sense that 'masculinity is put

into crisis' (1982: 40); the crisis is actualised by the final denial of narrative authority to the film's protagonist, who moves from being a muscular figure of winning authority in the boxing ring to a grotesquely overweight lowbrow nightclub entertainer. In this example, it becomes clear that the determinants of masculine definition - corporeality - are analogous to the determinants of its problematisation. In addition to the loss of characteristic role authority, the narrative trajectory of *Raging Bull* also illustrates the loss of corporeal authority, an issue which has assumed increased prominence in recent years. Steve Neale's article provides an early basis for thinking about the representation of male bodies on the screen, while he also notes the centrality of 'notions and attitudes to do with aggression, power and control' in the creation of masculine identities (1983: 5). In a discussion of the inscription of corporeal damage in Sam Peckinpah's Westerns, Neale remarks on the 'threat of castration' posed by such damage, which expresses the final destruction of 'the image of narcissism' personified by the damaged protagonists (in their antithetical relationship to women and the social order) (ibid: 10). The obsessive representation of corporeal damage in Peckinpah's Westerns is extreme, but other representations of damaged (and narcissistic) men carry their own resonance, as will be discussed below.

Where Neale's work centrally concerns itself with the debates arising from Laura Mulvey's feminist account of spectatorship theory, such as the psychoanalytical account of screen identification, more recent work produced on the subject of filmic masculinities has sought to open up new areas of debate. Cohan and Hark's anthology *Screening the Male* (1993*a*) discussed such concepts as the 'feminised' male hero, the ideological continuum linking problematic representations of masculinity with the wider sociopolitical culture, and notions of performativity and the masquerade. The volume expresses a general concern with the manner in which masculinity is so often expressed as in some sense damaged, and thus problematised, even if such damage - sometimes literal, usually figurative - is ultimately recuperated in the interests of restoring the symbolic order of patriarchy. As Cohan and Hark ask, 'what are we to make of a masculinity that can preserve its hegemony only by confessing its anxieties at every turn?' (1993*b*: 2).

In looking at the manner in which such anxieties are expressed, a recurrent subject of representation remains the male body, since this is the prominent site of the inscription both of authority and corporeal damage. The body typically connotes authority through its stature (ideally tall) and its manner of movement (ideally steady and determined). Additional factors, such as speech patterns and costume, also come into play, as I will discuss below. In *Screening the Male*, discussion of the body is largely

confined to the 'hard bodies' of 1980s action films, bodies which are narratively commodified to the point of being a 'spectacle' in themselves (Tasker 1993: 230). While more recent representations of the body seem to draw more attention to themselves, film has always had a strong investment in this basic tenet of representation, assigning specific corporeal types to specific, 'fitting' roles, and, if required, improving the 'fit' of the performer if necessary (for example, the reported use of height-elevating devices for Alan Ladd).

Critical discussion of the body ultimately addresses the cultural significance of corporeal representations, since the manner in which the spectator is expected to perceive a body as either an ideal or as aberrant is determined by cultural mores. The muscle-bound bodies analysed by Yvonne Tasker and Susan Jeffords would make less 'sense' in the 1960s than in the 1980s cultural climate in which they were received, when the activity of body-building assumed more respectability in conjunction with the arrival of a more 'macho' American presidency (Jeffords 1994: 25). As Paul Smith argues, the corporeal 'type' represented by the actor is significant for the fact that it 'bear(s) the mark of already signified cultural and cinematic verisimilitudes' (1993: 212). In this culturally-determined scenario, some bodies are privileged while others are notable by their absence. In *Impossible Bodies* (2002), Chris Holmlund addresses the relative invisibility of certain ethnic bodies, and the marginalisation of ageing bodies, except for the few cases of stars celebrated for carrying on their acting careers in spite of their age. As Holmlund writes of Clint Eastwood, he is 'respected, even revered, for (his) refusal to mask bodily differences' (2002: 7). As such, Eastwood's aged body carries the sign of authenticity, that this is 'really' a man on the screen, and, moreover, that this is a 'real man', given the continuing emphasis on the physical and sexual virility of the ageing Eastwood. The actor's public persona helpfully complements his screen persona, given his marriage to a wife half his age, and the arrival of a daughter at the age of sixty-seven (ibid: 149). As other critics, notably Richard Dyer, have discussed the concept of authenticity in relation to stardom, I want to position the issue here more towards the notion of the body in and of itself. What the authentic body suggests is a body that carries a sense of corporeal 'reality', and while part of the basis for this is the physical appearance of the character in general (particularly in a medium which, as Christine Gledhill suggests, offers a more sustained encounter with bodies in close-up than one is accustomed to in real life; 1991: 210), a less direct but nonetheless significant marking of the cinematic male body as authentic occurs in the narrative trajectory common to 'male' genres such as the action film and the Western, in which the protagonist undergoes some corporeal damage at the hands of villainous forces only to be recuperated at the narrative's end-point, typically killing

the said villainous forces in the process. This scenario invites a view of the body as authentic because it represents a 'testing' of the body, by which corporeal damage is absorbed and overcome; it can be readily viewed as a narrative representation (and endorsement) of the cultural edict that a man take such punishment 'like a man'. That this process occurs so often in male-identified genres is therefore unsurprising. As Jane Tompkins has written, 'The physical punishment heroes take is not incidental to their role; it is constitutive of it. ...(It) is sine qua non a masculine achievement' (1992: 105). If the damaged man is thus seen as an authenticated representation of masculinity, it is worth examining precisely why such representations of damage are required to validate the position of the male protagonist.

Paul Smith has discussed the masochistic implications of filmic scenes of corporeal damage, which often involve the body being partially exposed, and always involve the body being subjugated to a position of intense vulnerability. Exposure and vulnerability are indubitably associated with eroticism, and the addition of violence carries the suggestion of masochism. Theoretically, masochism represents a challenge to paternal authority as enshrined in the Oedipal law, inasmuch as the masochist embraces the threat of castration (Silverman 1992 *passim*). As represented in films, the masochistic moment, since it carries the threat of symbolic castration, 'must be no more than a *temporary* test of the male body' (Smith 1993: 162; emphasis in original); once tested, the hero must transcend such punishment and turn it into a narrative victory. While this trajectory is the expected narrative form of the vast majority of 'male' genre films, transcendence is refuted in those films which represent the hero at a point of loss at the film's end, most emphatically portrayed when the hero dies a non-heroic death, as will be evidenced in subsequent chapters (notably in such films as *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *The Shootist*, and *The Beguiled*). Corporeal damage is problematic enough in its exposure of the fragility of the subject; when the permanency of damage becomes final, the subject's fragility is confirmed as absolute.

Whether the male protagonist of a film is being beaten by the opposition or beating the opposition, his position in the narrative always relates to other men, and the substance of this relationship is significant. As has been frequently pointed out, the narrative milieu of most 'male' genre films - notably action films and Westerns - privilege the presence of and relationships between men over those of women, who often exist on the periphery of narrative action, even as they carry an important symbolic function (typically, and most crudely, as a guarantee of the hero's heterosexual desire). The resultant emphasis on male-male relationships raises the potential 'problem' of homosexual desire occuring within the homosocial sphere, to make use of the term

employed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in relation to literature (1985 *passim*). As Sedgwick describes it, homosociality defines same-sex groups, in this case men, and is meant to be distinguished from homosexuality even as the term is drawn from it (1985: 1). While the presence of the woman as a symbolic marker of heterosexual desire offsets the threat of homosexuality, some threats remain, in particular, bearing in mind the points raised above, when damage is done to the male body by other men, in a moment eroticised by the victim's submission and vulnerability. However such scenes may *temporarily* provide an ambiguous tone of (homo)eroticism, if the protagonists's heterosexuality is unambiguous, as is the case in the vast majority of films, then the main implication of such scenes is to render ambiguous the sexuality of the aggressors, serving only to confirm their aberrance, according to the logic of mainstream film. As far as this thesis is concerned, the most significant issue arising from the placing of the hero among a group of men is not eroticised scenes of damage - which are a rarity in Wayne and Eastwood's Westerns, although not without significance - but rather the negotiation of what can be broadly termed male authority. The placing of the hero in a homosocial sphere can allow for a more potent expression of male authority, inasmuch as the protagonist is judged as superior to his gendered equals, rather than, as patriarchal culture conceives women, the 'naturally' inferior Other. The manner in which narratives situate protagonists in relation to others also raises the issue of the two poles of authority by which the hero can be identified, that of social or narcissistic authority.

In discussing the 'Oedipal personifications' to be found in the Western, Mulvey traces the opposition between 'marriage' and 'not-marriage', as establishing the choice open to the hero at the end of the film ([1981] 1989: 33). Drawing on the work of Vladimir Propp, Mulvey delineates 'the tension between two points of attraction, the symbolic (social integration and marriage) and nostalgic narcissism' (ibid: 34), the respective personifications marking the protagonist's entry into the symbolic order (of 'properly' assigned gender roles) and the rejection of the symbolic in favour of a pre-Oedipal identity predicated on a sense of 'phallic, narcissistic omnipotence' (ibid: 33). In turn drawing on Mulvey, Neale discusses Peckinpah's 'nostalgic Westerns' with reference to the 'lost or doomed male narcissism' the films characterise (1983: 9-10). As noted by Neale, the threat against the doomed characters is posed by 'women, society and the Law' (ibid: 10), all of which represent the threat of civilisation, and consequently, according to generic logic, the threat of an insipid, 'castrated' existence.

The positioning of the hero as either socially authoritative or narcissistic determines his narrative representation to a large degree. The narcissistic hero, who arguably occupies

a more predominant role in post-war Westerns, thrillers and action films than his more social counterpart, expresses his narcissism not only by a lack of involvement (or at most committed involvement) with women, but also by a lack of attachment towards male friends (or at most a number of friends) and institutional bodies, as most commonly expressed in the action hero's ambivalent relationship to the police department of which he is a serving officer or detective. These oppositional or ambivalent relationships entail a representation of a character at odds with the social world in general, because he is seen to need no-one, and nothing, but himself. As Neale argues in his 1983 *Screen* article, a number of obvious examples come to mind with reference to the narcissistic hero, with Clint Eastwood's 'Man With No Name' character in Sergio Leone's 'Spaghetti' Westerns prominent among them. The character's narcissism is emphasised, Neale argues, by the fact that 'the male hero is powerful and omnipotent to an extraordinary degree' (1983: 5), a point made in reference to Mulvey's Lacanian analysis of the male hero as representing a narcissistic phantasy for the male spectator in the shape of a supreme ideal ego on the mirror-like cinema screen ([1975] 1992: 28). The narcissism of the Eastwood hero is further enhanced by his reticence with language, which underlines the 'image of the self as totally enclosed, self-sufficient, omnipotent', given the psychoanalytical understanding of language as a challenge to the narcissistic subject (Neale 1983: 7). While I intend to pursue and challenge some of Neale's arguments in the appropriate section on Eastwood, his account of the narcissistic hero offers a useful template for subsequent critical consideration.

Star Studies Criticism 1979-2004

In providing a necessarily concise account of theoretical aspects of masculinity and its representation, it becomes readily apparent that masculinity cannot be treated as a discrete concept in film studies, since its representational application invariably intersects with issues pertaining to stars and genres. As this thesis will consider the embodiment of masculinity in two prominent stars of the Western, it becomes necessary to examine these additional, central issues. Before examining the revelant issues pertaining to the Western, I want to address the issue of stars and stardom, and in so doing chart the conceptual frameworks that I will use in my own analysis of Wayne and Eastwood. The Western cannot be discussed without reference to masculinity, and neither can stars. As Powrie, Babington and Davies argue, 'Stars are indubitably central to the filmic representation of sex and gender, as the literally embodied site where masculinity and femininity take on their most idealised, powerful and immediate forms' (2004: 18). The specific image of masculinity offered to the

spectator is embodied by the actor on the screen, so considering the theoretical issues surrounding the image of the star can serve to provide a 'fuller' picture of the representation of gender. Discussion of representation in this context should begin with reference to a core theoretical area much utilised in recent discussions of gender, that of the masquerade and the related issue of performance.

The theoretical concepts of masquerade and performativity hold some importance in critical discourses seeking to destabilise the notion of 'the masculine', and the coherence or 'naturalness' of gendered identies in general. As originally described by Joan Riviere, a gendered identity 'could be assumed and worn as a mask' (quoted in Doane 1992: 235); thereby allowing the subject 'to manufacture a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one's image' (Doane 1992: 235). Riviere's analysis consisted in part of a female academic who flaunted her femininity in the distinctly male sphere of her profession. As Doane puts it, 'The masquerade doubles representation; it is constituted by a hyperbolisation of the accoutrements of femininity' (ibid). While Riviere and Doane refer here to the female, the concept of masquerade can be readily applied to the male, who, not unlike the female academic in Riviere's analysis, sometimes finds himself acting out an exaggerated, 'hyperbolised' display of gender when the cultural demands of patriarchy assert themselves. The notion of 'acting out', or performing gender, has been further elaborated by Judith Butler, who argues that the 'essence or identity' of gendered roles are in fact 'fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means' (1990: 136). Furthermore, as Butler puts it, 'The various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all' (ibid: 140).

As Dennis Bingham argues, 'The performative aspects of masculinity bring it close to acting and the star persona' (1994: 15). In relation to film, the concepts of masquerade and performance can be usefully applied to the multifaceted 'performances' evidenced on the screen; in performing his role, the actor performs both his star image and a certain image of masculinity, variously determined by the type of role played, the star persona, and all manner of ideological and cultural determinations. Much of the work done in this area has focused on actors like Sylvester Stallone and his 'hard-bodied' contemporaries in 1980s action films. With their overdeveloped musculature, these actors appear to enact a performance of hyper-masculinity, which has been variously read as a corporeal response to the belligerent, 'hard' political climate of 1980s America (Jeffords 1994) and a more problematic reflection of contemporary anxieties surrounding the notion of masculine authority (Tasker 1993*a*/*b*). The overemphasised corporeality of these stars lend them well to an analysis of their performativity, but

other, less 'developed' star bodies can be examined within these terms, given the manner in which stars 'perform' their gender not only by the sheer presence of their body, but by the way they move, the way they speak, and the way they dress.

The presence of a star on the screen is largely determined by physical characteristics. Much of the power of the cinema resides in the resonance one perceives in the various physical offerings of a film - the types of bodies on the screen, the detail in faces, the way bodies move. Colin McArthur argues that star presences are defined by 'qualities that are almost entirely physical: the way the actor is built, what his face and body say about the way experience has treated him, the way he walks and talks' (quoted in Gledhill 1991: 211). As such, one must enquire as to the particular pleasures being offered; the physical details inevitably *mean* something, although the 'meaning' in question can be abstract. In *Once Upon a Time in the West*, the first identifying shot of Henry Fonda is a close-up, shortly after which his character kills a young boy in cold blood. As Sergio Leone put it, Fonda had 'a face which for so many years has symbolised justice and goodness' (quoted in Frayling 2000: 271), ensuring that the power of the scene rests in the inversion of the signifying qualities of Fonda's face as an index of Fonda's star image. William Holden's lined, aged face in *The Wild Bunch* suggests his ultimate fragility - the pain of his anachronistic existence visualised by a face that registers the decline of Holden's 'golden boy' looks. (As Lawrence Shaffer puts it, 'A face that looks "lived in" is a face that *seems* to comprise (or reprise) its past in any of its momentary expressions'; quoted in Dyer [1979] 1998: 134; emphasis in original.) John Wayne's walk - slow, deliberate and sturdy - suggests his confidence and natural strength, while Eastwood's movements, especially in the Leone Westerns, are markedly lethargic and casual, suggesting a presence that is more ambiguous in terms of its identification as specifically 'heroic', in the sense that the casualness of movement underpins the noncommittal nature of his character. The signification of a particular body can, like the particular type an actor plays, be said to be largely socially determined:

> actors are chosen for their suitability to some pre-established set of types or typologies in terms of physique and demeanour, and these types bear the marks of already signified cultural and cinematic verisimilitudes. ... Thus, at any given time very particular kinds of bodies, voices, faces, and demeanours are regarded by the industry as proper (Smith 1993: 212-213).

There are especially clear examples of this argument, ranging from the popularity of muscular male bodies in the 1980s to the coding of facial hair in the Western (which was typically a mark of villainy until the code was disrupted in the 60s). Smith points to the fact that for a particular body to be coherently received by a culture, it must

'make sense' within the terms of that culture. As Susan Jeffords suggests, the 'hard bodies' of the 1980s can be read as a literal embodiment of contemporaneous American culture, their hard muscularity effectively reflecting the 'macho' politicised climate, and Reagan's belligerent 'might is right' posturing (1994 *passim*). While there is a clear case to be made that such bodies mean something simply as bodies, a case can be made for a more 'pluralistic' reading. Paul McDonald argues: 'Approaching the body as a sign of meaning may obscure the reading of the body as a source of doing, neglecting how the body produces meaning precisely through doing' (1998: 182). John Wayne's walk, referred to above, produces meaning through its slow, deliberate movement, suggesting a heavy, strong body. Wayne's walk emphasised a particular type of masculinity, confident and assertive, which led his directors, like John Ford, to suggest that Wayne conveyed 'the quality of being a real man' (quoted in Levy 1988: 109). On the other hand, the body can produce meaning through *not* doing, as in many of Clint Eastwood's performances, in which his presence seems almost spectral. As Bingham suggests, 'Eastwood is a minimalist. There is nothing distinctive about his walk. Eastwood's gestures are tiny, his movements economical' (1994: 171). While Wayne asserted the rugged masculinity of the Western hero, Eastwood's more 'static' physicality testified to the different type of hero he represented, which was based on a sense of alienation and mystery.

Other aspects of character identity, such as speech and costume, are important means of signification in the cinema. The introduction of sound ensured the commercial 'death' of silent actors whose voices did not 'fit', in the perception of audiences. For example, while other silent comedians failed to successfully move into sound, Laurel and Hardy - whose respectively 'high' and 'low' voices perfectly fitted their characters - remained highly popular. As Mary Ann Doane argues, the perfect 'marriage' of sound with image 'work(s) to sustain the narcissistic pleasure derived from the image of a certain unity, cohesion, and, hence, an identity grounded by the spectator's fantasmatic relation to his/her own body' (1985: 574). The specific drive for a coherent sense of bodily unity on the screen relates to the Lacanian concept of mirror identification, by which the infantile subject recognises his (or her) reflection as a perfect image of the self before he (or she) has a developed motor capacity, giving rise to the contradiction by which the subject both recognises and misrecognises his/her reflected image, as an accurate and yet apparently superior image of the self. Laura Mulvey has suggestively linked the spectator's identification with the screen image to the subject's initial identification with the mirror image, given the fantasy structure of the cinematic experience, and indeed the framed cinema screen's alignment with the framed mirror, both offering framed images of the human form (Mulvey [1975] 1992: 26). The screen

character's vocalisations naturally serve to cement the spectator's identification with the character, as the vocalisations also serve to cement the character as a definable 'type'. Jean Hagen's overly high-pitched, 'whining' voice in *Singin' in the Rain* marks her as worthy of comic derision from the start. James Stewart's drawl cemented his ineffectual screen persona, and Marlon Brando's mumbling speech, particularly apparent in his early films, accentuated his working-class narcissism. The speech patterns of Wayne and Eastwood also underline the typology of their screen characters. Wayne speaks in a low timbre, giving his voice a fully-rounded, 'solid' quality, and the slowness of his delivery suggests that he is 'accustomed to being listened to' (Buscombe 2000: 25). All in all, his voice connotes a sense of authority and a solidity of presence. Eastwood's use of language, by contrast, is principally defined by minimalism, a monotonal, passionless delivery punctuating the more prolonged moments of silence. The absence of speech, according to psychoanalytic theory, can serve to underline a fantasy of omnipotence, inasmuch as the 'lack' inherent in the subject's adoption of language (in the sense that one cannot be 'complete' without language) is negated in favour of an 'image of the self as totally enclosed, self-sufficient, omnipotent' (Neale 1983: 7). As Bingham puts it, referring to the Eastwood character's lack of a name in Leone's 'dollars' trilogy, 'With the elaborate paraphernalia of the Man with No Name reduced finally to the male imaginary essence, language is a hindrance to be kept to a minimum' (1994: 174). Eastwood's presence is in fact more complex than Neale and Bingham suggest, as I shall argue in detail in due course, for while his relative lack of speech theoretically links him to narcissism and a sense of omnipotence, the latter quality is rendered to such an extreme in the Leone Westerns as to function as a parody, and Eastwood's other Westerns are notable for their references to intense physical damage and, indeed, mortality. In the final analysis, Eastwood's vocally-challenged presence is an empty signifier, which arguably does not suggest a phallocentric fantasy to the extent that it suggests an incoherent fantasy, a presence defined by absence (of, in the Leone films, language, a name, and a fully-defined national identity).

Costume is an additional part of the signifying process, since 'clothes...are obviously culturally coded and widely assumed to be indicative of personality' (Dyer [1979] 1998: 110). Eastwood's poncho in the Leone trilogy signified a confusion over (national) identity, and a vaguely 'hippie' look, as Jane M. Gaines and Charlotte C. Herzog have suggested (1998: 174). In contrast to the casual look of Eastwood, Wayne's favoured apparel, 'the dark flannel shield or placket-front shirt with its buttoned panel creating the illusion of a fortified chest, carried over the military and authoritarian connotations associated with his star persona' (Gaines 1993: 100).

Costume holds additional resonance as far as one of the central structuring motifs of the Western - the opposition between the East and the West - is concerned. The identity of an Easterner is inscribed in his choice of clothing, invariably a patterned suit, marking him out as different to the more functionally-dressed Westerner. As Martin Pumphrey suggests, Western costume is inextricably tied-up with gender identity:

> The dandy's city clothes are inappropriate in the hostile (masculine) environment of the hero's West. The issue is both practical and existential. To pay attention to the non-functional aspects of dress (to imply that one dresses for others) indicates weakness in a man ([1989] 1996: 55).

The surface 'civility' suggested by the suit of the Easterner, in this sense, marks him as feminised; the unsuitability of the clothes to the rugged, 'manly' Western milieu is seconded by their societal attachment, which is generically inscribed as representing a threat to masculine independence, an identity underpinned by narcissism. The visual inscription of the Easterner's unsuitability in the environment of the West contrasts with the presumed suitability of the Westerner as suggested by his costume and, more generally, his bearing, which would lack the stiffness forced on the Easterner by his pressed suit. In the Western, arguably more emphatically than other genres, costume 'makes the man', and as such contributes to the star image, and the inscription of gendered identity, in an important sense.

In conceiving the image of a star, the spectator invariably considers the star as a representative 'type'. The 'type' defining the star's image has been discussed by Richard Dyer, as a term to describe the general qualities of their signification. Of John Wayne for example, his 'type' was a Westerner of a particularly rugged quality, while his image specified his all-Americanness in rightist terms, centred on a belligerent, uncompromising patriotism. Although Wayne was already right-wing, the actor's Westerns reinforced the image of an American defined by physical and moral strength. Wayne's patriotism and his personification of a 'natural' sense of morality served to legitimate his numerous forays into politics, including his unwavering support for the Vietnam war. The star's image ultimately serves to reinforce his/her 'type' by imbuing it with a sense of totality, as Dyer writes of Wayne:

> John Wayne's image draws together his bigness, his association with the West, his support for right-wing politics, his male independence of, yet courtliness towards, women - the elements are mutually reinforcing, legitimating a certain way of being a man in American society ([1979] 1998: 63-64).

The concept of typology, as can be seen from the example above, gives rise to the concept of a multifaceted identity which is inseparable from the workings of ideology - Wayne can only assume the 'legitimate' qualities of the 'American man' because of the manner in which the confluences of ideology in American culture equate physical strength, a certain idea of 'the West', and right-wing politics with legitimacy. The ideological significance of stars, as Dyer argues, comes not from a coherent embodiment of specific 'issues', but from the fact that a star like Wayne becomes the 'experiential, individual living embodiment' of a particular brand of right-wing politics, and as such 'they may convey the implications of those politics in terms of, for example, sex roles, everyday life, etc' (ibid: 28). The masking of politics achieved by this process, which makes politics both apparently 'invisible' and 'natural' (in the sense that its impacting on sex roles is shrouded by the perceived 'naturalness' of sex roles), is wholly in keeping with the workings of ideology in the wider cultural sphere (Eagleton 1994: 9). As ideological entities, receptive to the mass audience, stars assume particular resonance when there exists a contradiction between the ideological position adopted by the star and 'the perceived status of those values (especially if they are felt to be under threat or in crisis, or to be challenging received values, or else to be values that are a key to understanding and coping with contemporary life' (Dyer [1982] 1991: 132). This situation commonly arises when one examines the careers of long-standing stars, who 'relate' to their audiences in a variety of ways, but predominantly either by seeming to represent a sense of continuity of values, or by a change in values, or by an often ambiguous combination of both. Any change in a star's image can be determined by a number of factors, such as the ageing of a star, or a star's opting to portray different character types, but the role of ideology remains paramount in this process. Like the films in which they appear, stars cannot be divorced from the cultural context against which they present their character portrayals, for it is within the terms of the culture that the stars 'make sense'. As McDonald argues, 'Locating stars historically in their cultural context is an attempt to ascertain what forms of beliefs and knowledge co-exist with a star's image to make that image intelligible and representative of a period's key social concerns' (1998: 179). McDonald cautions against a simplistic account of such a relationship, but since stars can be read as signifying ideology, in all its complexity, and they in turn have to be 'read' by an ideologically-constituted audience, one can fruitfully look for signs of such a relationship.

In conceiving stars in terms of ideology, critical commentators have often referred to the concept of ideological contradiction, by which the star image is not seen as a coherent entity, but rather as a site of contradiction, 'in which case the star's image is

characterised by attempts to negotiate, reconcile or mask the difference between the elements, or else simply hold them in tension' (Dyer [1979] 1998: 64). Dyer contrasts such an image with the more 'reinforced' image found in an actor like John Wayne (ibid), and proceeds to suggest Jane Fonda as an example of the contradictory star image, citing in particular the disparity between the 'all-American' identity of her familial background and early films with the counter-cultural identity later adopted by her and expressed both in the 'real world' and the 'radical' films she made with Jean-Luc Godard (ibid: 67). In this instance, the contradiction arises over a period of time, marking a shift in the relevant weighting of dominant and oppositional ideology in 1960s America; the contradiction effectively registers a period of ideological crisis. Stars can also appear contradictory because of their adoption by exclusively different audiences, as exemplified by the popularity of actors like Clint Eastwood among both left and right-wing spectators. As Bingham argues, this phenomenon is expressive of 'a divergence between the cultural meaning of their personas and the contradictions of many of their films' (1994: 15). In the figure of a star like Eastwood, however, one must question whether it is possible to look at his persona as divergent from the contradictions expressed in his filmic characterisations. As Adam Knee notes, Eastwood has carved out a public persona through interviews which have emphasised his simultaneous adoption of liberal and conservative viewpoints (1993: 91). In even a film as ostensibly right-wing as *Dirty Harry*, Eastwood's character embodies the counter-cultural spirit of rejecting bourgeois authority figures and institutional bodies; although it should be noted that this can be read as itself right-wing, as an opposition to institutions 'tainted' by liberalism (as they are portrayed in the film), the fact remains that this perspective can also be read as left-wing, particularly in the context of the hostility felt by leftists towards institutional authority in the era of the film's original release (1971). Although Harry is undeniably a figure of authority, he is ostensibly 'outside' the institution; even his haircut is contradictory, combining 'a retro pompadour in the front and a counterculture shag in the back', and at one point occasioning the oft-directed enquiry of 1960s 'hippies': 'When are you going to get a haircut?' (Bingham 1994: 190).

Star images can either assume varying degrees of stability or oscillation in the harvesting of their image, depending on the roles and/or genres they choose (or are chosen) to embody. As Dyer argues, 'a star's apparent changelessness over a long period of time can be a source of charisma', although one must bear in mind that such consistency may only be 'apparent' ([1979] 1998: 98); alternately, an apparent change in a star's image can suggest their ability to 'move with the times'. In either case, the theoretical interest resides in the determining factors behind these processes, ranging

from the institutional (developments in the film industry) to the ideological (the impact of cultural and historical change, which often determines the institutional changes). A star image predicated on genres of male action, such as the Western, the war film, or the thriller, is often represented in terms of the division between narcissistic individualism and socialisation, and the consequential attitude towards institutions and society, women, and the use of violence. Given the considerable developments in the perception of gendered roles from the mid-point of the last century onwards, and especially from the late 1960s onwards, it is not surprising to see that star images in this historical period, so determined as they are by considerations of gender, become somewhat fragmented, having to define themselves with continuous resonance as masculinity becomes increasingly destabilised. In the previously-cited cases of stars like Henry Fonda and Arnold Schwarzenegger, transformations are evidenced in the former's portrayal of villainous roles in 1960s Westerns (*Once Upon a Time in the West* and *Firecreek*) and the latter's portrayal of 'softer' roles in the 1990s (*Kindergarten Cop* and *Junior*), respectively attesting to the contemporaneous destabilisation of the figure of the hero in Westerns and the strength of cultural discourses surrounding the image of the 'new man'. Cultural and historical forces work together to determine the types of star images received in the cinema over the decades, and just as stars fit into certain roles and certain genres, they must be seen to fit into the representational moulds that are culturally resonant at the time of a certain film's production. In examining the role of stars within these terms, one must address the various means of signification that have been discussed above, using the performances offered by stars to constitute their overall characteristic type (or types), in order to understand the resonance of that type at a given historical moment.

Masculinity-inflected Western Criticism 1989-1998

As Virginia Wright Wexman argues, 'To understand the meaning of star performer/characters in cinematic texts, one must approach these figures in terms of the narrative contexts that define them' (Wexman 1993: x). As this critical review has established, the representation of masculinity in the Western was not a critical priority from the 1950s to the 1970s. While references to masculinity are evidenced in the literature, such references lack a detailed theoretical framework. Akin to the genre itself, criticism of the Western became relatively sparse in the latter period of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Undoubtedly taking their cue from the ephemeral mini-revival of the early 1990s, which saw the success of *Dances with Wolves* and *Unforgiven* alongside a number of other significant productions, critics renewed their interest in the Western. Among the significant new work on the subject was a trio of

edited anthologies (Cameron and Pye 1996; Buscombe and Pearson 1998; Kitses and Rickman 1998), specific studies of Western masculinities (Tompkins 1992; Mitchell 1996), and star studies of Wayne (Thomas 1996; Wills 1998) and Eastwood (Smith 1993; Gallafent 1994). Unsurprisingly, this criticism reflected the developments in film studies during the intervening period, evidenced particularly in a greater interest in both gender and ethnicity. As far as masculinity was concerned, the new criticism emphasised the complexities of male representation, suggesting that the mediation of masculinity in the Western was far more problematic than might have been previously considered. The specific resonance of such representations in the Western has been concisely established by Martin Pumphrey:

> ...Westerns...occupied a prioritised position in relation to twentieth-century constructions of masculinity. Founded on the male point of view and fantasies of White, male power, they were primarily directed at male audiences, and Western heroes...have been regularly invoked as markers against which masculine behaviour should be judged ([1989] 1996: 51).

The Western's appeal among predominantly male audiences is a verifiable certainty, as demonstrated by an industry poll taken in the early 1940s, when genre production was at its peak, establishing male preference for the Western as more than double that of women (Buscombe 1993*b*: 36). As such, the specific appeal of the Western among men represents a significant issue. As Douglas Pye argues, much of this appeal for the Western 'must have lain in the fantasy it constantly re-enacted, in dramas full of varied male types, of what being a man might be' (1996*a*: 16). The relevance of this in relation to the popularity of particular stars over the decades is clear, as its relevance in relation to the issue of masculinity in general. Both of these interrelated issues have been already discussed to some extent, and will provide the focus of discussion in subsequent chapters on the films of Wayne and Eastwood. At this point, I wish to focus on further contemporary work on the Western with regard to gender, before moving on to consider the significance of the Western's demise within the same terms. While the majority of contemporary writers on the Western would readily concede that the genre cannot be discussed without some reference to masculinity, Jane Tompkins, in her book *West of Everything*, argues that masculinity is the *raison d'être* of the Western. The genre, she argues, 'doesn't have anything to do with the West as such. It isn't about the encounter between civilisation and femininity. It's about men's fear of losing their mastery, and hence their identity, both of which the Western tirelessly reinvents' (1992: 45). This statement is posed at the end of a discussion pertaining to the significance of death in the Western, which Tompkins reads as intrinsic to the genre, and intrinsic to its expression of masculinity. Arguing that the Western, as

pioneered in its late nineteenth century literary form, represented a deliberately antithetical (male) response to the period popularisation of sentimental religious (female) literature, Tompkins notes that the Western focuses on male characters, male spaces (the harsh landscape as opposed to domestic settings), and male ritual and action. 'The Western plot', she writes, 'turns not on struggles to conquer sin but on external conflicts in which men prove their courage to themselves and to the world by facing their own annihilation' (1992: 31). While citing different issues when accounting for the determining influences on the popularisation of Western literature - such as the 'militarism excited' by the Spanish-American war and the prevalence of survival-of-the-fittest philosophies - Tompkins adjudges the masculine desire to create masculine (and indeed *anti*-female) literature, to remasculinise literary culture, as the main cultural imperative of the arrival and growth of Western narratives (ibid: 44). As Tompkins goes on to argue, the gender system is thoroughly embedded in the Western, with the genre incessantly expressing a certain ideology of masculinity through its representation of such diverse concepts as language, landscape, and corporeal punishment. Since the Western equates language with lack and femininity, the genre 'is at heart anti-language. Doing, not talking, is what it values' (ibid: 50). Furthermore, the hero's silence 'demonstrates control not only over one's feelings but over one's physical boundaries as well. The male, by remaining "hermetic," "closed up," maintains the integrity of the boundary that divides him from the world' (ibid: 56). Silence expresses the common stoicism of the Western hero in an emphatic manner, and by also expressing his symbolic impenetrability, the hero is simultaneously defined as protected and not-female.

The 'masculinisation' effected in Western narratives is further evidenced in representations of the landscape, which in its sterile rigidity and harshness evokes the masculine. As Tompkins argues, 'The rhetoric of the landscape works in favour of the particular masculine ideal Westerns enforce' (1992: 77), citing the physical challenge it poses by its unforgiving austerity, and its hard physicality, which echoes one of the primary masculine ideals. Ironically, Tompkins also suggests the maternal qualities of the landscape, given the hero's close attachment to it, and the reassurance and security it evokes by its familiarity (ibid: 81). Tompkins writes further of the hero and the land that 'He courts it, struggles with it, defies it, conquers it, and lies down with it at night. In this, it is like nothing so much as the figure the Western casts out at the start: the woman' (ibid). Read this way, the landscape is less feminine than a substitution for femininity; in his appropriation of the harsh milieu, the hero gets close to nature, and its attendant (savage) beauty, but it is *his* nature, and *his* beauty (Horrocks 1995: 73). With the landscape establishing a firm geographical backdrop for expressions of

masculinity, the Western further promotes an ideal of masculinity by featuring recurring scenes of punishing violence, which Tompkins argues is 'constitutive' of the role of the hero (1992: 105), in the sense that it represents a test of endurance, a chance to 'prove' one's masculinity in the culturally-validated way. Since I have already discussed this issue in the section on theories of masculinity, I only mention it here as confirmation of the general way in which narratives underpin masculinity, although the specific way in which the Western makes use of this process should be emphasised. Given that the hero commonly has to endure acts of violence, and the threat of homicidal violence, *in addition to* the harsh landscape, the Western by its very nature - literally - punishes its heroes to a greater extent, arguably, than other genres of male action, with the exception of the war film. In the Western however, the harsh life led by the hero represents a normal lived experience, rather than the abnormality of the lived experience of warfare. The Western hero lives harshly, but that is the life he must lead.

As the protagonist of an ultimately phallocentric narrative, the figure of the hero offers the prototypical inscription of gendered identity in the Western, and a considerable amount of genre criticism has examined the evolving image of the Western hero. The post-World War Two period has been identified by many critics as a significant 'turning point' in the Western, where, in the words of Douglas Pye, 'tensions inherent in the tradition surfaced more explicitly, notably around the identity and agency of the hero' (1996*a*: 15). While the 'classical' hero 'was a brilliant ideological construction contradictorily committed to incompatible values of wilderness and civilisation' (ibid), in the post-war period the portrayal of the hero becomes increasingly fragmented. 'What previously were largely unquestioned aspects of a confidently held identity', according to Pye, 'often become assertions which signal not confidence but insecurity, not stable but unstable identity and internal division' (ibid: 17). The problematisation of the hero's identity was significantly accompanied by a more problematic and outwardly critical representation of civilisation. In offering an explanation for why the genre developed in this way at the time it did, Pye suggests: 'One way of conceiving this process is in terms of a greater awareness of the mid-twentieth-century-present forcing itself into the genre, with a consequent sense of crisis around the blocked dreams that the Western ceaselessly attempted to negotiate' (1996*a*: 15). Certainly, if one is looking at the critical portrayal of civilisation, it is not difficult to identify the Second World War and the development of the atomic bomb as signalling a more dubious attitude towards civilisation and 'progress'. Similarly, the genre's effective overturning of these tenets by the late 1960s can be ultimately related to the acute problematisation of these concepts effected by the Vietnam war. Pye argues in particular that 'It is in the

representation of civilisation that the Western's implicit images of contemporary America - the relationship between the imagined past of the genre and the moment of production - are clearest' (1996*a*: 15). The value of examining the evolution of gender representations in this sense has been suggested by Frank Krutnik. He argues that such portrayals 'can be read as a "barometer" of the pressures bearing upon, and the challenges besetting, the masculine ordering of culture (and the cultural ordering of masculinity) at any juncture' (1991: 88). Just as, then, one should ask *why* Westerns in (particularly) the late 1960s and early 1970s explicitly portrayed towns that were not worth saving, one should enquire as to the reason why such Westerns also offered increasingly 'troubled' representations of masculinities which were increasingly defined in terms of mortality. Significantly, these more nihilistic Westerns - prominent examples being *The Wild Bunch*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, and *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* - often had narratives centred on the 'end of the West' theme, with the death of central characters encapsulating a resonant statement of real finality. Such Westerns emphasised the end of the Westerner's existence as it used to be known, his formerly 'free' living constrained by the forces of 'progress'; many were set in the early twentieth century to physically 'mark' a post-frontier setting. As Pye notes, 'The power and control (over himself, others, the narrative) of the Western hero are...increasingly challenged in these decades' (1996*a*: 18).

In taking the representation of the imprisoned hero to its ultimate conclusion, the Western found its own generic dead-end, as if its resigned sterility left it unable to continually reproduce itself. In adapting to the more fragmented ideological climate of the Vietnam era, the genre problematised itself to the point of collapse. The precise importance of the representation of masculinity in this equation requires clarification. Since the genre was clearly in a period of steep decline, it might seem facile to make the point that masculinity was fragmented in these years because the narratives as a whole were, because in turn the genre was. Western masculinity, like the West itself, had to be seen to be coming to an end. But this remains precisely the point. Inasmuch as masculinity, as this discussion has established, is such an integral 'part' of the Western, it is conceivable that an explanation for the genre's fragmentation of masculinity lies among the reasons behind the genre's demise.

As previously established, the social destabilisation of the 1960s and 1970s, which loomed large over this period, arguably partially determined the Western's increasingly problematic negotiation of civilisation and 'progress', insofar as contemporaneous events effectively insisted that the 'obvious' benefits of the former and the inevitability

of the latter were a sham. In looking at masculinity in the context of the period, one could argue that the cultural disruptions of the period similarly affected the genre's increasingly problematic negotiation of masculinity. Fundamentally, the main consequence of the period destabilisation was its utter refutal of 'security' in every sense of the word. Externally, Vietnam was fought (and eventually, of course, lost); internally, America was experiencing serious disorder in the shape of riots, the rapid growth of political militancy and the concomitant ideological challenge represented in particular by Black power and feminism, and the assassination of high-profile figures characterised by a sense of idealism. It could be suggested that the crisis of identity in the Westerns of the period relates to the developments of Black power and feminism, since the genre's model of a hero was always a *White* male. However this suggestion, although interesting, accounts for only one aspect of the overall ideological fragmentation pervading the period. In sum, the developments of the period exposed America's vulnerability. Thus one can speculate that the image of the Western hero, an image, it must be said, of *American* masculinity which was, in the 'classical' model, implicitly invulnerable, was fragmented partly due to the loss of ideological confidence generated by the events of this period. A clearer way of conceiving this may be found by looking more precisely at the historicised nature of Western masculinities. Inasmuch as the Western is in a manner 'about' American history, its narratives implicitly identify the men they portray as being the men who *made* American history, by which one can say *the* American history - the 'taming' of the West as representing the largely post-Civil War consolidation of the expansion of the country, the establishment of civilisation in the shape of towns and railroads as marking the creation of the modern American state. Indeed, one can see the Westerner as an implicit image of America itself, as Jim Kitses suggests when he refers to the 'iconic representation of America in the cowboy' (1998: 16). Thus it is possible to read the severity of the latter Western's problematisation of masculinity as a filtered mediation of the intense problematisation of America's view and sense of itself. If the Western traditionally signified the 'birth of a nation' and the men who effectively created it, America was now experiencing the *end* of that optimistic vision. It is therefore not insignificant that the Western betrayed a more obviously problematic masculinity at the same time as it increasingly focused attention on the historical moment characterising the 'end of the West'. Furthermore, the 'ideal' of American masculinity was severely problematised by the Vietnam war, insofar as the American army was defeated by an army less 'masculine', under-equipped and quite literally feminised. It is in this sense that one can regard the impact of feminism, since the movement was perceived by men as 'an insidious campaign to undermine their strength, deny their authority, and destroy their self-image' (Chafe 1977: 134). In considering the possible reasons *why* the Western problematised

masculinity to the degree that it did in its latter phase, one must point not to a singular development in the period but an *overall* combination of cultural circumstances which served to undermine the confident and optimistic image of American masculinity. In terms of the Western, the fundamental change in the image of America ultimately affected the genre's representation of masculinity, because that national image was inherently identified in the Western's image of man. When that image effectively broke down, it was perhaps inevitable that its creators, according to the national myth, and indeed its ultimate signifiers, should be viewed in a more problematic light.

It is not inconceivable that one of the reasons for the Western's ultimate failure was the increasingly problematic identity of the Westerns of this period; they were not a comfortable image of America past (or, more implicitly, present). The disturbance of the civilisation/progress myth and the fragmentation of the traditional image of a heroic masculinity both marked the end of the genre and effectively conspired to guarantee its demise. Fundamentally, then, one might suggest that the ideological fragmentation effected by the sociocultural disturbances of the 1960s and 1970s at the very least contributed to the gradual but slow death of the genre finally realised at the tail end of the 1970s. The very 'Americanness' of the Western (and the Westerner) ensured their fate when the unified image of the nation collapsed under the weight of the period's traumatic events. However, the Western's demise was not entirely final. The past decade has witnessed a slight increase in Western production in comparison to the 1980s, but one must regard this increase in relative terms. The 1990s Westerns, and their reception, invariably testify to the problematic position held by the Western in American culture, post-Vietnam. The larger studio productions, as epitomised by *Dances With Wolves* and *Unforgiven* have fared well, enjoying both good box-office and critical adulation, including 'Best Picture' Oscars. Both films combined nostalgic evocations for the Western of old with politically responsive representations of Native American life and the role of women in the West, yet at the same time they contained problematic strains harking back to the 1970s. The dystopian ending of *Dances With Wolves* undercut the individual heroism of Costner (his character expresses the aim of educating White society on the plight of the Indian, yet a title scroll attests to the deportations), and *Unforgiven* problematised the Eastwood hero to the point of intensity. Other 1990s Westerns, such as *Posse* and *The Ballad of Little Jo*, which foregrounded Black and female characters, were box-office failures, owing to their effective displacement of the White male as much as their lacking of star figures as considerable as Eastwood. Viewed with hindsight at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is now clear that the Western's apparent revival in the 1990s was only ephemeral. Having begun mythologising on film a hundred years before, the Western

clearly could not continue to run its course. As the image of masculinity was so central to the genre, one can readily speculate that its representation in part impacted on the genre's ultimate demise. The so-called 'post-modern' Westerns represented by *Posse* and *The Ballad of Little Jo* testify to the fragmentation of the 'classical' model of Western masculinity, and their poor reception by audiences was also symptomatic of the highly problematic position in which the Western has been situated by that fragmentation.

What remains clear is that the Western's representation of masculinity accounts for much of the genre's resonance. While criticism has undoubtedly moved on since the 1950s, Robert Warshow originally identified the Western's 'certain image of man' as central to the genre some fifty years ago ([1954] 1974: 56). Warshow could not have been more correct, although in retrospect an additional point suggests itself. Looking back at the various negotiations of masculinity offered by the Western over the decades, it is clear that such representations may well be 'certain' to the Western, but they are not always 'certain' of themselves. As such, there is much more to that image than initially meets the eye.

In examining the 'images of men' embodied by John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, two massively resonant icons of the genre, the aim of this thesis is to give a *specific*, focused analysis of the manner in which the Western negotiates masculinity. In so doing, the complexity of that negotiation shall be sought, since Wayne and Eastwood have often been 'explained' away, as 'obvious' embodiments of masculinity in an 'obviously' masculinist genre. There is, as I intend to prove, nothing 'obvious' about either Wayne or Eastwood, or indeed the Western, other than the fact of their resonance in terms of the representation of masculinity. Yet this fact is central to the justification of the subsequent analysis. In undertaking a conjoined star study with reference to the Western, the legitimacy of looking at Wayne and Eastwood in particular might well be questioned. Taking into account the consistency of their popularity and box-office, the longevity of their careers, and their iconicity in the wider cultural sphere, the two stars are unmatched by comparison with their fellow Western stars. On Wayne's part, for every year but one between 1949 to 1974, he was in the top ten of a poll of distributors ranking the box-office appeal of stars (Wills 1998: 12). He was a Western star from 1930 to 1976. Although statistics cannot 'prove' Wayne's iconicity, a star at once strongly identified with a supremely American genre and a strident political tradition (which saw him linked to such iconic developments in American history as the McCarthyite hearings and the Vietnam war) cannot be conceived in any other way. While Eastwood's iconicity is not quite as paramount as

Wayne's, his generic iconicity is perhaps most resonantly confirmed by the fact that he is the very last star the Western had, and his cultural iconicity is evident in his stint as mayor of Carmel and the appropriation of his screen dialogue into the political lexicon of President Reagan. On the same industry poll establishing Wayne's box-office appeal, Eastwood was in the top ten for nineteen years (Wills 1998: 12), and he has been an 'A' list star of the Western since 1964. (Although his post-1976 Western output has resulted in only three roles to date, a sparsity symptomatic of the genre's decline, at the time of writing there is news of pre-production work on a new Eastwood Western (www.clinteastwood.org; accessed 22/6/04). The Western aside, his star presence has been consistently successful in numerous genre films over the past forty years.)

In examining stars primarily associated with a genre identified with American history, it seems appropriate to consider the historical context against which the stars themselves were positioned. In Wayne's case, the canvas is large, the star image having been cemented in the immediate period following the Second World War, and further developed in the Cold War-heightened 1950s, before the era of the Vietnam war formed the historical background of Wayne's last appearances. Eastwood's career was at its height during the most immediate period of the Vietnam war as far as American engagement was concerned - 1968 to 1973 - a five-year period in which he made nearly half of the Westerns of his (thus far, thirty-year) entire career. In the forty-five-year period with which this thesis is concerned, spanning the 1948 release of Wayne's first Western as an established star, *Red River*, to the 1992 release of Eastwood's last Western, *Unforgiven*, the genre has produced films received in the same variable and often problematic cultural context marking America's post-war history. In the sixty years since the end of the Second World War, the Western has experienced mixed fortunes, enjoying considerable prominence in the 1950s, when it accounted for an average of 27% of total feature production, but since the early 1960s a considerable decline set in, the decade's production average being reduced to 13% (Buscombe 1993*d*: 427). The Western died a slow but certain death in the 1970s, the likely reasons for this having been discussed at length above. Given the resonance of the historical context, and the fact that it has represented a valuable source of interest for previous critics of genre and star studies, the relevance of cultural and historical developments will form part of the discussion on Wayne and Eastwood, when there is a specific case to be made regarding the relevance of such developments. Since this thesis concerns itself with Wayne and Eastwood not in the form of separate entities but as stars usefully analysed within broadly similar terms, a more conclusive account of how the stars can be conceived against the backdrop of history shall be sought in the conclusion to this thesis.

In discussing stars in relation to their representation of masculinity, it is pertinent to consider the social basis of the types of male characters portrayed in a film, since the social basis underlines the specifically masculine basis of male character types, determining how audiences will conceive of a character in relation to the social archetype of masculinity they represent. Across the myriad of disparate characters in a given narrative, each is accorded a variable level of narrative, and masculine, authority. One of the strongest measures of such authority is the character's embodiment of a paternal identity, given the apparently concrete position of the father as the supporting basis of patriarchal culture. As Victor J. Seidler argues, originating with the Judaeo-Christian conception of God the Father, 'The visions of authority which we inherit within Western culture are tied up with conceptions of the father' (1988: 272). The various guises of authority synonymous with the paternal identity include the more abstract use of 'father' in religious titles ranging from priests to God the Father, the ultimate symbol of the authoritative 'Father' as the centre of worldly power. More concretely but no less symbolic, the procreative role of the father, defined by his possession of the penis, affirms the importance of his role in the cultural order. The cultural validation of masculinity is precisely defined through the ability of the male to enact a paternal role, since 'the authority symbolised by the father is seen to be inseparable from maleness' (Krutnik 1991: 78). Through his possession of the penis, the father assumes the 'ideal' role for the male subject to look up to, in contrast to the 'castrated' figure of the mother, in the subject's aim of subsequently assuming the same authoritative role in later life, in fulfilling his expected role in patriarchal culture.

As represented in film, father-figures can either be characterised as such according to biology or symbolic association. Although one might expect the biological father to possess the fuller measure of masculine authority, given his progenitive and leading role in patriarchal culture, the symbolic father can assume the mantle of paternal authority over a subordinating character, or indeed characters, in which case he can be said to possess a greater measure of authority than were his paternal identity solely confined to the role of a biological father of a small family unit. (While the biological father represents a 'natural' role model for his son, the symbolic father represents a surrogate role model for his 'son(s)'; he does, after all, possess the biological capacity for 'real' fatherhood.) Even a casual observation of varied genres reveals obvious examples of resonant father-figures, such as the all-controlling domestic patriarch of melodrama, the villainous patriarchs of *film noir*, and the various cattle barons, sheriffs and cavalry commanders of the Western. Despite the prominence of 'fathers' in a great number of films, and the obvious importance of paternalism in the articulation of masculine identity within the wider cultural context, film criticism has seldom discussed

the issue, and in the few examples of it doing so such discussion has been relatively insubstantial (for example Smith 1993; Holmlund 2002). This neglected area of investigation shall form a central part of the overall argument of this thesis, particularly in its application to the star persona of John Wayne.

As the ensuing account of his roles will demonstrate, Wayne exudes a paternal identity in almost all of his post-war Westerns, with the specific *type* of paternal identity forming the focus of critical interest in examining those roles. Eastwood, by contrast, refuses the paternal identity, or is refused it, in his incessant portrayal of characters whose primary determination is a sense of incoherence. Eastwood's characters lack a coherent sense of authority, a symptom of which can be found in the roles in which he portrays traditionally authoritative figures like soldiers or lawmen, roles in which his character suffers considerably more corporeal damage - not infrequently to the point of death - than in his roles which do not portray such traditionally authoritative figures. Eastwood's relative lack of authority invariably serves up a barrier to an assumption of a paternal identity, even if Eastwood's roles were to carve out such an identity, which they do not, at least in any kind of sustainable manner. The basis of the performative identities of both Wayne and Eastwood, I shall argue, defines the extent to which the paternal identity can be accommodated, or, more accurately, embodied. Precisely why Eastwood refuses the paternal identity that resided so consistently in Wayne's roles is a question I will seek to provide answers for in the conclusion to this thesis, and those answers can only be provided by a thorough analysis of the types of masculinity embodied by Wayne and Eastwood in their Westerns.

Exploring the star images of Wayne and Eastwood in considerable detail can underline the precise way in which American films create, maintain and modulate archetypes of masculine identity. In so doing, it is possible to view the star persona as inescapably embedded in the ideologically resonant sphere that is American culture, particularly when one views the predominant base of that culture as patriarchal, and the stars subjected to analysis are iconic male stars strongly identified with an iconically male and distinctly *American* genre. In analysing the roles of Wayne and Eastwood, I will develop an analytical system which synthesises the approaches discussed in this introduction. In looking at the actors as images of masculinity, I will focus much of the discussion on such issues as their personification of identities that may be narcissistic or social, and their embodiment of corporeal damage or corporeal perfection, all such facets of representation serving to underline the primary characterisations of Wayne as the authoritative father-figure, and Eastwood as the incoherent and aberrant anti-hero. In looking at the actors as stars, my particular concern is to address the manner in

which the star presence 'refers us to a particular state of the social reality of genre' (Britton 1991: 205), or, in other words, the manner in which star representations fit the mould of the Western hero at specific points in the history of the genre. In addressing Wayne and Eastwood's performances across the decades, one can clarify the types of masculine identity that resonated in the most American of all genres during its cultural prominence and decline.

2) JOHN WAYNE - INTRODUCTION

As an iconographical construct writ large, John Wayne retains a considerable hold on the American imaginary. As the biggest star figure the Western ever had, and as one of the most self-consciously patriotic and ideologically-determined stars produced by the American star system, his overwhelming cultural presence is perhaps unsurprising, given the resonance of his emphatically Americanised presences in the most American of genres. Although other Western stars (of the silent era) made more films than Wayne, none had a generic career span lasting as long as Wayne's forty-six years. To a large extent, Wayne *was* the Western, such was his consistently indelible identification with it - one could not conceive of Wayne without the Western, or vice-versa. Indeed, as Garry Wills suggests, Wayne 'became so identified with the West that he looked out of place in other kinds of movies' (1998: 14). Wayne was more 'at home' in the milieu of the West because it was more suited to his particular image of American masculinity, an image which often thrived on the ideology of individualism, and which seemed more enduring and timeless in a distant setting. Wayne's body - an important aspect of his filmic signification - thrived in the open, raw spaces offered by the Western, allowing the solidity of his presence to be better expressed, equating his broad body with the magnificent strength of the landscape; for much of the screen audience, Wayne was himself 'the spectacle they had come to see' (Kasson 2001: 127). Wayne's image was consolidated in the Western and came to be propagated by it in subsequent films which represented, for the most part, a dominant and assured masculinity; as the actor said of his own sense of image-building, 'I made up my mind that I was going to play a real man to the best of my ability' (quoted in Zolotow 1974: 119). Consequently, among the most interesting films of Wayne's career are those in which the defining features of Wayne's 'real man' are problematised, such as his sense of assurance becoming arrogant and wrong-headed, and his virile physicality becoming challenged by ageing, and impending mortality.

Given the apparent simplicity of Wayne's image, there is a dearth of genuinely critical material on the actor. That Wayne was, at least initially, too 'obvious' an actor to merit academic interest was suggested by the perceived consistency of his screen image, and the sense that Wayne was only 'acting himself'. Maurice Zolotow's 1974 biography of the actor, *Shooting Star*, though a non-academic text, establishes the basic parameters of Wayne's screen persona, such as his quintessential 'Americanness', the corporeal basis of his persona, and the development from Wayne's 'mature' 1940s and 1950s roles to the more benevolent and mythic patriarchal roles in Wayne's last films. Subsequently, critical work on Wayne has focused on the thematic detail of Wayne's

characterisations, and his over-determined filmic persona. In 'John Wayne: As Sure As The Turning O' The Earth' (1972-1973), John Belton delineates the strength of Wayne's presence in both moments of action and stasis, regarding the latter in contrast to the 'estranged' silent presences of Eastwood: 'Wayne's omniscient awareness of and reaction to other actors give his performances an energy and vitality that Eastwood's lack' (27). Although Wayne remains, as required by the genre, an individualist Western hero, he is always more socially-oriented than Eastwood; when the Wayne hero is alienated, as in *Red River* and *The Searchers*, it is viewed as a characteristic aberration. Wayne's presence on the screen is more assured than Eastwood's - Wayne is more coherently 'there' on the screen, more fixed, compared to the distanced, sometimes near-wordless performances of Eastwood. In what is an essentially laudatory account of Wayne, Belton's emphasis on the 'sureness' of the actor ensures an analysis of Wayne which avoids consideration of the less 'sure' aspects of his numerous characterisations, and in so doing offers a reading of Wayne which emphasises a consistency on the part of the actor's performances.

Michael Budd, by contrast, discusses Wayne as part of an inquiry into the role of the star in Ford's Westerns, arguing that the star's characterisations are inflected over time by changes in the genre's vision of the hero. Budd reads Wayne's role in the cavalry trilogy as evidencing 'a new and deeper consideration of the nature, value and flexibility of community, through the hero's increasingly lonely and uneasy presence within it' (1978: 55), citing in particular *Fort Apache*'s representation of Wayne's character - as a man distanced from the familial world of his fellow officers, and as a man who finally subverts his own identity for an identity moulded by the force of regimental tradition. Compared to the more easygoing and simply-motivated Ringo Kid of *Stagecoach*, Kirby York is beset by a split identity predicated on complex motivations. Though the Wayne hero has a forced bond with the military in this film, in his later Westerns with Ford the community becomes a focus of rejection, and the Wayne hero becomes a substantially altered character. In *The Searchers*, Ethan Edwards 'comes to embody forces heretofore alien to the hero' (56), and in so doing, Budd argues, Wayne incorporates debased elements of previous Fordian characterisations. Like the Indian-savvy Kirby York, Edwards knows the Indian, but his obsession with them borders on insanity, and his acts of violence verge on the 'savage' side themselves. As such, Edwards is rejected by the community he aided, and acquiesces in that rejection. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Tom Doniphon rejects the communal as he is rejected by the woman he thought loved him; his violent response is the setting of his house on fire. Doniphon is also a victim of history, his brand of stoical, heroic masculinity becoming a forgotten vestige of the past in the

film's frame story. As Budd puts it, 'the Wayne hero has been completely excluded from the familial, communal and historical centre' (1978: 55). In tracing the characteristics of Wayne's roles for Ford's Westerns, Budd uncovers a development in which the representation of the Wayne hero becomes less assured and more complex.

Following the deconstructive approach taken by early criticism on Wayne, more recent writers have sought to interrogate Wayne's masculine image to a greater degree, in attempting to break the unassailably coherent mould in which the actor, as a gendered subject, seemed to be positioned. The recent focus on masculinity, coupled with a more extensive theoretical approach, inevitably follows the development of gender-centred approaches in the 1980s and 1990s. Deborah Thomas' article, 'John Wayne's Body', seeks to examine the strains in Wayne's apparently monolithic image. Despite the perception that Wayne's image is too coherent to be worthy of interrogation, the limited academic work on Wayne suggests that his image, as represented in the numerous Westerns he made, is not quite as 'obvious' as this account proposes. In discussing Wayne's image, Thomas argues that Wayne, among all of the male American film stars, is 'a star whose meaning is profoundly corporeal' (1996: 75). His image is imbued with a sense of 'monumentality in terms of its physical attributes - its frozen, intractable qualities' (ibid: 76). Wayne seems to fill the frame with his physical presence - his height and his broadness literally inscribe the 'big man', while his slow, deliberate walk suggests the breadth of the weight he carries. From a similar perspective, Edward Buscombe suggests that Wayne's domination of the screen emanates not just from his physical size but the sense of authority he evokes. 'His voice is loud and he speaks slowly, as if accustomed to being listened to. He brings to his roles, especially his Western roles, a massive assurance, an indomitable solidity' (2000: 25). Such qualities suggest a highly coherent, undiluted model of masculinity. One of the means by which Wayne can be conceived is in terms of his qualities as a patriarchal figure, applicable to both American culture in general (as an established icon of 'manliness') and more specifically the Western (as a consistently paternal character). Yet Wayne's functioning as a father-figure in his films is often inflected in ways which do not necessarily support a coherently 'tough' reading of his masculinity. As Thomas suggests, for all of the Wayne character's belligerence, he often

> takes on a caring and protective maternal function as well, the absence or insignificance of mothers in many of the familial relationships he forges making possible his simultaneous embodiment of both roles. Of course, once its patriarchal elements are excised and the paternal is redefined in terms of such qualities as protectiveness and emotional involvement, the paternal/maternal distinction is no longer clear-cut (1996: 78).

As Thomas suggests, a number of Wayne's Westerns contain examples along this line. *Rio Grande*, which features a mother in a significant role, offers a tentative private moment where Wayne looks on at his son nursing a black eye after a fight, with tears of affection in his eyes. *Red River*, which features an especially bullish performance by Wayne, still permits a space for a quasi-maternal suggestion of emotional investment, when Wayne admits to his feelings of loss over his surrogate son, expressing with a sombre face, 'I thought I had a son, and I haven't. And I want one', a moment scored with explicitly romanticised music. Especially in his later films, and specifically in *The Undefeated*, *The Cowboys* and *Cahill: US Marshal*, mother figures are wholly absent, requiring Wayne's care of both surrogate and actual sons. In part, such moments of apparently maternal care are permitted by Wayne's 'real man' authority, as if the strength of his masculinity is so established that a degree of tenderness is allowed and does not pose a threat to Wayne's image. Apropos Thomas, I would add that Wayne adopts a more maternal role in his later Westerns, where his masculine strength is to some extent tempered by an almost grandfatherly persona. One way of conceiving this apparent inscription of maternalism is to think of Wayne as embodying an image of an all-incorporative masculinity, a model of paternalism which balances strength with tenderness, thereby invalidating the presence of a mother. Clearly, some of Wayne's 'maternal' roles contain compensations for what might be seen as an emasculation (*The Cowboys* showcases Wayne's physical strength in a fight against a thug more than half his age), but the point remains that the strongest inscriptions of maternalism are found in those Westerns in which Wayne's aged masculinity is perceived as being in a sense softer than in his earlier films. Wayne does not, therefore, represent a straightforwardly patriarchal figure, but one who, on occasion, balances 'masculine' strength with 'feminine' emotional involvement.

As Thomas goes on to argue, Wayne's image is not that of the 'supermen' of the 1980s action film; of his physicality, 'His size suggests endurance rather than speed, and its solidity is a solidity of the flesh - frequently subject to woundings by guns and arrows - rather than the impenetrable hardness of metal and stone' (1996: 79). Wayne's 'toughness' is not derived from a 'hard' masculinity as such, but from the fact that his body endures, as evidenced in his later films. The very fact that Wayne kept working into his late sixties suggests the manner in which his body could still sustain an authoritative image despite its obvious incorporation of age, notably an overemphasised gut. Certain aspects of Wayne's persona were not obviously troubled by his ageing. His size was not diminished, his walk was always slow and deliberate, and his speech maintained its slow delivery, albeit being of a slightly lowered timbre. Yet his later films do not seek to deny Wayne's maturity; indeed, they emphasise his

advancing years through both scripted allusions and broad-based narrative themes, notably the self-conscious positioning of Wayne as an elderly father-figure in *The Cowboys* and as the mortal cancer sufferer in *The Shootist*. Thomas suggests that the persistent quality of Wayne's masculinity, in terms of its 'toughness', is its ability to endure and go on, a quality which is thus 'fully compatible with age, fatness, drunkenness, and physical infirmities (bad eyesight, aches and pains), as his later films make abundantly clear' (1996: 79). Yet what is also clear from these films is a sense of anxiety felt on the part of Wayne for his ageing, concisely but resonantly expressed in *The Cowboys*, where Wayne's character admits, 'Miserable old age - I hate it', with downcast eyes and in a darkly lit frame. Although Wayne does endure for the most part of these films - even if he dies eventually in the two films listed above - his endurance is compromised to some extent by the fear that he may not be able to endure for a great deal longer.

The extended nature of Wayne's film career suggests the critical value of examining the possibility that the actor embodies a developing image of masculinity, particularly given the consistency of his identity as a Western hero over his entire acting career. Prominently, the more aggressive authority figures Wayne played in many of his earlier roles is replaced by a more benevolent and occasionally melancholic figure in the actor's later films, suggesting a softening of the persona. The iconic status of Wayne in American culture has suggested to some critics the specifically cultural resonance of Wayne's latter maturation. As Garry Wills argues, 'There was a *social* dimension to his ageing, a sense that a period in *history* was slipping away, not just one man's natural powers. The anachronism was still impressive, though doomed' (1998: 281; emphasis in original). Clearly, there was the suggestion that Wayne's ageing and death attested to the decline and death of the Western itself, given the effective correlation of both. Interestingly, both occurrences came to fruition in a period marked by a considerable decline in America's fortunes, with ideological fragmentation emanating from numerous sources but in particular by the loss of Vietnam. Wills suggests that Wayne's last filmic identity was of 'the lone survivor of a past heroic time' (ibid); the inherent anachronism in this suggests, in a particularly resonant way given Wayne's age, that with Wayne's death, the last vestige of heroism is gone forever. In Wayne's last film, *The Shootist* (which is itself unsure of the precise qualities of heroism), the mantle of heroism cannot be passed on; instead, Wayne's 'pupil' throws his gun away and walks back onto the 'civilised' town street. The ageing of Wayne is thus accompanied by a developing image of masculinity, and a developing image of the Wayne hero, both developments being to some extent determined by ideology.

Wayne's much-publicised political stance was image-friendly during the height of the Cold War, when evocations of 'Americanness' were more than ever bound up with rightist politics. Although Wayne always portrayed a strong American male, his 'ideal' as a prototype was cemented by his politics during the period when America's external security was threatened by an opposing ideology. When America found its ideological coherence wanting during the domestic turmoils of the 1960s and 1970s, Wayne undoubtedly remained popular in some quarters as a symbol of ideological reassurance, even as he was criticised elsewhere for his hawkish pro-war stance, and (more tellingly) blamed for leading men into the war, by virtue of his cultural resonance as a belligerent ideal of masculinity. This even came to be symptomatically classified as the 'John Wayne syndrome' (Wills 1998: 12-13). As Wayne could be identified with the dominant ideology in its ascendancy, so he came to be identified with it as it underwent a considerable sense of fragmentation.

By 1976, when Wayne's last film, *The Shootist*, was released, the Western was a fragmenting genre, and Wayne himself was dying. In an analysis of the film, Steven Albert argues that it represents a necessary redemption of Wayne's Western hero, and of his stridently right-wing political persona. The loss of the Vietnam war, and the resignation of Nixon, inscribed Wayne's politics as a lost cause, and, from the perspective of the nature of the war's loss, as a guilty cause. Wayne's heroic Westerner was always defined by his sense of authority, but such was the fragmentation of authority in 1970s America that Wayne had become 'the very embodiment of distressed authority in America' (Albert 1981: 9). *The Shootist*, according to Albert, redeems this loss of authority by idealising the Wayne character, in a narrative scenario which rejects the more parodic elements marking Wayne's previous Westerns from the 1960s. Despite struggling with cancer (in a resonant parallel of the actor's real problems with the disease), the Wayne character single-handedly takes on three gunfighters at the end of the film, whom he successfully dispatches before being unheroically shot in the back by a barman. More importantly, his moral authority is underlined by his paternalistic relationship with his lodger's son, to whom he imparts the wisdom of good manners and a mature, reasoned approach to violence. Wayne's characterisation of a father-figure in the film, following the paternal characterisation the actor embodied in the vast majority of his post-war Westerns, forms a determining aspect of his character, inasmuch as it strengthens the iconic nature of the Wayne hero, and underlines the thematic transition in the film's climax, in which the authority invested in the 'father' is effectively rejected by the son, who returns to his mother after witnessing the death of the 'father'. While Albert does not extend his argument concerning Wayne's paternal identity to the extent that I would argue the film merits, as in the example of the

climax, he draws attention to the symbolic qualities of Wayne's paternal screen persona in a general sense. As he puts it, Wayne had, by the time of *The Shootist*, 'practically become the patriarchy in the flesh' (1981: 9), by which the cultural determination of his iconic status meant that 'John Wayne' embodied all that was perceived to be *wrong* in the American body politic in 1976, following the loss of Vietnam and the fall of Nixon, another of America's supreme authority figures. In addressing Wayne's symbolic embodiment of patriarchy, Albert addresses Wayne's screen persona from the broadest perspective, even if he does not specifically address the significance of Wayne's paternal identity, a logical corollary of the actor's embodiment of patriarchal values, in *The Shootist*. To do so would problematise his central argument - concerning the film's redemption of the Wayne hero through a combined appraisal of Wayne's heroic authority and a profound humanisation of his character (through detailing the pain caused by the cancer) - since I would argue that the film's representation of the Wayne character as a father-figure is decidedly problematic. Nevertheless, by linking *The Shootist* with the ideological conflicts prevalent in America at the time of its production and reception, Albert draws on a common area of analysis in film studies, but importantly locates the star himself in the theoretical equation. Not only can Wayne's performances be said to embody changes in the genre, as critics like Michael Budd have argued, but they can be said to embody American cultural developments, as Albert argues. As an embodiment of patriarchy within a patriarchally-determined society, the star image of 'John Wayne' arguably could not fail to do anything less.

The fact that the critical accounts delineated above have sought to emphasise the gendered configuration of Wayne's image and its ideological ramifications suggests the usefulness of a synthesised approach in analysing that image (although it remains an inescapable fact that gender is invariably tied up with ideology). A central theoretical perspective of the ensuing analysis of John Wayne's Westerns is that the star made an icon of the American male, and in terms of the resonance of his iconicity and its prolonged existence he was perhaps unrivalled in this. It remains of little wonder that Wayne found his stardom in a genre predicated on representing both definitions of America and definitions of masculinity, and that in that genre he came to be its biggest and longest-serving star, and, ultimately, one of its representative 'fathers'. As an icon of masculinity, Wayne's principal gendered identity on screen is fundamentally paternal. In the more emphatic representations, Wayne plays a biological father, and, more frequently, a surrogate father. In those narratives which characterise Wayne's paternalism in a less transparent manner, he assumes a broadly symbolic paternal identity, by which he becomes a father-figure through his iconic attachment to the

West (as in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*), or to America itself (*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*).

As established in the previous chapter, the figure of the father is a prominent ideal in patriarchal culture, his role validated by his progenitive qualities and consequent assumption of familial leadership, both of which are determined by his possession of the penis, the culturally-validated physical marker of masculine authority. To function as an authoritative 'father' in film, however, a character need not be a biological father; as in life, male individuals who hold a position of power over younger men, and act as a confidant and mentor-like figure to them, can be readily conceived as a paternal figure, especially if they embody physical characteristics that might fit such expectations. In Wayne's case, his height and breadth ensure his corporeal dominance over others, while the deliberate slowness of his speech, as Buscombe notes, suggests that he is used to being listened to (2000: 25). That Wayne is so often listened to by men considerably younger than him reinforces his paternal identity, in films which position his character in such a way as to invite a reading of him as paternal; the narrative milieu of almost all of his films has Wayne assuming a strong leadership role over a group of men, who are often younger than him, and who are often placed, alongside Wayne, in a familial-type environment, such as that of the military or the law.

In discussing Wayne's 'grandiose image of patriarchal authority', Virginia Wright Wexman notes that Wayne's characters are often placed outside the traditions of marriage and family, since the Western typically associates marriage with 'a more diminished masculine presence' (1993: 85). Of the eighteen post-war Westerns analysed in this thesis, only five grant Wayne's character a living family, and all of these familial structures are problematised, whether as a result of estrangement (*Rio Grande*, *McLintock!*, and *Big Jake*), or the deaths of sons (*The Cowboys*) and wives (*Cahill: US Marshal*). In her criticism of previous studies of Wayne, Wexman argues that the 'cultural verismilitude' of his characters has been unwisely neglected (ibid: 75); in her analysis, Wexman points to the significance of Wayne's leadership role in American culture, the perceived authenticity of which was 'confirmed' by his iconic war hero persona, despite the fact that he played no part in the war itself, unlike some of his actor contemporaries (ibid: 73). Since authoritative leadership is a defining feature of 'the father' as an ideal figure, Wayne's 'father' had the assumed quality of a cultural truth; the presence of his own sons in many of his films from *The Searchers* onwards only reinforced the validity of the persona.

Elsewhere in her account of gender roles in Hollywood film, Wexman discusses the problematisation of male roles in the 1950s, which saw the 'natural', unquestionable authority of the male challenged by the increasing presence of women in the workplace, and the new emphasis on the importance of satisfactory sexual relationships in marriage, particularly for women (1993: 168). Inasmuch as Wayne's father-figures are almost always positioned outside a traditional family structure, his 'father' retains the authoritative identity becoming of the role, while being removed from the potentially problematic milieu of the family unit, within which the mother - her position strengthened by the post-war developments cited above - can be said to represent the possibility of a rival focus of authority. While the 1950s is specific to Wexman's account of problematised gender roles in contemporary melodrama, it is perhaps significant that Wayne's position as an 'A' list star was confirmed in this period (according to Steven Albert, Wayne's greatest box-office success was between 1950 and 1965; 1981: 9), and of the two 1950s films which partner Wayne with a maternal figure - *Rio Grande* and *Hondo* - his respective roles are that of an estranged father in the military and a surrogate father who happens to be part-Indian, both roles expressing a rejection of conventional models of domesticity and marriage. (Given that these ideals were also problematised in the 1950s melodrama, I intend to explore the contextual relationship between that genre and the Western in a more detailed manner in the conclusion to this thesis, following full consideration of the characterisations embodied by Wayne, and Eastwood.) In the years following the 1950s, the emancipation of women, both as a perception and a reality, became a steadily growing phenomenon, as did Wayne's iconicity as both a star and 'an American'. While some of Wayne's films feature assertive women (especially those featuring Maureen O'Hara), they are naturally 'tamed' by the end of the film. As a general point applicable to the vast majority of his films, Wayne's functioning as a father-figure outside marriage allows for a consistently authoritative performance of the role, regardless of the increasingly empowered position of women in the culture-at-large. (A handful of Wayne's 1970s films betray the influence of feminism, but these represent the exception to the rule.) Given the often problematic representation of domestic life in the Western, Wayne's role is generically correct, but the strength of his undomesticated paternal identity ensures that Wayne's 'father' is an unrivalled figure of authority in the genre.

While Wayne's father-figure is authoritative enough as far as his basic narrative role is concerned, the authority of his paternal role becomes more apparent when conceived in its symbolic light. In all of his Westerns, Wayne's character is seen to tame the environment in the interests of White 'civilisation', weighing his might against Native Americans, Mexicans, and, most often, aberrant members of his own community. As

such, his actions can be characterised as representative of an American 'father' in a symbolic sense, using his dominant authority to carve out a safe space for 'his' people, the space being part of a larger space defined by a settled border, marking the beginning of the modern American state. (While all Western heroes, in one way or another, fulfill this narrative purpose, the strength of Wayne's paternal signifiers confirms his paternal identity, which may not be a defining feature of other Western heroes in any case.) Wayne played father-figures from the outset of his post-war career (notably in *Red River* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*), and in so doing established a basis for the identity he would carry, to a lesser or greater degree, in his subsequent roles for a further thirty years.

While previous critical accounts of Wayne's screen image have referred to his paternal identity, they have done so in relatively general terms, as part of a larger argument. In following the gender-focused theoretical route already accounted for in the limited amount of critical analysis of Wayne, I plan to discuss Wayne specifically in terms of what I would argue to be a definitive, and somewhat critically neglected, aspect of his screen image. If a relative consistency exists with regard to Wayne's characterisations over a period of four decades, it is his embodiment of a paternal identity, whether literal or surrogate, or more broadly symbolic. As a 'father', however, Wayne cannot be any more conceived in monolithic terms as he might be as any other gendered type. As the following account of Wayne will show, Wayne's paternally-defined roles oscillate between coherence and incoherence, and normalcy and aberrance. While Wayne is, with varying degrees of emphasis, always a 'father', there is very rarely any sense of consistency as to the moral determination - for want of a better term - of the paternal 'type' he plays from film to film. As such, the following account will not examine the Westerns on a strictly linear basis; rather, the four chapters will account for, variously, the coherent 'father', the incoherent 'father', the older 'father' (in which a broad consistency exists to merit a sustained analysis of Wayne's post-1969 Westerns), and finally, *The Shootist*, which as Wayne's last film merits individual consideration. In each chapter, I intend to draw out the essence of Wayne's gendered identity in the genre which defined his career, by focusing on a central but critically neglected aspect of that identity. In so doing, I hope to delineate the ways in which Wayne's 'father' underlines the strains at the heart of his apparently 'uncomplicated' image, and, concurrently, the strains at the heart of gendered representation in the Western itself.

3) WAYNE - THE COHERENT FATHER

Throughout his thirty-year career as an established, 'A' list star of the Western, John Wayne portrayed a variety of character types, but a consistent defining aspect of his roles was the embodiment of a paternal identity. Whether a soldier, lawman, or a private citizen, Wayne always unequivocally led from the front, commanding a sense of authority that was far more substantial than that possessed by Eastwood, primarily because of Wayne's more 'naturalistic' performance style (compared to Eastwood's distanced, ironic, and frequently parodic style) and his greater number of obviously authoritative roles (the regularity of Wayne's military and legal roles compares with Eastwood's relative lack of such roles). Wayne's paternal identity was reinforced by the manner in which he was frequently cast against much younger supporting actors, lending an inevitable air of paternalism to his characterisations from the outset. Across the range of Wayne's paternally-inscribed characters, a sense of inconsistency emerges from the apparently consistent nature of his dominant screen identity, inasmuch as the type of 'father' he portrays ranges from those who comfortably accommodate the narrative, who assume a fundamentally benign presence, and those who assume a problematic position in the narrative, whose paternal role seems less of a 'natural' narrative component than a 'foreign' one. (For simplicity, these opposing paternal types will be subsequently described as the 'coherent father' and the 'incoherent father'.) Interestingly, throughout the main period of his stardom, which essentially ran from the late 1940s to the early 1960s,[1] his roles evidence a consistent oscillation between roles bordering on coherence and incoherence, to the extent that for every film of this period featuring a coherent, or 'good' father, there is a film featuring an incoherent, or 'bad' father. By the late 1960s and beyond, Wayne's characters assume a far more consistent representation of benign paternalism, in a sense fitting his increasing seniority and increasingly mythic stature, and, as I shall duly argue, offering a characterisation whose ideological role served a resonant function in the traumatic social, cultural and political context of the period, giving an impression of continuity and stability in an era defined by sociocultural fragmentation and instability. The films examined in this chapter - *Rio Grande*, *McLintock!*, *Rio Bravo*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *The Alamo* and *3 Godfathers* - all evidence a broadly coherent representation of paternalism, whereupon the more problematic traces of characterisation in the films are ultimately contained by a final stress on the innate strength of the paternal identity, its immutability and durability. Collectively, the films assert the 'good' side of Wayne's incessantly paternal screen persona, through portrayals which underline the paternal identity through the

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[1] Steven Albert (1981) notes that between 1950 and 1965, when Wayne was consistently at the top of the list of US box-office stars, his films regularly grossed between $4 and $8 million. Between 1966 and 1976, his films earnt similar sums, yet the process of inflation ensured that the sums represented considerably less profit (9).

various prisms of biological fatherhood (*Rio Grande* and *McLintock!*), the 'father' as leader of a homosocial family unit (*Rio Bravo*), the 'father' as a figure of myth (*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *The Alamo*), and the 'father' as a figure of redeemed criminality (*3 Godfathers*). Since these conceptions of paternal identity are central to the ensuing discussion on Wayne, and, apart from the last specified type, apply equally to the films discussed in the next chapter, they are worth delineating in further detail at this point.

The **biological father** represents one of the fullest affirmations of masculinity, given its progenitive role in patriarchal culture. In the cultural vocabulary, the father is the head of the family, his name determining the family name, and in psychoanalytical terms the father occupies the most profound position of symbolic identification for either the male or female child. As the male child holds the key for entry into the symbolic world, the father of a male child forms the patriarchal ideal; significantly, four out of the five Westerns in which Wayne plays a biological father feature a son, while all of the numerous films in which Wayne's fatherhood is surrogate feature males in the role of the surrogate child.

The **homosocial/authoritative father** carries a paternal identity by being in charge of an all-male 'family', such that exist in the military sphere and in other all-male environments, such as the legal set-up in the Western (as featured in *Rio Bravo*). The homosocial sphere, as such, encapsulates in microcosmic form the patriarchal world, given that the all-male 'family' invariably contains the patriarchal lineage of a father-figure and his 'sons', his younger subordinates. The homosocial father is necessarily characterised by strong leadership qualities, for a sense of authority underlines the paternal identity. The authoritative leading man is a trademark of conventional Hollywood cinema, and is often most emphatically portrayed in genres determined by action, the Western being an example. The leading man, in such contexts, is seen to lead by example, setting the standard of masculinity for the other characters to attain. In a cultural context informed by the determining influence of patriarchy, such representations of authority figures 'naturally' lend themselves to paternalistic notions, with the sense of authority itself deriving 'naturally' from the masculine identity. While *Rio Bravo* features Wayne as the leader of a homosocial family, the correlating film examined in the next chapter, *The Searchers*, features Wayne as simply an authority figure, with no homosocial connotations, although his paternal identity is shaped in the film by his relationship with his nephew. In both films, Wayne's father-figure is defined by a powerful sense of authority, which is subject to affirmation in *Rio Bravo*, and intense problematisation in *The Searchers*.

The **mythical father** enhances the pre-established mythical reverberations surrounding the Western genre and its characterisations of heroism. As a narrative of the 'real' past filtered through the mythologising process, the Western effects a mythical rewriting of the past. What distinguishes the more obviously mythical Western characterisations from their less mythical counterparts is their respective attachment to the mythically-inscribed past. While all Western characters are attached to the historical context in a functional sense, as a man (or woman) of the West, the more resonantly mythical characters are identified with the past to the extent that the historical context functions as a more fundamental determinant of characterisation. Rather than being an elementary man of the West, the mythical hero is specifically representative of the West, functioning as a resonant icon of the period. The paternal characterisations of Wayne that can be categorised as mythical are not limited to the films the ensuing discussion will classify as such - *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *The Alamo*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (to be discussed in the next chapter) - but these films evidence the most significant examples of this identity type. The mythical father is typically marked by a sense of durability (whether literal endurance or endurance through passing into legend), iconicity, and a strong degree of nostalgia. In addition, allegorical qualities are offered up, with the character assuming a symbolic, metaphorically-rich aura. In the above films, Wayne's characters are broadly identified as a 'father' of the West, whose narrative role encompasses a macrocosmically-inscribed sense of myth. Wayne reconciles an Indian dispute in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, he adopts a crucial historical role in helping to 'make' modern America in *The Alamo*, and in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* he represents the Old West as the sole iconic heroic figure of a bygone era.

The **redeemed father** is specific to *3 Godfathers*, representing the paternal identity as an ideal, the attainment of which effects a sense of redemption. Taken at face value, this would suggest that the film contains one of Wayne's more obviously unproblematic characterisations. However, the film is examined at the end of this chapter because it forms something of a gateway to the more problematic films examined in the next chapter. While *3 Godfathers* contains one of the most emphatic representations of the paternal identity, it also contains a more aberrant characterisation in the form of Wayne's initial social identity in the film, that of a bandit. As such, *3 Godfathers* marks a transition point in Wayne's post-war career, admitting the strain of aberrance before redeeming it through paternalism. Beginning the film as a 'badman', he goes on to be a 'good father'. In the films to be considered in the next chapter, Wayne's paternal identity is inscribed as aberrant, and/or incoherent, from the outset, incessantly raising the question as to the possibility of his full integration into the social world represented

in the narrative. By contrast, the films examined in this chapter consistently situate the respective 'fathers' in a familial context, whether 'real' or surrogate.

Rio Grande (John Ford, 1950)

Rio Grande, the final film of Ford's cavalry trilogy, is notable for being one of the very few of Wayne's films to feature him in a portrayal of a biological father (the others being *McLintock!*, *Big Jake*, *The Cowboys*, and *Cahill: US Marshal*). The characterisation of Wayne as a biological father places a more direct emotional investment in the portrayal of the paternal/filial relationship, and the complication effected by the presence of his son (Jeff/Claude Jarman Jnr.) in the regiment is compounded by the arrival of his estranged wife (Kathleen/Maureen O'Hara). By introducing a 'real' familial scenario into the narrative, the film locates the Wayne character, Kirby Yorke, in unfamiliar territory, given the paucity of Wayne films in which he is explicitly located within a familial scenario (i.e. a family that is alive at the actual point of the narrative, in comparison to the handful of Wayne films in which he has a family consigned to the past by death). Symptomatically, the film locates Yorke's family duty as a problem which impinges on his sense of assuredness (for example, he is prone to emotional vulnerability).[2] However, the principal source of the problem in *Rio Grande* is not the presence of the family as such, but specifically the presence of the estranged wife, who is wholly incompatible with the military sphere in the same way the son is not. Kathleen's return poses a challenge to Yorke, based on the possession of parental authority, and the threat of overt maternal control. By the end of the film, patriarchal values have been reasserted. Under Yorke's command, Jeff proves himself militarily in a climactic assault against Apaches, thus allowing Yorke to fully relate to him as both a son and a soldier, and in the dual, compatible capacity of father and military commander.

A regular feature of Wayne's characterisations in his cavalry Westerns is his embodiment of a combined paternal/militaristic identity, in which he commands both a sense of authority and a sense of emotional investment, leading the troops as a commander and sustaining a caring relationship with them, like a father. While this type of characterisation is evidenced, to varying degrees, in all of the cavalry films, it assumes greater significance when the Wayne character is positioned in a relationship with a 'son', especially when, as in *Rio Grande*, the son is real, and not surrogate. By being both a literal father and a military commander, Wayne's character necessitates a

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[2] The film's emphasis on the family, which is unusually marked for a Wayne Western, and its depiction of the family as problematic, arguably links the film to the melodramatic tradition, which witnessed a generic revival in the 1950s. I shall consider this linkage in further detail in the conclusion to this thesis.

combined paternal/militaristic identity. The presence of his enlisted son allows Kirby Yorke to experience Jeff's maturation in a disciplined environment, without the domestic, 'feminised' trappings of the family environment. (It is when Yorke's estranged wife arrives on the scene that complications occur, her maternal presence constituting a gender-determined problem in the military sphere.) While the principal focus of *Rio Grande* resides in the reconciliation of Yorke's relationship with Kathleen, his relationship with Jeff is given a measure of attention. While Yorke's comparing of his son's height against his literally establishes whether Jeff 'measures up', the film also portrays the emotional nature of the paternal/filial bond. When Yorke secretly looks on at Jeff nursing a black eye in bed (recovering after a fight with another trooper), tears well in his eyes as he smiles, suggesting the raw emotion of the paternal/filial bond, its suggestively 'feminine' frailty significantly tempered by a recognition of the son's 'masculine' progression through fighting. Yorke subsequently lowers his face, as if embarrassed, to compose himself (a gesture Wayne uses in his other Westerns for similar betrayals of emotion). Yorke's military background necessitates the ultimate repression of emotion, but when it is released, it underlines the paternal/filial bond. In the case of *Rio Grande*, the relationship is a direct one, and any sense of vulnerability is considerably offset by the emphatically 'masculine' nature of the relationship, the proud appreciation of the 'toughened' son by the father. By the end of the film, Jeff has shown that he is 'tough', and that he 'measures up', following his heroics in the climactic Indian assault. This allows Wayne's character to end the film as a man of confirmed paternal and military authority, having raised a son who turns out to be an effective soldier, directly following in his father's footsteps, and fulfilling the patriarchal tradition.

If the film ends by underlining a sense of familial success, it nonetheless initially constitutes the family as a problem, given its apparent incompatibility with military life (of the few films featuring Wayne as the father of a 'real' living family, *Rio Grande* is the only one of his 'military' Westerns to feature him in such a role). If Yorke seems relatively at ease when undertaking military duties, his confidence is overcome with anxiety when his role becomes more explicitly that of the separated father, and, more specifically, the separated husband. The vast majority of Wayne's 'major' Westerns, in common with one strand of generic tradition, have him estranged from romance, alienated from past loves either by an unfulfilled relationship or by the woman's premature death, and alienated from potential relationships by a lack of compatibility, because the woman either values civilisation too much, or because she is realistically unavailable (Martha in *The Searchers*, the impossibly younger women in *The War Wagon*, *El Dorado*, *Rio Lobo*, and *The Train Robbers*). Social commitment is always

problematic in the Western, and the only commitment Wayne's Western heroes regularly undertook was to the army, or the law, or simply to other men. In *Rio Grande*, a conflict between two different kinds of social authority defines Wayne's character, between institutional authority on the one hand and familial authority on the other. This is clearly illustrated in the first meeting of Yorke and the newly-enlisted Jeff. In accordance with professional duty, Yorke deliberately maintains a distance in their conversation, negating any sense of emotional investment. As soon as his son leaves, however, Yorke compares their respective heights, and bends his back over in a somewhat exaggerated manner in furtively glancing outside the tent to see his son again, an unusually performative bodily gesture on Wayne's part, at this point expressing a private break from the regimental stiffness imposed on the soldierly body. Wayne's body is in fact given a considerable focus in *Rio Grande*, as if the film's effective romanticisation of his character permits for his body to be more of a subject of representation.

Specifically, Yorke's body becomes a source of anxiety as he is emotionally torn following his reunion with Kathleen, who rekindles the erotic side of his persona which has been institutionally repressed for so long. In their first extended conversation together, Yorke and Kathleen maintain a distance from one another, as in Yorke's meeting with Jeff, but after Yorke is left on his own, as in the earlier example, his private emotions are betrayed. Leaving Kathleen to sleep in his quarters, Yorke ventures outside to sleep in a wagon by himself. In a rare eroticised display of Wayne's body, his character takes off his shirt and throws it onto the ground, an unmistakable 'gesture of frustration', as Deborah Thomas notes, in which 'a slight stiffness in his step' is registered as he climbs into the wagon (1996: 82). As Garry Wills suggests, the bodily movement exhibited in this scene 'is the very opposite of "the Wayne walk" - uncoordinated, disoriented by conflicting emotions' (1998: 187). The display enacted in the scene eroticises Yorke, but the awkwardness inscribed in his physical presence suggests a vulnerable body, a body exteriorising the emotional turmoil it is undergoing inwardly. As Wills argues, the corporeal aspect of Wayne's image is problematised here, its stoical coherence questioned. Later, Yorke is disarmed by the unexpected arrival of the regimental singers, who serenade Yorke and Kathleen as they listen in attentive silence. Typically, such moments in film contain a strong emotional angle, and this scene is no exception. Yorke's presence is again defined by awkwardness - he exchanges furtive glances with Kathleen, fiddles with his cigar, and looks downwards, suggesting a degree of embarrassment. Kathleen, by contrast, seems slightly more composed, suggesting a more coherent and assured persona to Yorke at this particular moment. The voices of the regimental singers again accompany evocatively silent

images of Yorke as he walks by the bank of the Rio Grande at night, ostensibly contemplating his war strategy, but also suggesting that Kathleen is on his mind, given the romantic impulse effected by the earlier use of the singers' voices. Yorke's introspection in this scene is also characterised by loneliness, emphasised by the evening setting, and underlining an earlier exchange between Jeff and Kathleen, who in response to her son's enquiry as to the 'kind of man' Yorke was, replied, 'He's a lonely man.' The scene ends with a close-up of Wayne's character, his face expressing anxiety. Clearly, Yorke's masculinity deviates quite consistently from the stoical, which in its own way narratively raises the question Jeff asks: 'What kind of man is he?' As a figure of romance, Wayne cuts a far more problematic figure than he does as a soldier, where he fits an accustomed role, especially within the context of *Rio Grande*'s position in Ford's cavalry trilogy. Given the total absence of romance in *Fort Apache* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* as an aspect of Wayne's characterisation, the presence of romance in this film forms an intrusion into the narrative space, romance being the determining factor behind the more problematic aspects of Wayne's representation in the film. The split effected in Wayne's character during the course of the narrative, between the apparently incompatible polarities of soldier and family man, evokes a problem that necessitates a solution, in the interests of a coherent character portrayal which stresses unity rather than fragmentation. The climax of *Rio Grande* duly works to achieve this.

The film ends with an apparent reconciliation of both the romantic and military drives of Yorke's persona, with Yorke attending a military parade in honour of a successful Indian raid, joined by Kathleen on the podium wearing a white dress, suggestive of a bride entering a new, more compatible marriage. Yorke accepts Kathleen on his own terms, involving her integration with his military life, and the re-formation of the family unit, of husband, wife, and son. Very rarely would Wayne's Westerns situate his character within a 'complete' family of living spouse and descendant(s), but appropriately the sense of domestication implied by this is ameliorated here, by being integrated into the military sphere. Yorke ends the film as both a family man and a military man, in an apparent answer to Jeff's earlier question, and fulfilling the paternal role within both spheres of influence over his son. At the end of a film which has at times expressed a sense of a problematised character, Ford allows the Wayne character to finally square the circle of his identity.

McLintock! (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1963)

In contrast with the austere representation of the father in *Rio Grande*, *McLintock!* represents Wayne's paternal character within the context of a broadly comical narrative. As such, *McLintock!* can be grouped together with Wayne's 1960s Westerns, the majority of which were light-hearted, often comic star vehicles (*North to Alaska*, *The Sons of Katie Elder*, *The War Wagon*, *True Grit*, *The Undefeated*). Within this narrative scheme, Wayne's characterisation itself becomes a source of comedy, a development which only effectively occurs in four of Wayne's Westerns (*North to Alaska*, *McLintock!*, *True Grit* and *Rooster Cogburn*). For all the comedy, however, Wayne's paternal role is invested with a degree of seriousness. Wayne is cast as a traditional Western patriarch, a cattle baron by the resonant name of George Washington McLintock, which evokes the spirit of one of America's founding fathers. Echoing *Rio Grande*'s emphasis on Yorke's familial and militaristic authority, Wayne's paternal role in *McLintock!* covers both the familial and social spheres, as he is in charge of both his family and the town he lives in, which is named after him. Unlike Wayne's other comedy Westerns, *McLintock!* has a more obvious ideological message with regard to its negotiation of gender and control. Loosely based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, the film concerns McLintock's attempt to win over, and 'put back in her place', his wife, Katy (Maureen O'Hara), who wants a divorce, thus reaffirming his own sense of familial authority. (The casting of O'Hara as the estranged spouse effecting a disruptive narrative presence harks back to *Rio Grande*.) The lines of conflict are further delineated by the Eastern background of Katy, who talks of the pleasures of New York and Newport 'in season', and by an intense debate between the couple over whether their teenage daughter should be raised in the East or the West.

The familial structure of the film is thus distinctly feminised; the mother is a particularly headstrong figure, and the daughter sides with her, making matters worse by dating an 'Easternised' college student who dresses in dandy clothing, wears red-rimmed glasses, and plays the ukulele. The threat of feminisation posed by this potentially emasculating familial context forms a problematic gendered scenario, but the fact that *McLintock!* is a comedy Western ensures that the problem is displaced, its seriousness lessened by its ostensibly comic negotiation. While McLintock and Katy have moments of sincerity, their relationship is predominantly governed by exchanges of sardonic insults and moments of slapstick comedy, in which, significantly, Katy bears the brunt of the humiliation. This ensures that the effect of comic displacement is effectively concentrated on O'Hara rather than Wayne, who might seem to exist as part of the same equation (as a partner in the romance), but is differentiated simply by being

Wayne, the given, indispensable authority figure of the narrative, whereas romance, personified by O'Hara, is a more dispensable narrative element, as often absent as present in Wayne's Westerns. While O'Hara is the butt of most of the film's comedy, Wayne is effectively introduced as a figure of comedy *and* authority in the animated credits montage, which puts his title over the image of a bull. In this playful negotiation of the actor's iconicity, establishing both the pedigree of his *Red River* persona and drawing on the by now developed popular stereotype of the specific type of his masculinity, the film both determines Wayne's character as 'masculine' and as a caricature. In so doing, the opening credits set the parameters for the film's subsequent characterisation of Wayne, in which he assumes the status of a commanding authority figure, while simultaneously being characterised in terms of comedy.

The principal comical aspect of *McLintock!* is located in the familiar realm of 'the battle of the sexes', which links the film to one of the mainstream comic traditions in American film, and, more indirectly, one of the principal thematic concerns of the Western, the bipolarisation of gender. While the primary tone of *McLintock!* is farcical, its narrative is still concerned with the generic trope of gendered control. As is evidenced by the abundance of comedies centred on an imbalanced relationship, one of the principal thematic concerns of the comic genre is the disruption of 'normal' gender roles, representing a transgression of ideologically-determined 'order'. In this film, the centre of 'order' lies with McLintock, who 'owns' the town in which the film is set. The town is named after him, the animated credits show the town replete with signs bearing his name, and McLintock himself points out in response to a bureaucrat's assertion that he does not own the town that, according to the records, he does own a considerable amount of it. While town ownership is typically the hallmark of the Western villain, McLintock is distinguished by his benevolence (notably towards Native Americans), and by his antagonistic relationship with government officials. Yet for all the power McLintock has over the community, as something of a societal patriarch (like his namesake, George Washington himself), his domestic patriarchal authority is hindered by the overbearing presence of his wife, whose emasculation of him is most succinctly expressed by a character's observation following McLintock's hasty retreat from a domestic confrontation ('Did you see a yellow streak about a mile wide running down his back?'). Her general opposition to his 'rugged' Western ways determines her relationship with him, and the marking of her character as a generically aberrant figure, as a particularly haughty example of 'repressive' femininity.

Before McLintock's remasculinisation as a husband occurs at the very end of the film, he is remasculinised as a father, in figurative terms, when his daughter is pursued and duly won over by a more 'masculine' boyfriend, Dev, played by Wayne's son, Patrick. In contrast to the previous, effeminate boyfriend, Dev's masculine credentials are established by his physicality (via labouring and fighting) and his authoritative relationship with the daughter - at one point he beats her over his knee with a dustpan, an act which McLintock consents to (he places the dustpan in Dev's hand). By taking Dev into his family, McLintock aims to redress the gender imbalance of his feminised family by taking in a surrogate, naturally 'masculine' son. The couple's engagement at the end of the film marks the full familial inclusion of Dev, and acts to spur on McLintock when he elects to punish Katy for her constant criticism of him, and subsequent undermining of his masculine authority. He pursues her through the town and spanks her over his knee, forming an inverted repetition of Dev's earlier assault on his daughter, marking the culmination of father/son authority in the family. Significantly, the punishment echoes that which a father might use to punish a child. Such an infantalising assault reinforces the sense of a transformation of power relations; symbolically, McLintock becomes more than a husband, and Katy becomes less than a wife. If the ending of the film is a utopian one, the pleasure is based on the restoration of gendered 'normality', in which a more familiar set of generic expectations regarding gender fall into place. The town's overzealous population revel in Katy's punishment, with accompanying laughter and applause (forming a diegetic audience, suggesting by implication the consent of the 'real' screen audience to the punishment). The societal support for McLintock's actions forms a significant renegotiation of the implied 'feminising' impulses of society in the Western, but then McLintock's patriarchal role in the community ultimately asserts its 'masculine' heritage to start with. Following the assault, the film ends with a shot of the McLintock household at night, where Katy is heard expressing her love for her husband. Where *McLintock!* begins by evidencing the contrast between the Wayne character's ownership of the town with the relative lack of ownership over his family, it ends by suggesting his ownership over both.

<u>*Rio Bravo* (Howard Hawks, 1959)</u>

Rio Bravo evidences one of Wayne's most authoritative and coherent performances of the Western hero as a 'natural' leader, a recurring character type of the Western in general, and arguably Wayne's Westerns in particular. The paternal identity of Wayne in the film emanates from his role as the leader of a surrogate family, through which he assumes the identity of a surrogate father, an identity which brings with it at least the

same level of authority as Wayne possessed in his biological father roles. Wayne's characterisation in *Rio Bravo* is one of his most unproblematic, although the romance plot which is central to the film has a partially destabilising impact on the Wayne character, at times undermining his sense of authority and assurance (as in *Rio Grande* and *McLintock!*). The overall strategy of the film, however, is to represent Chance as a balanced hero. While Chance's professional world (as town sheriff) is definably homosocial, he also flirts with the world of romance, in so doing guaranteeing his 'masculine' credentials in as fullest a sense as possible - with a woman nearly half his age (who could, significantly, be as much his daughter as his lover). Although Hawks' interest is in the professionalism embodied in the group as a whole, the specific authority of Chance is never in doubt; he occupies the moral centre of the narrative, giving 'meaning, coherence, and integrity to the lives of those around him' (Wood [1968] 1996: 100). His deputies include the alcoholic Dude (Dean Martin), the youthful 'son', Colorado (Ricky Nelson), and the elderly Stumpy (Walter Brennan), all of whom respectively lack Chance's sobriety, maturity, and physical aptitude. Furthermore, Wayne's corporeal authority guarantees his group leadership: he stands a foot taller over the three actors; his bodily performance throughout the film suggests a sustained rigidity in comparison to the respectively fragile, lithe, and stooped bodies of Martin, Nelson, and Brennan; and his low-timbre voice contrasts with the alternately high-pitched and comical voices of Nelson and Brennan. In defining Wayne's character in this way - as part of a professional group but in a sense above it - the film allows Chance to exercise an individualist ethos within an essentially social setting, allowing him to have his generic cake and eat it, and - via his relationship with Feathers (Angie Dickinson) - allowing him to temper any narcissistic vestiges in the process.

Chance's first appearance in *Rio Bravo* underlines the balanced identity he characterises in the film. As the tremor-ridden Dude goes to retrieve a coin disdainfully tossed into a spittoon, the pot is kicked away by Chance, who is revealed, from Dude's point-of-view, in a tight low-angle shot. Hawks simultaneously establishes Chance's power, and his sober control, over the pitiful figure of Dude. Yet this initially blatant suggestion of masculine hierarchy is tempered when Chance is knocked to the ground (by Dude), and goes on to attempt to reprimand a murderer in a clearly hazy, unfit state. Dude, now more in control than Chance, saves the sheriff by targeting his assailant with very accurate shooting (the man's gun is shot out of his hand). Both men are therefore seen to be professionals, and in need of each other, although Chance's authority is evidenced as more commanding, given that he is not represented as an alcoholic. Dude's recovery from alcoholism is a defining theme of the narrative, and Chance acts as his mentor in the character-building process, underlining his standard-bearer model of masculinity.

Chance facilitates Dude's recovery by keeping an eye on his drinking, but more significantly by subjecting Dude to tests of his competence in confrontational situations. In passing such tests, Dude shows that he 'measures up' to the standards set by Chance.

Although *Rio Bravo* primarily asserts the authority of Chance in his professional duty as a lawman, its romantic sub-plot - Chance's affair with Feathers - evidences Chance's lack of control in an emotionally-vulnerable situation. Their first encounter is a highly embarrassing one on the sheriff's part; he is sighted by Feathers holding up a pair of frilly red drawers, to which she responds, 'They have possibilities - but not on you.' Chance simply has no reply to Feathers' joke, and his relative insecurity is compounded when, as he leaves the scene, Feathers shouts after him, 'Hey sheriff, you forgot your pants.' As Deborah Thomas puts it, 'his combined annoyance and flustered embarrassment set her up as a disturbance to his previously secure sense of being both masculine and in control' (1996: 84). Although Chance's emasculation in this scene is compensated by the presence of the comically short Mexican hotelier Carlos (Pedro Gonzalez-Gonzalez), the limits of his masculine authority are clearly displayed. Chance gets flustered again when he suspects Feathers of cheating at a card game, and she graphically suggests that he strip-search her. When they finally kiss, Feathers tells Chance that he 'better run along now and do your job', to which he can only mumble a sigh of frustration, suggesting a flustered acceptance of repression and alluding to the problematic Western dichotomy polarising generic 'duty', in whatever heroic guise, against the desire for romance. Even when Chance finally sleeps with Feathers, his anxiety is still betrayed. After he explains to Feathers that he's having difficulty sleeping - being mindful of the near-state of siege in the town, resulting from the presence of the film's villains - she suggestively informs him that she'll leave her hotel room door open. Yet for all these disturbances, Chance duly assumes a greater measure of control when Feathers falls asleep behind the hotel bar, and he ends up carrying her upstairs, a gesture which suggests his simultaneous adoption of a paternal and romantic persona, an identity regularly assumed in Wayne's Western and non-Western films. While the preceding narrative has, to a degree, problematised traditional gender roles, at the point of the consummation of their relationship, Chance assumes the traditional dominant role over the subordinate role of Feathers. However, the scene following the coded fade-out underlines Chance's adoption of a 'playful' persona - during which he calls Stumpy a 'treasure' and kisses him on the top of his head, exiting with a smile as Stumpy smacks his rear-end with a broom - suggesting the consequent relaxation of Chance's persona through a process of eroticisation. In addition, Chance's interaction with Stumpy suggests a father-son interaction, effecting an infantilisation of Stumpy in

spite of his considerably greater seniority. Clearly, Chance's sexual encounter also renews his masculine authority, to the extent that he fulfills a principal 'duty' of the ideal subject.

One of the critical debates central to *Rio Bravo* revolves around the extent to which the Wayne character can be conceived in terms of parody. Robin Wood, in making this case, suggests that Wayne's character is based to such an extent on his iconic brand of stoical and silent heroism that it 'verges on parody', effectively 'testing the validity of the values the *persona* embodies by exposing them to the possibility of ridicule' ([1968] 1996: 93; emphasis in original). It is clearly apparent that part of the humour of Chance's initially embarrassing encounters with Feathers derives from the fact that this is the normally assured Wayne character being a subject of embarrassment. More acutely problematic, given that Wayne's 'mature' persona - as an assertive and naturally dominant authority figure - was well established by the time of this film, his specific 'proneness to sexual embrrassment' has an 'adolescent' quality about it (Wise [1971] 1996: 115). These moments are indeed parodic, and thereby problematic, but the question remains whether the effect of defining Wayne's character in parodic terms is merely temporary, or more permanent. The fact remains that the overall weight of the narrative underlines Chance's authority, as the leader of the all-male group, whose *individual* authority may be qualified by his reliance on others during moments of conflict (Wood [1968] 1996: 95), but is in the main exemplary, notably as regards the two relationships he has with Dude and Feathers, which define the basis of *Rio Bravo*'s narrative: Chance successfully oversees Dude's recovery, and he gets the girl. While this latter aspect of the plot is the cause of initial discomfort, its parodic qualities are temporary, and arguably less problematic than Wise and Wood suggest by their argument that the romance plot emphasises Chance's sexual immaturity (Wise [1971] 1996: 115; Wood 2003: 46). Given the ease with which Chance eventually consummates the relationship, and the fact that he is played by John Wayne, it seems doubtful that the film is suggesting his sexual immaturity; rather, Chance's embarrassment would seem to derive more from the fact that Feathers is an unusually assertive woman, whose provocative behaviour would probably cause equal discomfort to other Western heroes. The presence of Feathers in the film, discomforting as it is, is in fact representative of the typical function of women in the Western, but her assured characterisation sets her apart from the typical representation of such women. That she is a stronger character makes Chance's ultimate winning of her all the sweeter; in a narrative which poses various tests for his character, the passing of this test could be said to further emphasise his strength, marking a relationship between equally strong personalities.

Insofar as it betrays a degree of initial embarrassment, Chance's relationship with Feathers would seem to complicate any sense of an undiluted, phallocentric narrative trajectory. Chance's actions within the 'male' world of the narrative attests to an assured and secure persona, while his dealings with Feathers betray, at least initially, an insecure persona. If, as Naomi Wise suggests, Chance's 'social immaturity' seems to derive from his living in an all-male world ([1971] 1996: 115), the implication is that Chance is in a sense incomplete as a result of living an isolated existence.
Consequently, the ultimate affirmation of an eroticised persona renders Chance as a more 'complete' character, a synthesis of social and sexual authority, with the latter being free of the common generic threat of domesticity; as Wood points out, Chance and Feathers are far removed from 'the mainstream of civilisation, with its "settled" domestic-bourgeois world of "Mr and Mrs" and their family' (2003: 41). (One need only contrast the representation of settlement-inducing relationships and the centrality of the family as the basis of 'civilisation' in Ford's Westerns to emphasise this point.)

Ironically, following his liaison with Feathers, Chance suffers an immediate loss of control in the next scene, when he is overcome by a group of villains without being in possession of his rifle. If the film thereby implies that Chance has been in a sense feminised by his relationship with Feathers, it would only be doing so in accordance with the logic of gendered relations as implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) negotiated in the Western. Yet the typical structural mapping of gender in the Western does not entirely fit with the narrative model of *Rio Bravo*. Although Chance's strength as a Western hero is fairly clear, he is not inscribed with the usual qualities of resolute individualism, inasmuch as he depends on the help of his colleagues throughout the film; as far as Feathers is concerned, she emphatically does not fit with the usual characterisation of the 'civilising' leading woman, bearing in mind the connotations surrounding the Western lady 'entertainer'. For a film which at first glance seems to contain stereotypical characterisations, notably Wayne's strong, silent hero and Brennan's comical old man, *Rio Bravo* in fact refuses many of the traits associated with such stereotypes. While Stumpy is granted some profoundly dignified moments, Chance is not stereotyped, but humanised, by his dependence on others for strategic support, and his awkward moments with Feathers. The characters are not stereotypes that fit stereotypical generic logic, but individually-defined characters that fit the internal logic of this film, allowing Chance moments of self-parody (when he kisses Stumpy) without denigrating his heroic stature, and Feathers a resolutely independent air, sexy and yet deserving of as much respect as a more conventional 'lady'. In an additional negation of generic logic, the narrative space of the film represents a problematisation of the typical wilderness (coded as raw and masculine) and

civilisation (coded as domesticated and feminine) opposition; in fact, as Wood points out, this opposition has no meaningful place in the film ([1968] 1996: 91). *Rio Bravo* offers in contrast, in the words of Deborah Thomas, 'a non-domestic space which is neither wilderness *nor* marital home that both men and women can inhabit together' (1996: 87). If the film's project is to consolidate such disparate polarities, its final scene is significant in the way it simultaneously underlines Chance's 'roles' as sheriff and lover, the professional persona at one with the erotic. Threatening to arrest Feathers for indecency if she leaves her hotel room wearing some revealing tights, Chance is drawn towards her when she comments on his inability to admit his love for her. As they embrace, the film cuts to Dude and Stumpy walking down the main street; as they pass the hotel, Feather's tights are thrown out of her window and land in front of the men. Picking them up, Stumpy asks, 'You think I'll ever get to be a sheriff?', in an acknowledgement of Chance's enviable status. At this point, he has achieved the fullest realisation of Western masculinity, possessing the masculine 'guarantees' of both legal authority (the villains have been spectacularly defeated, with Chance expertly exploding dynamite with long-range rifle shots) and active heterosexuality. In setting such a sexual example to the men, Chance's paternal role is underlined, suggesting his unequivocal position as the leading figure of the homosocial 'family', the man who sets the standards so that others may follow his exemplary model of masculinity.

Notwithstanding its romantic sub-plot, what *Rio Bravo* seems finally to be 'about' is the 'the exclusive, self-sufficient, all-male group' (Wollen [1964] 1996: 84), or all-male 'family', and Chance's positioning with regard to it. As the authoritative head of the group, Chance commands a position of leadership, although he is dependent on the group throughout the film. Chance's role in the group places him both at its centre - through his leadership and his rehabilitating friendship with Dude - and at its periphery - through his liaison with Feathers, effecting a break from the homosocial 'family'. This opposition is given dramatic expression in the jail-house communal singing sequence, where Chance's absence from the communal singing is conspicuous; he stands over them, almost like a father watching his children (Wood 2003: 74). By this point, Dude's rehabilitation seems near-complete (he is seen pouring whisky back into the bottle without spilling a drop), by implication allowing Chance to direct more attention to the world of romance. Of the two songs sung, the last relates to romance, and thus seems to refer as a commentary to Chance's relationship; his non-involvement in the singing can be further judged as a limitation of the scene's self-conscious qualities, and as pointing to the determining features of Wayne's star image, which sat uncomfortably with singing (notwithstanding his pre-star B-Western 'singing cowboy'). In standing outside the convivial circle, refusing to 'perform', Chance establishes himself as outside

the *overtly* social, and moreover homosocial, world, just as the final scene in the film isolates him from the world of male friendship, in once again being set up as an example of a more 'complete' masculinity compared to Dude and Stumpy. Chance achieves authority in both the homosocial and the heterosexual setting, the film leaving the spectator with the sense that Chance is neither bound to the former, nor exclusively attached to the latter. In ending the film in this manner, Hawks underlines Chance's role in the 'family' as a man of specifically *individual*, paternal authority within the social realm, as the man whose masculinity is unburdened.

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (John Ford, 1949)

Wayne's character in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* is both a leader and a mythically-inscribed 'father'. Individually, these identities carry substantial authority; together, the effect on characterisation becomes intensified. Wayne is aged to play a Captain, Nathan Brittles, at the point of retirement, with one 'last stand' to undertake before he submits to the passing of time, a plot device which itself carries a mythical dimension. Wayne's persona in the film is that of an essentially benevolent father-figure as military leader. While others around him have romantic attachments, Brittles remains stoically abstinent, offering protective advice to the young lovers of the film while pointing out that he is old enough to be their father. In imparting such advice, Brittles essentially *becomes* their father, fulfilling a transcendent role which only he can fulfil. His seniority accentuates his paternal status, as it does in *Red River* and in Wayne's later films, in which his ageing was real, since older father-figures always seem to assume a greater measure of patriarchal authority. His seniority also gives a mythical dimension to the Wayne character, with such a dimension being suggested in the film's opening voice-over, describing Brittles as 'One Captain fated to wield the sword of destiny'. Brittles age marks him as an experienced campaigner, given the historical juncture at which *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* is set (1876, just after Custer's death). The historical context, a defining point in American history, underlines Brittles' staying power in a 'real' historical moment defined by considerable violence, but Brittles' role in the context of the Indian wars is markedly conciliatory. The film ends up by averting the expected cavalry/Indian conflict, showing Brittles to be part of the eventual 'solution' to the 'Indian problem', as defined by the terms of American ideology (outright belligerence replaced by a more 'respectful' attitude, notwithstanding reservation confinement). In so doing, Brittles becomes identified with historical 'progress' in a direct way; he becomes a metaphor for historical 'progress' itself, which encapsulates his mythical status in the film. Finally, the mythical 'father' is fully evidenced at the film's climax, which integrates Wayne's character into a role which suggests that he is

not only a father-figure to his troops, but a father-figure to the American nation as a whole.

Although Brittles is a fully authoritative character, in keeping with his military role, his age brings with it a degree of physical and emotional vulnerability. Wayne walks with a pronounced stoop, he steadies himself before venturing into the cold outside, when outside he breathes harshly, and his eyes become readily moist when emotionally affected. Brittle's ageing becomes a focus for emotional vulnerability when he comes face-to-face with his retirement. Facing his troops for the last time, he receives the gift of an inscribed timepiece. He is seemingly moved to tears, yet he very deliberately checks his emotion, passing the command of the troop over in a gruff, determined voice. Despite this betrayal of emotion, Brittles has a clear sense of what he expects from the soldiers under his command. On more than one occasion in the film, Brittles expresses the maxim, 'Don't apologise - it's a sign of weakness', imparting a code of masculinity that Wayne's Western characters observe with near-absolute consistency. If Brittles betrays a sense of fragility at the end of *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, the film discounts the implied weakness of a passive retirement, by having Brittles recalled to the army as leader of scouts, allowing him to retain a sense of institutional authority, to be recognised as a 'natural' leader of men.

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon perhaps features the most resonant example of the Wayne character's embodiment of a combined paternal/military authority, an identity also assumed, more problematically, in *Red River* and *Fort Apache*. With an old soldier at the heart of the film, the narrative focus is on a figure whose authority is derived from his seniority, in the sense that he carries the assumed authority of the older man (within the patriarchal context) and his role as a 'father' to the troops is further cemented, and from his specific military experience. The film's underlining of Brittles' leadership qualities, in conjunction with his paternal qualities, have led Garry Wills to suggest the film's resonance as a post-war hymn to the need for national unity in facing an 'outside' enemy (whether they be Nazis or Communists) (1998: 180-181). The ex-Confederate contingent of the unit is emphasised, with Brittles giving his assent to the burial of a soldier with the Confederate flag, and agreeing with a soldier who remarks that Brittles' scout commission, signed by Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan, would be complete if it was also signed by Lee. As Wills points out, the replacement of the World War by the Cold War underlined the continued need for national unity, and an ageing military hero of the post-war West perfectly embodied a metaphorical representational figure of unity for modern post-war America. Brittles' most dependable adjutant is a relatively young ex-Confederate Captain, their characters

'embody(ing) the fusion of different elements in American society - North and South, old and young, experience and energy, Father of His Country and rebellion restored to loyalty' (Wills 1998: 181). The mythic resonance of Wayne's character, strongly established in the film's opening narration ('One Captain fated to wield the sword of destiny'), is underlined throughout the film by his positioning as a 'father' to his men, a unifying figure of paternal, militaristic, and national authority, an all-encompassing 'father'.

Brittles' overall mantle of authority serves to contain his displays of emotion, which are in any case determined by the expectation of a 'softer' form of masculinity correlating with the arrival of old age. The final action of the narrative, however, is based on a refusal of his 'surrender' into retirement - with its negative connotations of passivity and domesticity - and a continuation of life in the military, its mythic reverberations solidified by Brittles' appearance in a Custer-like fringed buckskin jacket. Unlike the real Custer, however, there is no expectation that Brittles will suffer a similar fate, given that the film establishes Brittles' friendship with an Indian Chief (even if his strength as a father-like leader is contrasted with his Native American counterpart, who cannot command the unity of his warmongering men). The Custer analogy is revealing, since he remains a legendary, 'heroic' figure of history. In fashioning a Custer-like image of Brittles at the end of the film, it is as if 'real' history is subjected to ameliorated myth and nostalgia, with Brittles assuming the aura of Custer's heroic stature devoid of the problematic strain of the latter's military recklessness. Put simply, Brittles may look like Custer, but we know that he will not 'do a Custer'. Instead, he rides into the sunset at the end of the film as a man who lives out the myth of the perfect soldier to the full, a non-belligerent military man beyond his years, and an ageing 'father' defined by durability.

<u>*The Alamo* (John Wayne, 1960)</u>

When Wayne produced, directed, and starred in *The Alamo* in 1960, his filmic identity as the Western hero *par excellence* was assured, while his political identity as an American 'patriot' was secured, Wayne having aligned himself with the McCarthyite camp as the anti-communist hysteria in America became more intense in the 1940s and 1950s.[3] Like *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, *The Alamo* sees the actuality of 'real' history subjected to myth, but in a more direct manner, given that Wayne's character is the 'real' Davy Crockett. In *The Alamo*, Wayne would refer back to one of America's

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[3] Wayne served the anti-communist cause both by joining the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals and becoming its president in 1949 (Zolotow 1974: 254), and making stridently anti-communist films such as *Big Jim McLain* and *Blood Alley*.

defining historical moments. In playing Davy Crockett, Wayne identified himself with one of the country's supreme patriots, a man who, in sacrificing himself upon the altar of freedom in the name of Texas, guaranteed the future 'free' (i.e. American) development of the Western territories. In mythical terms, Crockett in a sense 'gave birth' to the West as it came to flourish under the national banner of America, thereby assuming the symbolic role of an American 'father'. As Crockett, Wayne's role is thus initially predicated on myth before the narrative even unfolds, and, as it does unfold, the mythical characterisation of Crockett is intensified, particularly in the film's climax. In playing the role of one of America's 'fathers', Wayne's part represents a continuation of the patriarchal persona he had adopted in his post-war career, even as his character in *The Alamo* lacks a surrogate paternal identity. Instead, the paternal identity of an American 'father' is wholly determined through the prism of myth.

In *The Alamo*, Wayne's Davy Crockett is situated within a triadic configuration of leading male characters, with Will Travis (Laurence Harvey) and Jim Bowie (Richard Widmark) on either side of him. Naturally, Wayne's character is the most positively-represented, forming a masculine presence guided by stability, in contrast to the extremes embodied in the other two characters. Travis is a 'stiff' martinet, while Bowie is opinionated and arrogant. Crockett and Travis first meet in a San Antonio cantina, where their differences are emphasised. Crockett drinks while Travis does not; Crockett disdains titles while Travis is prone to use them; Crockett is unambiguously American while Travis' accent sounds more European. (Putting aside the fact that many Americans would have had European tinges in their accents in the early nineteenth century, Harvey's quasi-English accent serves to accentuate the contrast between himself and Wayne, and underline the former's inappropriately aristocratic bearing.) When Crockett settles a difference between himself and another man with a good-natured brawl, Travis looks on with alternating expressions of bemusement and mild disdain. Clearly, the film is at pains to portray Crockett as easygoing and casual, with none of the 'airs' possessed by Travis (who, as later dialogue alludes to, is 'fancy educated').

In accordance with the vast majority of Wayne's post-war characterisations, Crockett's relationship to romance is highly problematic. A potential lover is established in the shape of a Mexican woman, but the film never develops their relationship as such. Their first encounter, in which Crockett offers his help in protecting the woman from a threatening land agent, ends with the woman thanking him but rejecting his offer as unrequired. As he leaves, Wayne/Crockett stands for a moment, in total darkness, as he says 'Goodnight' to the woman, tersely, accompanied by poignant music. In their

only other extended scene together, in the romantic setting of a riverside, the expected development of a romantic liaison is replaced with, and displaced by, politics, with Crockett giving words to his need to fight for the cause of the Alamo and 'freedom'. Perhaps appropriately, the woman duly departs the scene and the narrative, leaving to go South on a wagon, leaving Crockett to undertake his patriotic and masculine duty without the 'burden' of romance. Yet the parting of the woman does not occur without a sense of regret on Crockett's part. As Deborah Thomas points out, Wayne's films often have his character renunciating romance while feeling a sense of loss, in contrast to those Westerns which renounce romance without instilling apparent regret in the figure of the hero (1996: 86). In this scene, Crockett's voice is hushed as the woman leaves, but depart she must, leaving Crockett to do what men must. Near the end of the film, when comforting a distraught Bowie over the telegraph-announced death of his wife, Crockett reveals that he too once mourned a wife, thereby in a sense explaining his problematic relationship with the woman in the film (and linking *The Alamo* with the numerous Westerns in which the history of Wayne's character includes a dead wife). Romance, for Crockett, is perhaps a forgotten memory.

The Alamo comes to a close with the duly-expected epic battle, in which, by the guiding terms of American ideology, lives were nobly sacrificed for the cause of liberty, and a defeat became a victory (as indeed it eventually did when the Mexicans were defeated by Texans only two months after the fall of the fort). Clearly, the narrative had much potential for Wayne to position himself as an 'authentic' American hero, even at the expense of authenticity. His filmic demise is significant in this respect, marking the fulfilment of the heroic identity even at the very point of death. Mortally wounded by a Mexican bayonet, Crockett staggers to the fort's ammunition dump with a flaming torch, and sets off a massive explosion which consumes both himself and the ammunition the Mexican forces would have been bolstered by. As Garry Wills notes, the only eyewitness account of Crockett's death reported that he survived the battle, and was summarily executed under Santa Anna's orders (1998: 214). Clearly, this apparent 'reality' would not transfer well to the narrative demands of Hollywood film, but it would moreover not fit with the legend of the Alamo and Crockett's heroic role in it, for '*If* the choice were liberty or death, how could he give up liberty in order to live?' (ibid: 215; emphasis in original). Wayne's rewriting of the myth conveys considerable grandeur upon Crockett's death. Instead of surrendering, he dies fighting, and instead of merely dying, he denies the Mexicans their expected supplies, and subjects himself to a spectacular death; as Wills puts it, 'his own death is transformed into a cleansing apocalyptic fire in which he will live forever' (ibid). Crockett effectively transcends death by being incorporated into myth. Thus does Wayne seal his

place in the annals of heroic death scenes in American film. Compared to the other death scenes of his Western characters, Crockett has by far the most 'heroic' death, especially in terms of the specific connotations which individuate his role in the eventual Texan victory - in denying the Mexicans their supplies, Crockett's actions serve to weaken the Mexicans militarily. A legendary American figure dies a legendary death, contributing to the ultimate 'birth' of a 'free' Texas even at the moment of his death. Less of a sacrificial lamb, Crockett dies as a martyred 'father' to a future, fully independent America. In subsequent films, as will be duly evidenced, the Wayne character's death would be less noble. Moreover, in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (to be addressed in the following chapter), which followed *The Alamo* in 1962 and similarly focused on a mythically-inscribed hero, his death would not serve to underline the durability of history, as here; rather, it would underline the end of (Western) history.

***3 Godfathers* (John Ford, 1948)**

While the films discussed above have contained representations of paternalism that have been essentially benevolent and relatively unproblematic, *3 Godfathers* marks a point of departure, given that Wayne's character in the film is a bandit, inscribing an aberrant identity as the other films examined in this section characterised the socially 'normative' identities of soldiers and lawmen (as the vast majority of Wayne's films do). Despite its transgressive characterisation, Wayne's role in the film is one of his most emphatically paternal roles; indeed, his paternal identity motivates his very survival in the narrative, his trek through the deadly wilderness being as much for the survival of the infant in his care as for his own. The film attests to the strength of the paternal ideal, and its transitional nature, given that it can be embodied in an aberrant character as much as a seemingly more benevolent character, although the film explicitly marks paternalism as a means of redemption. Although Wayne's bandit in *3 Godfathers* lacks the consistently problematic type of characterisation that marks *Red River*, *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, it suggests a point of transition inasmuch as it questions the 'natural' ideological equation of paternalism with innate goodness, a point of equation that wholly collapses in the more problematic films to be analysed in the next chapter.

A remake of one of Ford's silent Westerns, *Marked Men*, *3 Godfathers* reintroduces the type of Western masculinity popularised in the silent era, the so-called 'Good Badman'. As the moniker suggests, this heroic type was definitively an outlaw to begin with, but not an overly villainous outlaw at that, and he would ultimately be revealed

as a heroic character, his redemption secured by a good deed for woman or child, with an attendant suggestion of domestication. The 'Good Badman' type of characterisation exemplified in microcosm the genre's negotiation of masculinity, by explicitly illustrating the choices of masculine identity available to the protagonist. The Western hero in all narratives does, of course, face a choice between an unregulated, 'tough' masculinity and a tempered, more feminised masculinity, with most films having the hero fall somewhere in the middle, but the 'Good Badman' made the choice more explicit by encapsulating in one character the oppositions typically spread across the two characters of villain and hero, with the oppositions rendered at their broadest points, particularly as far as the image of masculinity - at its most unregulated - was concerned.

In *3 Godfathers*, the three 'Good Badmen' vary across the lines of age and ethnicity, with Wayne's character (Robert Hightower) being accompanied by a Mexican (Pedro/Pedro Armendariz) and a youth (the Abilene Kid/Harry Carey Jnr.). They rob a bank at the start of the film, and proceed to flee a posse by entering a desert. With their water running low, the bandits make the fatal decision to go further into the desert in an attempt to evade the law. As a result, they are exposed to the elements, leading to the death of Pedro and the Kid, and the near-death of Hightower. In surviving the experience, Hightower's masculine credentials are underlined to the extent that he more successfully endured the horrors which ultimately killed off his companions - a lack of water, a raging sandstorm, and an utterly arid landscape. As Deborah Thomas suggests, endurance - alternatively through sustaining injuries and incessantly pursuing a goal - is a key characteristic of the Wayne hero (1996: 79). In this film, Wayne's endurance is perhaps the most pronounced of all his films, its emphatic nature suggested by the positioning of the wilderness itself as his enemy, rather than his natural 'friend'. Yet this endless wilderness also offers the characters the chance for redemption, via the route of paternalism, in the shape of a newly-born child.

This determining narrative turning-point occurs when the trio come across a seemingly abandoned stagecoach, only to find a woman inside who is near-death and also in the final stages of pregnancy. Hightower, on discovering the woman, returns to speak to his companions. In a emotively-delivered monologue, he describes the situation, saving the detail of the expected baby until last. Hightower subsequently implores Pedro to deliver the child, not owing to his own fear of a lack of competence as such, but owing to his apparently traumatised state ('I'm a tough old bird, but I'm not going back in there!'). Hightower's refusal expresses his vulnerability, a fear of an overt breakdown of emotional control which necessitates blockage. As Pedro leaves, this point is

emphasised in Hightower's actions; a sense of emotional exhaustion is expressed as he collapses to the ground, adopting an almost foetal position of surrender. Lest this dramatic emphasis on masculine weakness become too problematic, Hightower's transition of responsibility allows Pedro to fill an arguably feminised role, and while he delivers the child, Hightower takes on the more 'masculine' task of hacking at a cactus plant with a machete, so as to drain the plant's flesh for a minuscule amount of water. Moreover, Pedro elects to go as a family man, marking him with the compromising traits of domesticity that the Western typically associates with such an identity. For all these vaguely compensatory gestures, however, Wayne's character is positioned in such a way as to invite the 'threat' of feminisation. Although the Wayne character does not deliver the child, he holds the baby as the dying mother implores him to care for it, before she finally expires. He is subsequently forced into a position that can be characterised as both paternal *and* maternal (a concept discussed in relation to the Wayne persona by Deborah Thomas; 1996: 78). He is the godfather, yet he also carries the baby, and cares for it, in such a manner as to disrupt gendered programming. *3 Godfathers* both self-consciously acknowledges this threat of feminisation and attempts to ameliorate it. Typical Fordian humour is derived from Hightower's awkwardness when holding the baby, his eyebrow-raising when the Kid, reading from a child-rearing guidebook, refers to 'the nurse' as Hightower holds the child, and his similar reaction when the Kid reads out the biological advice on early feeding ('Well that's out!'). The simple fact that the child is a boy allows for some straightforward assertions of masculinity, as when Hightower, looking through a case containing various items appropriate to child-rearing, discards a frock which, although blue, has too many 'feminine' frills. More significantly, the thematic parameters of this scene, and the subsequent scenes illustrating the transportation of the child through the desert, posit the domestication suggested by the child against the harsh, more 'masculine' setting of the wilderness which the characters find themselves in. Indeed, the enduring test posed by the need to survive the wilderness can be characterised as a test of masculinity as well as survivability, given the gendered inscriptions of the Western landscape, a harsh environment to be set against the 'soft' town. (Significantly, the town of Welcome in the film - where the trio rob the bank - is defined by a 'hen-pecked' sheriff, and at the end of the film a group of society league women sing 'Bringing in the Sheaves', imbuing the climax with a distinctly feminising tone.)

At this point of the film, the overall narrative process of *3 Godfathers* evidences the generic intrusion of a melodramatic strain into the narrative milieu of the Western, an intrusion which carries the distinct threat of feminisation. The tragic figure of the dying mother, the arrival of the baby, and the overt religious subtext of the film, are all tropes

more properly identified with melodrama, and - with a few exceptions - are consequently rarely found in the Western.[4] As such, the film's relationship to the genre borders on unfamiliarity, the melodramatic strain working to erase the film of more identifiably Western elements, in particular 'action' (the only brief moments of 'action' comprise of the bank robbery and the pursuit near the beginning of the film). Even as the film portrays the three bandits enduring the savage elements of the desert, the specifically Western determinant of such images are offset to an extent by the melodramatic implications suggested by the men's baby-carrying. David Lusted, in an article which seeks to define the Western as 'male melodrama', refers to 'the psychic and emotional conflicts within and between men' that correlates the genre as a form associated with classical melodrama, albeit with a masculine slant (1996: 66). Lusted subsequently notes the need in the Western to accommodate its melodramatic elements within a narrative world centred on male action, which it can do precisely because the incidences of male action are predicated on the melodramatic principles of male conflict. The lack of identifiably Western 'male action' in *3 Godfathers* therefore places it far more emphatically in the melodramatic tradition than other Westerns, as does the manner in which it negotiates the issue of identity. The film's 'good badman' theme links it back to the melodramatic traditions of earlier Westerns, and its broad opposition of identity (ranging from bandit to 'father') marks in quite excessive terms 'that masculine identity is not fixed but subject to competing definitions and change', which Lusted identifies as a melodramatic trope (ibid: 65-66).

The tensions inherent in *3 Godfathers*' blending of Western and melodramatic elements are resonantly expressed in a shot of Pedro comforting the baby with a rattle screen left, while he holds his gun screen right, encapsulating the dual identity of bandit and father-figure, and the choice between those two identities. Just prior to this gesture, Pedro and Hightower have a heated argument concerning their situation, which results in the baby being disturbed. Hightower asks why he was not prevented from pledging to the dying mother that he would care for the child, which evokes an angry response from Pedro before they are both silenced by the baby's crying. Like the aforementioned encapsulating shot, the men's exchange and subsequent response underlines the opposing identities being negotiated, their banditry evoked by their argument (in which Hightower bemoans the forced adoption of a paternal identity, and contemptuously throws a Bible to the floor), and their fatherly qualities evoked by their sudden

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[4] William S. Hart's Westerns often featured melodramatic strains in their depiction of a pious female figure and her 'goodly' impact on the Hart hero, but the rapid overtaking of Hart's popularity by Tom Mix in the early 1920s signalled a change in audience expectations of the Western, and melodramatic concerns largely became *passé*. The religious subtext of *3 Godfathers* can perhaps be traced to Ford's increasingly spiritual feelings following the death of his close friend Harry Carey in 1947: the film is a remake of *Marked Men*, in which Ford directed Carey, and Carey Jnr. stars in the remake.

attendance to the child's needs. The Kid interjects at this point, reading from the Bible, to suggest that their coming across the baby was destiny, an argument which leads Pedro and Hightower to leave their differences aside. Given the overt religious subtext of the film (the three Magi are evoked; a donkey arrives in the desert to convey Hightower and the baby to the town of New Jerusalem), the Kid's interjection serves to 'naturalise' the father-figure identity by asserting its predestined quality.

The effective 'forcing' of the paternal identity onto the men collectively, and ultimately Hightower singularly (after the deaths of the Kid and Pedro), places the men in a far more perilous situation, in which the baby's needs are held in preference to their own. As such, the paternal identity is fundamentally used as a means of redemption in the film, allowing the three bandits to achieve something of a state of grace. Unsurprisingly, given star logic, Hightower is the only man to come out of this process alive, but the character is defined from the outset as more 'naturally' attuned to paternalism than either of his companions. The Kid is too young, while Pedro's ethnicity arguably precludes him (the film has Hightower admonishing Pedro for addressing the baby in Mexican on two occasions, asserting the baby's 'Americanness'). Furthermore, the very beginning of the film establishes the quasi-paternal, protective relationship Hightower has with the Kid (he stresses the choice available to the Kid between robbing the bank and going over the border to start life afresh, suggesting that the job may be 'too rough' for him). Although, following the birth of the baby, all of the bandits take a role in caring for the child, Hightower's role is more central, and as such he is defined as the boy's principal 'father'. He gives the pledge to the dying mother, being beside her and held in the frame with her as she dies. In the mother's naming of the child - Robert William Pedro Hightower - Hightower's paternal authority is further asserted, his complete name giving identity to the baby, bracketing the others' forenames. Subsequently, Hightower takes charge of the baby for the majority of the film, holding it while it is fed and coated in axle grease (taken from the wheels of the stagecoach, and functioning as a wilderness version of Vaseline). Although the Kid holds the baby for a moment and sings to it, his assertion of paternalism is relatively brief in contrast to the more sustained assertion embodied by Hightower. Both the Kid and Pedro hold the child while making their final, mortal, struggle through the desert, but in this section of the narrative the focus on paternal qualities is filtered through more prominent concerns, such as adversity and survivability. Although these men are holding the baby, the context is distinctly less paternal than the earlier scenes involving Hightower cradling the child, and feeding it. In any case, the ultimate demise of the Kid and Pedro leave Hightower as the sole paternal figure of the narrative. Entering the town of New Jerusalem, he is apprehended by the law, and subsequently receives a

reduced jail sentence on account of his redemptive behaviour. He also receives custody of the child, following the completion of his term. Before Hightower leaves on the prison train, a young woman promises she will write to him, suggesting the possibility of romance and surrogate familial completion on his return. Although the woman's identity is not defined (probably as a result of careless editing), she is important in the sense Budd Boetticher famously suggested, in 'what she represents' (quoted in Cook 1993: 241).

3 Godfathers therefore ends with a guarantee of Hightower's paternal identity, lawfully recognised after being narratively 'proven' by his actions, and his enduring qualities. In situating the film among Wayne's other paternal Westerns, *3 Godfathers* is the only film in which his character becomes a 'father' during the child's infancy, although other Westerns have him as a surrogate or real father to young children (*Hondo*, *Big Jake*, *The Cowboys*, *Cahill: US Marshal*). Returning to the concept of the paternal/maternal figure discussed in relation to Wayne's characterisations by Deborah Thomas (1996: 78), *3 Godfathers* represents Wayne at his most 'maternal', given the absence of the mother and the various images showing him cradling and feeding the baby.
Hightower's adoption of a paternal identity is predicated on a relatively strong degree of maternal investment, but this is arguably confined to his initial moments with the child. Once the bandits have set off on their final stretch of trekking through the desert, the stress is on brute survivability in a thematically 'masculine' sphere, where Hightower is tested to the limit, and survives. As Thomas argues, Wayne's 'maternal' qualities can be conceived as suggesting a brand of masculinity that is all-incorporating, rather than simply a 'feminised' masculinity (ibid). By expressing both a tender sense of commitment to the child, ensuring its basic nourishment and well-being, and a more resolute sense of commitment, ensuring its survivability, Hightower's relationship to the child remains fundamentally paternal but initially invested with a degree of maternalism. Hightower's 'feminised' moments of vulnerability are suggested more forcefully in other ways, by his emotional pleading to Pedro to attend to the mother because he cannot go back to the scene himself, and by his mental fragility towards the end of the film, when he experiences aural and visual hallucinations of his dead companions. By the end of the film, however, the traces of maternality and emotional vulnerability have been removed, leaving Hightower to stoically accept his punishment, with the suggestion of a future romance implying his future role in a family made up of the 'correct' gendered roles of mother *and* father.

Grouped together, the films discussed above all represent different types of paternal identities, ranging over the principal period of Wayne's stardom. Respectively, the films

portray characterisations of the father (*Rio Grande* and *McLintock!*), the 'father' as a homosocial leader (*Rio Bravo*), the 'father' as a mythical figure (*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *The Alamo*), and the 'father' as a redeemed criminal (*3 Godfathers*). While the films are not devoid of problematic aspects with regard to the characterisation adopted by Wayne, they represent, in general terms, coherent portrayals of a paternal identity, and a 'father' whom the viewer can comfortably accommodate. In those narratives where obstacles are raised in the way of a progression to a successful paternal identity (the strained relationships in *Rio Grande* and *McLintock!*; the aspect of criminality in *3 Godfathers*), the obstacles are duly removed by the end of the film, while the other films all work by building up Wayne's paternal identity to a point where his character ends the film as, unequivocally, a 'natural' leader or a mythical incarnation of a specifically *American* 'father'. If these films represent Wayne's paternalism in an essentially positive light, the films to be addressed in the next chapter represent paternalism in a far more aberrant light, ranging from tyrannical 'fathers' to anachronistic 'fathers' doomed by the irreversible process of history. The broadly coherent father-figure evidenced in this chapter becomes a 'father' largely defined by incoherence, in films which, as in this chapter, are commonly regarded as being among the most significant Westerns of Wayne's career.

4) WAYNE - THE INCOHERENT FATHER

The films discussed in this chapter characterise an incoherent model of the paternal identity carried by Wayne, forming an inverse relationship to the films discussed in the previous chapter. As the films discussed here emanate from the same period, they also feature characterisations of the 'father' that are analogous to the principal types of paternal roles previously discussed - the 'father' (*Red River*, *Fort Apache* and *Hondo*), the 'father' as a leadership figure (*The Searchers*), and the 'father' as a mythical figure (*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). While the characterisations featured in these films cannot be deemed to be polar opposites of the types of characterisations featured in the Wayne films examined in the last chapter, they nevertheless exemplify something of a parallel development to the previous films examined, in the sense that they privilege a 'negative', or incoherent characterisation at the expense of a more 'positive', or coherent characterisation. Of the three delineated paternal types, each is portrayed with a considerable degree of problematisation in the films to be discussed. The 'father' is essentially characterised in a diluted fashion, inasmuch as he is variously a brutish, alienating presence (*Red River*), a 'father' unsure of himself (*Fort Apache*), and an aberrant 'father' (*Hondo*). The 'father' as leader is alienating to the extreme, characterised as a borderline-psychotic (*The Searchers*), while the mythical 'father' is doomed to tragic anonymity, his iconicity serving to characterise the West itself in terms of mortality (*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). While the key term of reference for the character types of these films is incoherence, which applies particularly to *Fort Apache*, *Hondo*, and *The Searchers*, an additional notable feature of the 'fathers' in these films is their angry disposition, which is expressed most clearly in *Red River*, *The Searchers*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. (While Wayne's roles often call upon him to express anger, the above films evidence a general, bitter sense of anger that is not confined to specific instances of motivated anger, but which seems to inflect the whole persona.) Both aspects of characterisation set up a point of obstruction in the spectator's relationship to Wayne's screen character, inasmuch as the incoherence effects a fractured sense of personality, and the anger effects a disturbed sense of personality; in those films in which Wayne is incoherent and/or bitterly angry, his character is not easily accommodated, a sense of alienation inscribing the spectator's response to his character. Significantly, during the most emphatic period of Wayne's stardom, spanning from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the 'incoherent father' exists on an almost equal footing with the 'coherent father', setting the stability of his paternally-determined characterisations against the oscillation evidenced by the variety of his paternal roles, and specifically their 'moral' inflection. The films examined in this chapter underline the point that a consistent strain of fundamentally problematic

characterisations besets the most prominent period of Wayne's stardom, suggesting a problematic strain at the very centre of Wayne's brand of Western heroism.

Red River (Howard Hawks, 1948)

Wayne does not play a biological father in *Red River*, the first Western of his post-war career as a fully-fledged star, but such is the emphatic nature of his surrogate fatherhood that Wayne comes across as a 'complete' father throughout the film. Moreover, his character, Tom Dunson, is narratively conceived in such a way as to function as a 'father' in both a microcosmic and macrocosmic context, the latter determined by a reference made by Dunson pertaining to his desire to provide enough beef for the whole nation, underlining the positioning of Dunson as a supreme patriarchal figure. In its prologue, *Red River* announces itself as 'A story of one of the great cattle herds of the world, of a man and a boy - Thomas Dunson and Matthew Garth, the story of the Red River D.' By the sandwiching of 'man and a boy' between the references to the great herd and the river, masculinity itself comes to assume an epic status before the film properly begins. While the epic structure of the film allows it to encompass such themes as nation-building and the arrival of capitalist values in the West, the central point of the film's interest resides in the relationship between Dunson the 'father' and his surrogate son, Matt (Montgomery Clift), a relationship which highlights the conflict between individualism and group values, and the conflict between different types of masculinity. Dunson's ideals as a father-figure are underlined when he first comes across Matt, who is the lone survivor of an Indian raid on a wagon train which kills Dunson's woman (whom he left behind to pursue new pastures). Then a young adolescent, Matt is accepted by Dunson after the boy's tenacity is expressed when he points his gun at Dunson after being slapped in a bid to calm his subdued hysteria. After taking Matt's gun away from him, Dunson gives it back to the boy; as the score swells, Dunson tersely comments to Groot, 'He'll do', seeing Matt's tough assertiveness as a virtue. In essence, Dunson sees himself in the young Matt, and, with the film's time frame moving from 1851 to 1865, their relationship develops to one of mutual respect, with the clear implication that Matt will eventually succeed Dunson as head of the cattle empire, thereby fulfilling the expected Oedipal trajectory.

Wayne's characterisations during the late 1940s - in *Red River* and in Ford's cavalry trilogy - suggest a clear alignment between paternalism and militarism, both being clearly expressive of masculine authority in patriarchal culture, legitimising male power through a gendered continuum of social and state authority. Clearly, the immediate social context of the period ensured that such characterisations had a resonant edge,

confirming the strength of American masculinity following a hard-fought military victory in World War Two. And yet in *Red River*, Dunson's paternal/military identity becomes the source of his problematic characterisation, with the film consistently suggesting that Dunson's strident militarism is excessive and, far from being socially relevant, is ultimately anachronistic. As such, the film's resonance is determined by a highly problematic representation of the Wayne character. Dunson is militarised by his possession of a distinctly authoritarian leadership style, and additionally by his costume, which consists of a placket-front shirt, 'creating the illusion of a fortified chest' (Gaines 1993: 100). As Peter Biskind notes, 'Although the war is over, he is still wearing his army pants (*sic*) along with his buckskin shirt; he's still half officer,...he treats peacetime like wartime, his cowboys like soldiers' (1983: 279). *Red River* begins by underlining Dunson's authoritative persona as benevolent, but the effect is temporary. In a montage depicting the building of Dunson's cattle empire, his leadership of which accounts for much of his patriarchal status, Wayne's accompanying voice-over states: 'Wherever they go, they'll be on my land. My land! I'll have the brand on enough beef to...feed the whole country. Good beef for hungry people. Beef to make 'em strong...make 'em grow.' With these words, the film expresses Dunson's paternalistic intentions, as if he, in feeding the whole of America, can be conceived as a father to the nation. As a benevolent provider of food *and* an aggressive leader whose tenacity builds and, for the most part, maintains, an empire, Dunson's persona carries both paternalistic and militaristic connotations, yet the militaristic connotations surrounding the role of Dunson come to be primarily represented as an aberrant facet of character.

Dunson's authority is derived from his fiercely individualist determination, by which the support of his men is gained and subsequently lost when his authority becomes overbearing and he makes mistakes, while Matt achieves the support of the cattle herders by accommodating himself to the needs of the group. In so doing, Matt usurps Dunson's leadership role and alters the course of the trail, taking a route which Dunson steadfastly rejected but which does indeed turn out to be more efficient. The narrative themes evoked thus revolve around leadership and its legitimacy, the conflict between the individual and the group, and a harsh, extensive trek - all of which are suggestive of aspects of military life. As the leader - until the usurpation - of the cowboys, Dunson comes across as a general-type figure, defined by the harsh treatment of his 'troops'. He whips a herder as punishment for a fatal accident, and attempts to hang a pair of deserters, before electing to shoot them, in which he is only prevented from doing so when Matt shoots the gun out of his hand (thereby figuratively marking the transfer of phallic power). The attempted desertion of the men is contextualised by Dunson's

increasing irrationality; one of the deserters admits that he 'signed the pledge', adding 'but you aint' the man I signed it with', articulating Dunson's physical and spiritual deterioration when it is plain to see, evidenced by his increased drinking and severe lack of sleep.

A recurring motif of *Red River* is that of Dunson's old partner, Groot (Walter Brennan), telling Dunson that he 'was wrong', and the revelation of the more obvious cattle route suggested by Matt proves this to be true, at the defining narrative moment of Matt's usurpation. At other moments of the film, Dunson's actions are criticised as 'wrong', such as his attempts to whip the herder and hang the deserters. At the start of the film, Dunson is proved wrong with devastating consequences, when he refuses to take his lover with him on leaving the wagon train for new pastures; he assumes she will be safer in the company of the settlers. Instead, she is killed in a subsequent Indian raid, which serves to underline Dunson's future moments of wrongness with great resonance, suggesting a measure of self-doubt under the assured exterior. In ultimately responding to Dunson's wrongs, Matt asserts his youthful authority over the ageing, tyrannical Dunson, his rebellion contrasting youth against age, almost as much as it contrasts the 'right' way against the 'wrong' way. *Red River* was the first Western to 'age' Wayne, and the seniority characterising Dunson remains one of the film's focal points of interest, particularly when conceived in the light of the film's portrayal of Dunson as a father-figure.

As Dunson's authority is derived from his being an ageing father-figure, the film in effect locates its criticism of Wayne's character in terms of his seniority, and the arrogance and obstinacy made worse by it. Notably, the prologue evidences Dunson's lack of arrogance in his younger days, by having him accepting the advice of Groot to rest by the shores of the Red River. As Wayne plays Dunson as a much older man, his arrogance becomes his defining characteristic. Michael Coyne suggests that, in contrast to the traditional Western's tendency to extol seniority, *Red River* 'punctured the moral authority of the mature Western hero, daring to suggest a fatal discrepancy between age and wisdom' (1997: 55). Indeed, the film suggests Dunson's physical flaws in his increased drinking and his deficient sleeping, and his resulting mental vulnerability is demonstrated extensively by his paranoia following the shooting of attempted 'quitters'. Dunson turns his rifle on the assembled herders, asking them if they also want to quit, asking Matt where he is going in a threatening manner, and then pointing his rifle at a herder simply getting some water. Through his actions at this point in the narrative, Dunson almost comes across as a borderline psychotic, with the camp-fire light exaggerating the glint in his eyes and the concerned reactions of the onlookers.

Dunson's near-incoherent mumbling as he leaves the scene serves to add to the sense of what Garry Wills has referred to as the 'spiritual deterioration' of Dunson, noting Wayne's appearance in the film as becoming progressively 'gaunt, hollow-eyed, semi-insane with worry' (1998: 142). The more unbendingly macho Dunson becomes, the more his masculinity is seen to be deficient, and his leadership of the group problematic. When Matt finally usurps Dunson's leadership, the moment is defined by narrative logic, with the collective strength of the group pitted against Dunson's discredited individual authority. The first film of Wayne's to represent his character in actively dislikeable terms is also the first in which his character is aged. Although Wayne's portrayal is powerful, one which 'lends him much greater stature than in his first films' (Luc Moullet quoted in Liandrat-Guigues 2000: 30), the stature conveyed is problematised by its unwelcome narrative presence as the film progresses, with the very authoritative aspect of Dunson's persona becoming the problem that must be dealt with.

As noted, Dunson's arrogance informs his highly individualistic identity in contrast to the group-oriented values of Matt. After Matt becomes leader of the group, his lack of arrogance as leader is established, in contrast to Dunson, in his words to Groot: 'He was wrong. I hope I'm right.' Although *Red River* establishes the importance of Dunson's single-minded tenacity in building up his empire, the structural implication of the film is that Dunson's rigid masculine values must be, and by the end of the film they seem to be, tempered by the 'softer' masculine values of Matt. The film suggests consideration along the lines of one of the principal thematic oppositions favoured by the Western, by which narcissism is set against social authority (Mulvey [1981] 1989: 34). Dunson's loss of his fiancée at the start of the film, which follows his decision to leave the group of settlers they are travelling with and set off on his own (with Groot), evidences a degree of social alienation, an aspect of Dunson's persona which is developed as the narrative progresses. His later, more tyrannical actions are collectively frowned upon by the herders, who look on with expressions suggesting either shock or disdain, before they express their opposition to Dunson more assertively. Groot, giving voice to the discontent of the group, recurringly tells Dunson he was wrong, suggesting the potential alienation of Dunson's old friend. At one point Dunson actually tells Groot to say that he is wrong, which, as Coyne argues, suggests that Dunson 'is effectively suppressing his own moral uncertainty; for a moment, he looks almost afraid' (1997: 58). After Dunson is left on his own, the herders, now led by Matt, come across a wagon train of assorted dancing girls and gamblers, under Indian attack. The men help the settlers to repel the attack, and stay with them for a night, thus socially integrating themselves in a way one could not conceive of Dunson

doing, after a prologue which establishes Dunson's disavowal of the social. Here, Matt becomes involved with one of the women, Tess Millay (Joanne Dru), the narrative at this point suggesting both the cementation of Matt's masculinity and the possibility of his having his own heir. In short, the narrative proposes Matt as the future, precisely because of his affirmative social authority in contrast to Dunson's nihilistic individualism. When Matt and the herders finally arrive at their destination of Abilene with the herd they are welcomed like heroes by the community; Dunson's arrival functions as a disruptive intrusion into that community. Appropriately, although he is accompanied by some men, he leaves them behind to confront Matt alone, with Matt standing alongside the rest of his men, underlining the final conflict between individual and group-centred masculinity.

The climactic fight between Dunson and Matt, which forms the climax of *Red River*, remains a point of critical debate in terms of its precise narrative function. It has been variously interpreted as a final endorsement of Dunson's brand of masculinity, as an assertion of a softening of Dunson's masculinity, or as simply an ending bordering on incoherence. The confrontation itself is preceded by the striking image of Dunson/Wayne moving forcefully through the cattle, the actor's famous walk being accompanied by increasingly pounding music, the effect being to underline the focus of the conflict (control of the cattle empire). Matt's initial reluctance to fight leads to Dunson's suggestion of emasculation ('Won't anything make a man out of you?'), but after Matt begins to fight back, both men are 'feminised' by the intervention of Tess, who shoots over their heads and tells them that they really love each other. Dunson tells Matt to marry Tess, and informs him that an 'M' will be added to the 'D' brand, because, as Dunson tells Matt, 'You've earned it.' Critics favouring a reading of the climax as an endorsement of Dunson's brand of masculinity place emphasis on this line, such as Michael Coyne, who suggests, 'in giving Dunson the last word, *Red River* actually identifies his rigid standard of masculinity as exemplary' (1997: 56). While Dunson does indeed admire Matt for displaying 'toughness' in standing up to him, his new-found acceptance of Matt surely involves giving credit for Matt's standing up to him, and, consequentially, an acceptance of Matt's different brand of masculinity. Essentially, the ending of the film is somewhat incoherent. As Robert B. Ray puts it:

> Few endings in the history of American popular cinema have been so often criticised as being emotionally inconsistent with what has preceded it. For the concluding reconciliation simply ignored the fact that the rest of *Red River* had fully discredited Dunson's values (1985: 171).

The confrontation is ultimately motivated by the fact that the antagonism between the two men had to come to a head before the end of the film, according to conventional narrative rules. Before he is left behind by the mutineering Matt, Dunson tells him 'I'm gonna kill you', and the drama of the climax is predicated on the anxiety over whether Dunson will actually try to carry out his threat. One might suggest that the fight is also meant to confirm Matt's masculinity, although such a marking of 'toughness' does not automatically correlate with the specific arrogance and tyrannical inclinations which mark Dunson's persona. Not only has the rest of the film discredited Dunson, as Ray suggests, but as the film nears its climax, Dunson is marked quite unambiguously by the code of the villain, a shot of him riding with his posse being lit very sparsely, and scored with a dark and foreboding motif. While the 'tough' side of Matt has been proved to some extent, Dunson's acceptance of him implies the ultimate 'softening' of his own bullish persona, in that he now accepts as an equal a man who challenged his authority and subsequently proved him wrong. The end of *Red River* suggests a transition from the tradition of narrow-minded individualism to the more collective tradition of group-centred sociality. While the film begins with Dunson losing his woman after leaving the wider group, it ends with Matt gaining a woman after he receives the support of the group in place of Dunson. Inasmuch as this contrast is historically differentiated between 1851 and 1865, the film contains the suggestion that Matt's masculinity is better suited to the new order. Dunson's tenacious individuality established his empire, but that aspect of his personality comes to be rendered as unwelcome and anachronistic. Implicitly, Dunson's masculinity must *adapt* to the new order. As Leo Braudy argues, 'His old-time aggressiveness, perhaps useful for winning the West..., can be made to fit in with the new society' (1977: 132). Dunson, in short, must be civilised, and given that he stops fighting at the behest of a woman, this is what is implied. Interestingly, for all of Dunson's apparent hard-heartedness, he does have an emotional side, and it is Tess who releases an admission of Dunson's emotional side, thereby problematising the apparently 'tough' image carried by Dunson.

Dunson arrives at the wagon train after Matt and the herders have left, and is taken aside by Tess in an attempt by her to dissuade him from trying to kill Matt. Although she does not succeed in this, her attempt nevertheless establishes Dunson's feelings towards his surrogate son, and in so doing evidences an emotional vulnerability in his otherwise resolutely hard persona. Dunson's emotion stems from his memory of leaving his fiancée (Fen/Coleen Gray) behind, in spite of her wishes, during the film's prologue. As Tess recollects her pleading with Matt to let her join him on the trail to Abilene, Dunson recollects Fen's similar request. Dunson completes Tess' revelation ('I wanted him so much that...') with the words expressed by Fen when he left her ('...you

felt you had knives sticking in you'), an exchange accompanied with romantic music. The explicit reference is to Dunson's memory of Fen, but implicitly Dunson's admission betrays his feelings towards Matt. Earlier, Dunson asks Tess when she fell in love with Matt, to which she responds, 'When did you...' (interrupted by Dunson's defensive 'What?') '...fall in love with her?' The pause is suggestive, given that the break of the two clauses gives the first part of the sentence its own meaning, which quite explicitly relates to Matt. Dunson duly admits his feelings for Matt: 'I thought I had a son - and I haven't. And I want one.' Despite his authoritarian persona, Dunson's animosity towards Matt for his 'betrayal' is also bound up with his love for his surrogate son, which is expressed here in terms of the loss he feels. The figurative 'replacement' of Fen by Matt emphasises the paternal/filial bond as equal to the bond of romance, echoing the earlier 'replacement' of Fen by Matt following her death and his narrative arrival. Dunson's emotion may be determined by his paternal identity, but it invests that identity with a considerable measure of vulnerability. Not only is *Red River* the first film of Wayne's to critique his 'hard' persona, but it is also Wayne's first film to admit this degree of emotional vulnerability, which is measured, but nonetheless clear to see.

When making *Red River*, Wayne was evidently concerned about the kind of 'old man' figure he would play, and he argued with Hawks about precisely how Dunson's seniority should be characterised. Hawks was concerned that Wayne failed to convincingly perform the physicalities of ageing, and got Walter Brennan to advise Wayne on his performance. In an interview with Maurice Zolotow, Wayne recalled his objections:

> Brennan showed me his idea of an old man walkin' and talkin'. His idea of it was kinda shufflin' and totterin'. And mumblin'. I was supposed to be tough and hard and walk like that? ...I played Tom Dunson my own way, standin' tall (quoted in Zolotow 1974: 233).

Wayne also disagreed with Hawks' suggestion that he 'cringe' when defied by Clift, arguing that his character, although 'mean and vicious...could still hold an audience. But let him show a yellow streak and he will lose them. I'm not about to cringe. I agree with the audience' (ibid). Here, Wayne justified his 'tough' performance by suggesting audience consent for such an image of masculinity, although part of the consent audiences would have had to have with the film, which enjoyed considerable box-office success, was the otherwise problematic ageing of Wayne. Wayne's desire to accentuate his 'tough' performance in interview suggests a desire to compensate for the details of ageing that his performance clearly evidences. If Dunson, admittedly, does not walk in a frail manner, he *does* mumble in the film, and expresses the ageing of his body in his

repeated gesture of rubbing his ribs. Dunson's first appearance in the main time frame of the narrative immediately establishes his physical frailty, where he uses Matt's help to get up from his bent-kneed position on the ground, and rubs his ribs on standing up, a gesture repeated later in the film. Hawks' framing of this scene accentuates Dunson's age, by having him and Groot standing on either side of Matt, their seniority combining to form a contrast to the youthful 'son'. *Red River* evidences the bodily deterioration of Dunson, and finally motivates his severe lack of judgement as the result of his drinking too much and sleeping too little, excesses too much, perhaps, for his aged body. Although Wayne's character certainly cuts authority, the whole basis of the narrative is the proving of his authority as wrong by his surrogate son, whose masculinity is more youthful and accommodating. The climax of the film venerates youth over old age in the sense that Matt, along with Tess to a lesser extent, makes Dunson a better man. Although the climax is partly motivated by its 'proving' of Matt as a man, his main proof of character was his defiance of Dunson, and, although he does not articulate it here, Dunson surely realises at this point that he was wrong.

Fort Apache (John Ford, 1948)

Two 'fathers' - one biological, the other surrogate - occupy the narrative space of *Fort Apache*, the first film of the cavalry trilogy directed by Ford and starring Wayne. Although Wayne, as the surrogate father, is far less emphatically a father-figure in this film than he is in his other Westerns, his 'father' becomes the successor of the paternal mantle, following the death of the biological father, played by Henry Fonda. The film pits Wayne's character, Lieutenant Kirby York, against Colonel Owen Thursday (Fonda), both posted at Fort Apache during a period of Indian insurrection. In so doing, an opposition is set up between two very different soldiers, and figures of paternal authority (in their dual capacity as leaders of men, with Thursday occupying the role of confidant to his younger charges). York is fully acclimatised to the West, wearing a 'neckerchief and a cowboy hat with his regimental uniform, and he *knows* the West, having familiarity with and respect for Indian ways, which crucially determines that he lives at the end of the film, while Thursday dies. Thursday, an Easterner to the full, is not only not acclimatised to the West, but also actively in dislike of it, as evidenced by his comments at the beginning of the film ('What a country - forty miles from mud-hole to mud-hole'), and in his visible discomfort in general. In their respective manner, bearing, and army outlook, York and Thursday differ; most prominently, York is a pragmatist who adapts the strict disciplinary codes of the army to make them more suited to the West, while Thursday is a glory-seeking authoritarian who rigidly enforces the code, in such a way that when he demands that the men

conform fully to uniform code, and lose their 'Western' signifiers, his demand suggests a specifically *Eastern* desire for conformity. As is regularly played out in those Westerns in which Wayne is characterised against another substantial heroic, or quasi-heroic male character[1], *Fort Apache* enquires as to the kinds of masculinity both men personify, and ends up seeming to validate both examples in an incoherent coda. In this sense, the film can be related to *Red River*, although the incoherence in that film rested more on a forced aspect of narrative motivation (Dunson 'softening' for a 'happy ending'), rather than the effect created in *Fort Apache*, whereby the incoherence is specifically located in the identity of Wayne's character, which is thematically suggestive of a split personality.

Fort Apache differentiates the characteristic identities of York and Thursday in terms of their relation to the physical milieu of the West and the social world of the military unit. York fully *belongs* to the West, while Thursday remains distanced from it. The film develops this theme in the manner in which it relates the characters to the landscape, to the world beyond the boundaries of the fort. As befitting his wearing of a cowboy hat with his uniform, York is at ease in the Western environment, and is represented in the exterior world more consistently than Thursday, who, as the beginning of the film establishes, detests the Western environment. When Thursday is represented in the world outside, he looks uncomfortable, his movements stiff and restrained in comparison with York's more 'natural' ease-of-movement (Dyer [1979] 1998: 146); York's later appearance at a regimental dance, to inform Thursday of a peace treaty, is instrumental in comparing the dust-covered and rugged 'natural' appearance of York with the austere, well-pressed appearance of Thursday, who fatally rejects the treaty. Thursday is hampered by a lack of local knowledge - his underestimation of the Indian's warring capabilities leads to his ill-thought-out charge, which decimates the regiment and leaves him dead.

York and Thursday's relation to the social milieu is similarly differentiated. As an upper-class, Eastern martinet, Thursday alienates his men, while York is at ease with the men around him. The burgeoning relationship between Thursday's daughter, Philadelphia (Shirley Temple) and a young Lieutenant, O'Rourke (John Agar), forms a point of conflict between the two men. While York encourages the relationship, Thursday actively opposes it on the grounds of O'Rourke's more proletarian class background. After Thursday's death, O'Rourke and Philadelphia marry and have a son, to whom York becomes a godfather, thereby cementing a social identity in assuming

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[1] Such Westerns include *Red River*, *Fort Apache*, *Rio Bravo*, *The Horse Soldiers*, *The Alamo*, *The Comancheros*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *El Dorado*, *The War Wagon*, *True Grit*, *The Undefeated*, and *The Train Robbers*.

the identity of a surrogate father. However, York's adoption of a paternal identity is problematised by the fact that the identity he ultimately assumes is that of Thursday, his regimental 'father' thereby having a fractured identity, compromised by its association with the negatively-portrayed Thursday.

The incoherent coda which ends the film both implicitly critiques Thursday's ill-conceived 'heroism' and regards it in nostalgic terms, and at the same time suggests that York, in his assuming of Thursday's command, has incorporated aspects of Thursday's persona. Instead of his earlier 'Westernised' appropriation of army uniform, York now wears the uniform with total conformity to regulation, and as he leads his troops out in the final moments of the film, he adopts the same desert-regulation headgear as Thursday did earlier. Similarly, his speech is also regimental in tone, stiffer than before, and fully in tradition with the rose-tinted view of military life which defined Thursday's character. As York responds, 'Correct in every detail', to a journalist's overtly romanticised account of Thursday's charge as portrayed in a painting (significantly, hung in Washington, the centre of Eastern power), York's affirmation of the *myth* of heroism is evidenced, and Ford even suggests an Eastern amelioration of York's Western persona. What is clear from Wayne's performance, however, is the very forced nature of York's presence in this scene. In particular, the close-up of his face as he renders the above line reveals a somewhat blank expression, as if York is not in full control of what he is saying, or indeed the persona he has adopted. As Pye argues, 'The rigidity and studied control of York as he responds to the visitors suggests, after his earlier incarnation, a role deliberately taken on and enforced by will' (1996*b*: 117). That Ford frames York's response with a portrait of Thursday prominent in the near background reinforces the effect of a persona transference, with both men - living and dead - sharing a similar expression, that of a rigidly stern stare. York's correction of a misnomer by a journalist renders this apparent appropriation of Thursday's identity by York more complex, however, as Thursday was defined earlier by his habitual use of incorrect names, and this is followed by further telling indications which suggest that while York has adopted some attributes of Thursday, he has moulded himself into a better and more 'positive' commander of men. As York responds to a journalist's comment that Thursday's men are forgotten, he turns to face the window looking out onto the desert, and delivers a spirited speech which takes up the theme of how the memory of the men lives on, and in the body of the current regiment. During York's speech, images of Thursday's regiment are reflected on the window, which attest to the strength of the myth, but they also signify, given York's words, the body of the army in general, and what is significant, arguably, is the way in which the images are literally reflected onto York's body, resonantly suggesting that

York's body *is* the army. The reflection also suggestively underlines York's paternal relationship with his men, in the sense that both York and the soldiers are aligned at the point of corporeality. By contrast, Thursday's antagonistic and martinettish attitude alienated him from his men, and his conformist approach to uniform suggestively differentiated his body from his men. Of itself, this image suggests a 'complete' sense of military authority, but the overall effect of the film's coda works against this, given that Wayne's character is himself ultimately rendered as 'incomplete'.

When York goes on to introduce the journalists to his godson, the son of O'Rourke and Philadelphia (whose marriage, presumably, has been facilitated by the death of Thursday, who objected to the relationship from the start on the basis of the somewhat 'un-American' notion of social class), his paternal identity is further underlined by being accorded the status of godfather. If Thursday's real fatherhood was somewhat negated by his lack of real affection for his daughter, here York's holding of his 'son' is truly affectionate, and his acceptance of O'Rourke and Philadelphia's marriage would seem to constitute him, arguably, as a more affirmative father-figure than Thursday. The authoritative but tyrannical 'father' of *Red River* is replaced by a more benevolent, but more incoherent characterisation. While the reflected images of the troopers on York's body suggests a sense of paternal authority, when one considers that the men reflected are actually Thursday's command, York's *individually-specific* authority, and persona, are rendered problematic. A further, almost absurd sense of incoherence is suggested in the name of the child, Michael Thursday York O'Rourke, which validates both names, and, more obviously, in the final image of the film, York leading his men into the desert wearing the same regulation headgear as Thursday. As Pye argues, one can understand York as a character who is fundamentally repressed, his falsehoods conveyed as a necessity, conforming to the glorification process of military tradition (1996*b*: 118). In 'becoming' Thursday, Wayne's character effectively embodies the central incoherence of the film, which in registering praise for Thursday at this point contradicts the deep-rooted criticism previously held for the character. If, as Robin Wood argues, the overall volte-face tone of the scene does not convey a sense of irony ([1971] 2001: 28), then the centrality of Wayne's role in it surely does, given the forced nature of his performance; even if one accepts Ford's view that submission to military propaganda is 'good for the country' (quoted in Bogdanovich 1978: 86), Wayne's character is problematised by his assumption of an incoherent identity. York forces an ambivalent identity upon himself, his former sense of individuality subordinated to the wider interests of the military machine. This process, defined as it is by myth-making, can be read as marking the encroachment of modernity into the West (Pye 1996*b*: 118); as such, the final image, which marks York leading his men as

Thursday did, suggests that York is doomed by the circumstances of history, a fate which notably befalls Tom Doniphon in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. One is implicitly led to wonder how far York will take on Thursday's identity, and whether, in becoming more conformist, York will suffer the same fate as Thursday, thereby becoming a dead 'father'. As McBride and Wilmington point out, Ford uses the same camera set-ups in depicting York's march out of the fort as he did with Thursday's fatal march out of the fort, with a reprisal of 'The Girl I Left Behind' on the soundtrack (1974: 108). Although, in York's case, no girl is left behind, only the remnants of a previously more coherent and undiluted persona.

***Hondo* (John Farrow, 1953)**

Like *Fort Apache*, *Hondo* effects a problematisation of the Wayne character through its portrayal of incoherence, rather than acute belligerence. The film traces its eponymous character's identity via the usual generic mechanisms, but does so in such a way as to leave Wayne's character's identity - at the centre of which rests a surrogate paternalism - indefinable. Very broadly speaking, Hondo Lane begins the film as an outsider, an identity contextualised by his part-Indian background. As the narrative progresses, he assumes a paternal identity, which is contextualised by his adoption of a more coherently White identity. Yet such a synopsis fails to account for the film in full, for Hondo's character development as a White 'father' occurs within a context which positions him in terms of a suggestively Native American identity, as I shall explain in more considered detail in due course. Within this definitive narrative schema, an archetypal Western theme is foregrounded in making the Wayne character become gradually attached to the White family, alluding to the alienated outsider's integration into the social sphere. In *Hondo*, as in many Westerns, this integration is not represented unproblematically, for Hondo's attachment to the White family does not wholly negate his original Native American identity.[2]

Hondo begins with Wayne's character emerging from the wilderness towards a homestead, watched by its occupants, a woman and a young boy. His approach evidences a momentary disturbance of the heroic identity; his walk is accompanied by a pounding piano on the soundtrack, its rhythm accentuating the heaviness of Wayne's walk, suggesting the threatening quality of his physicality. He is watched with concern by the homesteaders, and his facial expression carries a suggestion of neurosis. In spite of the overdetermined logic of Wayne's star presence, narrative logic thus positions his

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[2] As in *Rio Grande*, the film's representation of a father in a familial structure, with both father and family problematised, is arguably reminiscent of the 1950s melodrama.

character as posing a sexual threat, his narrative introduction effecting a sense of disruption. (Considered in terms of his duly-realised Native American identity, his being introduced in this way speaks volumes for the way in which the Western characterises the threat posed by Indians.) Introduced as a nomadic Westerner, Hondo is gradually integrated into the domestic settlement he has come upon - fixing a variety of ranch accoutrement, being invited to sleep inside when he begins to bed-down for the night outside - and ultimately finds himself becoming involved with his female host, Mrs Lowe (Geraldine Page), whose husband is away. Hondo goes on to assume the role of a father-figure to the woman's son. Such a character development would suggest an ameliorated identity structured by the logic of the ideologically 'safer' Western which sought to finally and *coherently* position the hero in a social milieu (as in the Westerns ending with the hero 'settling down' into a familial life). Yet his integration into the social world is characterised by considerable ambiguity. As befitting a hero attached to the wilderness, Hondo initially elects to sleep outside with his dog. Mrs Lowe invites him inside, and an exchange takes place which helps to further define the nature of his characterisation. Hondo expresses surprise at being referred to as both 'civilised' and a 'gentleman', and he is again positioned in sexually-threatening terms. On seeing Mrs Lowe standing beside her alcove-set bed, he walks towards her, and she develops a look of concern, shutting the alcove curtain and gesturing towards a mattress set on the floor. The absence of Mrs Lowe's husband clearly puts her in a vulnerable position, which permeates Hondo's sexual presence with a threatening quality which might have otherwise seemed frivolous in another context.

Hondo's assumption of a more 'domesticated' identity is the direct result of such narrative procedures serving to integrate the character into the social world, although this character development is crucially contextualised by the revelation of Hondo's Indian past, which occurs before his romance with Mrs Lowe and his assumption of a paternal role. The 'civilising' imperative of the Western hero's domestication is thus fundamentally problematised by the revelation of Hondo's association with 'the savage', with the attendant implications of a debased sexuality. The revelation of Hondo's past life occurs in two separate moments, bracketing the night scene discussed above. In the first scene, Hondo describes himself as 'part-Indian' and alludes to his strong, 'Indian' sense of smell, and in the second scene he reveals that he had an Indian wife, and lived with the Apache for five years. Hondo's allusion to his strong sense of smell ('Indians can smell White people...I'm part-Indian, and I can smell you', he tells Mrs Lowe) is suggestively sexual, but the manner in which Hondo makes it compounds its sexual basis; he stands right beside her, staring at her as he describes the odours he detects.

As such, the debased nature of Indian sexuality is suggested, and aligned with the Wayne character. When Hondo refers to his old life in more detail, his recollection of his former life is dreamy and evocative, with references to his relationship couched in evasive but suggestive language ('...waking up, just you and her...it smells smoky and kinda' private, just you and her'). Significantly, in accordance with the usual fate of Indian wives of White heroes, the wife is dead, and if inter-racial sex has taken place, at least there are no offspring serving as permanent proof of the miscegenous act. When he is asked whether he loved his wife, Hondo replies, 'I don't know. I needed her', with an enigmatic expression on his face. However much the statement can be read as a confirmation of an evasiveness on the part of the film, it can also be read as a typical assertion of Western masculinity, in characterising love as in a sense dangerous, but something ultimately sought by the hero as a retreat from his loneliness. The object of desire in this case is more dangerous, but if the death of the wife accords to generic expectation, Hondo's absorption of the suggestive sense of smell does not, acting as a dilution of the 'natural' separation of White and Native American identities.

Hondo's part-Indian identity is further and more subtly suggested by his totemic relationship with his dog. He remonstrates with Mrs Lowe as she attempts to feed the dog, explaining that he does not feed the dog, since 'Sam's independent. He doesn't need anybody. I want him to stay that way. It's a good way.' The point of correlation is furthered when Mrs Lowe's child tries to stroke the animal, which growls at the boy. 'He doesn't take to petting', Hondo explains to the child, a behavioural trait which echoes the Western hero's problematic relationship with the world of romance. Sam is an undomesticated dog, forming another correlation with Hondo, whose discomfort in the domesticated milieu is registered by his initial gesture of sleeping outside, and his lack of familiarity with the interior setting when invited inside. Perhaps the most significant underlining of the totemic relationship occurs when Hondo's reference to his smelling ability is immediately preceded by a reference to his dog's smelling ability, the revelation of his ethnically-mixed identity being further enhanced by a sense of Otherness. Hondo's figurative kinship with animals is further suggested when he chooses one of Mrs Lowe's horses to break-in prior to purchasing it, which Mrs Lowe points out to be 'the most savage one.' In addition, Hondo's fringed buckskin apparel, although constituting a staple costume of the genre (as worn by Alan Ladd in *Shane*), can be understood as a visual signifier of Hondo's part-Indian identity, given the Native American roots of the apparel. Although the costume in itself does not signify 'Indianness', its appropriation by Hondo is surely significant, given the manner in which his character has been defined.

Hondo gradually develops the Wayne character into a father-figure, although like the manner in which his romantic persona is contextualised by his Indian past, the paternal character development is contextualised and indeed obliquely determined by his social ethnic identity. During his revelatory discussion with Mrs Lowe concerning his Indian past, Hondo tells her that she reminds him of his late Indian wife, which undoubtedly serves to cement his attraction towards her, but which also positions him as a paternal suitor in terms of 'Indianness'. Hondo's ultimate adoption of a paternal identity becomes fully apparent after Mrs Lowe's husband is killed, paving the way for Hondo to fill the role vacated by Mr Lowe. Yet, crucially, it is Hondo who kills Mr Lowe, and the killing itself seems to be determined by his part-Indian identity. Shortly after Hondo leaves the homestead, the local Indian tribe arrive at the scene, as if on a raid. After warning Mrs Lowe to vacate the homestead soon, the tribal Chief, Vittorio (Michael Pate), calls the child 'boy warrior', and addresses Mrs Lowe as 'mother warrior', before exclaiming that 'It is no good for small warrior to be without father to teach him how to be a man.' Vittorio suggests that Mrs Lowe take up one of his own men, but she insists that she already has a husband, to which Vittorio asserts that the husband is dead. When Hondo kills Mrs Lowe's husband in a fight (albeit in self defence), he facilitates Vittorio's assertion, effecting a violent disruption of the *wholly* identifiably White family, their identity already problematised by Vittorio's assigning of their 'Indian' names. Significantly, in an earlier exchange concerning the husband's absence, Hondo suggests that the husband may have been killed by the Apaches; in figurative terms, Hondo's killing of Mr Lowe expresses his filling of the 'savage' role that has been determined for him. In paving the way for his becoming a surrogate father to Mrs Lowe's child, Hondo fills the role of the 'father warrior' in such a way as to be symptomatic of his part-Indian identity. (Interestingly, Hondo's antagonism towards Mr Lowe begins when the latter kicks Hondo's totemically-inscribed dog.)

While *Hondo* on the one hand defines Hondo in terms of a Native American identity, it also reveals that he used to be a soldier for the US army, thus not allowing for an unproblematic identification with either a White or an Indian identity. However, when Hondo becomes the surrogate father in the Lowe family, the film seeks to emphasise his 'Whiteness'. It does this by undertaking a subtle negation of his Native American signifiers, as evidenced in his costume change, the fringed buckskin being replaced by the more traditional, more coherently 'White' combination of a plain shirt and waistcoat. (Significantly, Hondo's dog is killed by an Indian prior to his becoming a father-figure in full.) Despite the film's initial portrayal of the Indians as the appraisers of paternalism, who call on the boy's requiring of a 'good Apache father', when Hondo becomes a 'father', he is necessarily more 'obviously' White. As such, it is significant

that his past life as an 'Indian' was confined to being a husband and not a father; the 'problem' of a fuller suggestion of miscegenation aside (not to mention the problems posed by a 'half-breed', which would go on to haunt Wayne in *The Searchers*), Hondo's integration into the Lowe family suggests the apparent 'naturalness' of White fatherhood compared to Apache fatherhood. While Hondo can be an 'Indian' to a certain extent, his previous existence only allows him to go so far, acting as a barrier to the adoption of a fully domesticated identity. In its negotiation of Hondo's paternal identity, *Hondo* adopts a 'protective' characterisation which seeks to ameliorate the more problematic aspects of its hero. While 'Indianness' determines his filling the role of the father, as the father Hondo enacts 'Whiteness' in a far more coherent manner than before, becoming fully integrated into the familial sphere, and attached in particular to Mrs Lowe's son ('Other night after you went to sleep he crawled up to my bunk, put his arms around me. Made me feel kinda funny, like he was dependent on me'). Yet for all the coherence of Hondo's White identity at this point of the narrative, the film cannot finally avoid the ambiguities inherent in the Wayne character.

Hondo ends by underlining the essentially incoherent and oscillating identity of its eponymous hero. The Indians launch a raiding party on a convoy of escorted wagons containing settlers leaving the territory as tensions escalate; among them are Hondo, Mrs Lowe, and her child. The Indians lose the battle, retreating after Vittorio is killed by Hondo. A young Lieutenant describes how the Apache will be vanquished when General Crook's campaign begins in due course, to which Hondo responds, in the film's last line, 'End of a way of life. Too bad. It was a good way.' Hondo's remarks hold resonance for himself at this point, given his self-proclaimed kinship with the Apache. As the convoy rides off, Hondo shouts the standard cavalry 'whoop' as earlier established in the Ford films, absorbing himself into the mould of the US army, his earlier institutional home. Interestingly, however, Hondo is once again associated with his Indian signifiers during the film's climax, returning to his fringed costume, and draping a suggestively Indian-effecting blanket over his horse. It can therefore be argued that *Hondo* neither *fully* establishes his 'Indian' or 'White' identity; although the Wayne character is obviously genetically White, his social identity remains an interesting point of ambiguity throughout the film. Even in his final words of commitment to Mrs Lowe, he affirms his desire to be with her 'forever' in the Apache vernacular. While the killing of Hondo's dog and his assumption of a paternal role involve a negation of the 'Indian' part of him, his association with the generically-inscribed Other is reiterated at the end of the film. Although Hondo's final remarks suggest the end of 'a good way of life', he leaves the film still wearing buckskin, and on a horse adorned with an Indian-styled blanket. He remains in commitment with a White

family, but one is reminded of his earlier idealisation of commitment spoken in Apache. The Wayne hero leaves the narrative of *Hondo* as nothing but an enigma, a character whose 'real' identity remains something of a mystery. As far as his general characterisation is concerned, he is benevolent, ensuring his accommodation into the familial sphere despite his being 'tainted' with a Native American past. However much his paternal status is predicated on hybridity, it remains a model of paternalism that can be accommodated. Yet his hybridity ensures that Wayne's character remains fundamentally incoherent. Wayne's next Western would come to echo *Hondo* in positioning his character between the two polarities of the White family and Native Americans, although such is the aberrant representation of the Wayne character that he comes to be excluded from both worlds.

***The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)**

One of the principal constituents of the father-figure as a type is the embodiment of authority, a trait which sits comfortably with paternalism within the context of the ideological conceptualisation of gender in the culture at large, given the position of the father as the nominal 'head' of the family. As evidenced in the previous chapter, *Rio Bravo* formed a clear example of a role which characterised Wayne as an authority figure through his surrogate paternalism, an identity gained by his being positioned as the 'head' of the all-male 'family' in the narrative. In *The Searchers*, made just three years before *Rio Bravo*, Wayne's character is given a surrogate paternal role; as a surrogate uncle, his 'nephew' accompanies him in the film's narrative quest, which is to enact the liberation of his captive niece and to return her to the familial milieu, thereby fulfilling the expected role of the father as the protector of the family, the guarantor of familial authority. In serving this role, however, the paternal identity is problematised via the core aspect of Wayne's characteristic authority, which in this film, as in *Red River*, is rendered acutely problematic.

As far as Ford's work with Wayne is concerned, *The Searchers* forms a definitive break from the essentially benevolent (and relatively coherent) characterisations of the past, and looks forward to the more troubled characterisation of their final Western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Wayne's character, Ethan Edwards, has a very secretive, but suggestively criminal past, he harbours an illicit desire for his brother's wife, and he is excessively racist. The latter aspect of his personality would perhaps not be so problematic in the 1930s or the 1940s, but by the mid-1950s Hollywood had begun to treat Native Americans with more tentative respect, notably in such films as *Broken Arrow*, *Devil's Doorway*, *Apache*, *Broken Lance*, and *White Feather*. Although

some of Ethan's actions are heroic, Wayne does not play a hero as such in *The Searchers*. From the beginning of the film, his presence is viewed as a disruptive intrusion into the domestic milieu of the settled family, who are effectively unsettled by Ethan's arrival out of the wilderness.[3] The film's opening shot, taken from the dark interior of a house, shows a door opening to expose the wilderness beyond the porch, which expresses thematically the division between these two worlds of the wilderness and civilisation, thereby alluding to a principal thematic opposition of the Western. Ethan, on horseback, appears in the distant landscape, on approach to the homestead. Inside the homestead, Ethan is initially warm towards the family, holding up the young daughter in a fatherly gesture, and giving his sabre to the young son. Shortly thereafter, however, the tone of his characterisation changes, effecting an immediate problematisation of the established paternal identity. At the dinner table he upsets the harmony of the family by insulting the adopted, part-Indian son whom he is uncle to, Martin (Jeffrey Hunter), describing him as a 'half-breed', with the score changing key in response, underlining the negative reactions of the other diners. After the meal, Ethan evades his brother's questions about his past, specifically his activities during the three years between the ending of the Civil War and his coming 'home'. The brother comments on his noticing that Ethan's collection of coins are freshly-minted, to which Ethan defensively replies 'So?', over a distinctly ambiguous tone in the score. Ethan's recent past is a mystery, but the implication is that he has undertaken some illegal activity. (As Buscombe notes, the film problematises Ethan in this way, while the novel it is based on did not, suggesting Ford's intention to make the Wayne character darker; 2000: 45.) Underlining Ethan's incompatibility with domesticity, he is literally shut out of the familial milieu, retreating to the dark porch in the night outside, as his brother shuts the bedroom door in the background, shutting out more light. (Figuratively, one can relate this action to the final shot of the film, both sequences evidencing Ethan being shut out of the family milieu, although the final shot, as in the opening shot, reverses the polarities of light and dark, aligning the former with the open wilderness and the latter with the homestead interior.) Ethan's discomfiture (and discomfiting presence) in the home is fully apparent, and anticipated by the lyrics of the opening title song ('What makes a man to leave bed and board, And turn his back on home?').

Although his principal action in the film (the rescue of Debbie/Natalie Wood) suggests the hero in league with civilisation, in all other respects Ethan's actions counter such expectations. The home, as the basis of civilisation, is something Ethan can be no part of.

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[3] The subsequent depiction of a superficially content family beset by troubling undercurrents, partly in the shape of a problematic father-figure, links the film to the melodramatic tradition popularised in genre films of the 1950s. The significance of this relationship necessitates wider consideration - notably in terms of its ideological ramifications - which I intend to reserve for the conclusion to this thesis, in examining the sociocultural background informing the characterisations of both Wayne and Eastwood.

Part of the reason for Ethan's discomfiture in the home is the suggestion of his illicit desire for his sister-in-law, Martha (Dorothy Jordan). Ford alludes to this with necessary subtlety, using Ethan's coat as a prominent symbol. The morning following Ethan's arrival sees Sam Clayton (Ward Bond), a family friend, visiting the homestead. He is witness to a private moment between Martha and Ethan, in which Martha delicately strokes Ethan's coat, before handing it to him, kissing him in a gentle embrace, and looking up at him reverently. Recognising the privacy of the moment, Sam stares straight ahead, pretending that he notices nothing. As Buscombe puts it, Ethan's 'transgressive desire for his brother's wife means there is no place in the home, no family he can be integrated into' (2000: 21); Ethan simply has to leave. Symptomatically, when he returns to the homestead, he finds the house a burning ruin, its occupants murdered. The only body he seems to discover, or the only body he seems interested in discovering, is that of Martha, located in the storehouse. As in the film's opening shot, the camera is positioned in the interior, looking out into the light beyond; only now the security of the interior domestic world of the family has been shattered, and with it the remotest possibility of Ethan's integration into that world.

Throughout *The Searchers*, Ethan's total incompatibility with civilised values is established. His offensive dining-table comments evidence bad manners, and he twice interrupts the group-singing of 'Gather at the River' at the social functions of the burial of Martha and family, and the wedding of Martin's estranged girlfriend to her new lover. His disruptive presence on these occasions cruelly attests to his disdain for the formal rituals of civilisation. On the trail for Debbie, Ethan's actions are represented as excessive, underlining his extreme racism. He shoots out the eyes of an Indian corpse so that, according to Comanche beliefs, the Indian's spirit will have 'to wander forever between the winds'. Later he deliberately shoots at a herd of buffalo in an attempt to deprive the tribes of good stocks of food, an action framed by Martin's voice-over and contextualised by its description in a letter Martin has sent to his girlfriend. As Pye suggests, Martin's voice-over effects a distancing of our response to the scene, 'detach(ing) us from Ethan so that we are required to perceive the neurotic and irrational nature of his attitudes and actions' (1996*c*: 229). When Ethan and Martin come across the adult Debbie for the first time, Ethan actually tries to kill her, refusing to admit the possibility of her reintegration into White society. Martin stands in front of Debbie to protect her, his youthful opposition to Ethan, like Matt's filial opposition to Dunson in *Red River*, being fully justified by the narrative at this point. Debbie protests that she wants to remain part of the tribe, although her White lineage is emphasised, interestingly, by her clear wearing of lipstick. The apparently 'civilised' motives of Ethan are thus exposed as a sham; he is not interested in 'liberating' the still obviously

White-in-appearance Debbie. That Ethan is hit in the shoulder by a Comanche arrow as he advances to shoot Debbie *and* Martin suggests both narrative necessity (the film would end too abruptly) and, correlatively, ideological necessity (such an ending would be too downbeat, especially for Ford, and it would render the Wayne character as too problematic, even for this film). Symptomatically, one can read the arrow hit as punishment for Ethan's attempted action, an action too far, in this case. If it assumes the quality of a somewhat forced narrative moment, it attests to the problem the film has in negotiating the role and actions of such a problematic character as Ethan. Significantly, this is not the only example of forced narrative material in the film; as will be seen, the climax of *The Searchers* also underlines the depth of the problem posed by the film's protagonist.

Ethan's blind hatred of Indians is given an additional dimension by the film's suggestion that Ethan is like the Indian himself, and specifically a double to the Comanche Chief holding Debbie, Scar (Henry Brandon). Foremostly, his transgressive characteristics mark him to some extent as Other, and it is also worth noting that part of his transgression emanates from his irreligiousness, as evidenced in his contemptuous interruption of the funeral service ('Put an amen to it!') and his justification of the shooting of the Indian corpse's eyes to Sam, who is a preacher ('What good did that do you?' 'By what you preach, none, but that Comanche believes...'). This gesture, and other moments of the film in which Ethan professes his knowledge of Indian ways, suggests Ethan's compatibility with the enemy he seeks, and when he finally meets Scar, the scene emphasises doubleness by Ford's shooting of Wayne and Brandon in the same way, with almost identically-framed close-ups, and in the dialogue. Ethan tells Scar, 'You speak pretty good American for a Comanche. Someone teach you?', to which Scar duly replies, 'You speak good Comanche. Someone teach you?' As Joan Dagle points out, this ironic exchange implies that both men gained linguistic knowledge from sexual relations with respective Others (2001: 124). Furthermore, the film problematises the 'naturalness' of ethnicity while simultaneously reinforcing the doubling effect of Ethan and Scar by having a White actor play Scar, when Ford typically cast Native Americans in such roles (McBride and Wilmington 1974: 152). Ethan's own Whiteness is explicitly (but logically) problematised by his scalping of Scar at the end of the film, as Arthur Eckstein has suggested (cited in Buscombe 2000: 53). Elsewhere, Ethan's association with the Indian is reinforced thematically, when his descriptions of Indian ways resonate as accurate characterisations of himself. Both Ethan's justification of his eye-shooting ('Aint got no eyes he can't enter the spirit land, has to wander forever between the winds') and his translation of Nawyecka, Scar's tribe ('Kinda means "round-about"') suggest the wandering nature of the Indian, when

wandering is also the basis for Ethan's whole existence (Buscombe 2000: 22-23). More disturbingly, if Scar is to be read as Ethan's transgressive double, his attack on the homestead, and his (implied) raping of Martha, suggests that 'Scar has acted out in brutal fashion the illicit sexual desire which Ethan harboured in his heart' (ibid: 21). To conceive of such a correlation pertaining to a Western 'hero' would initially seem overly speculative, yet *The Searchers* problematises its 'hero' from the start. Ethan's 'Indianness' underlines the complexity and ambiguity of his character, suggesting that his animus is essentially directed against a part of himself, which in totality embodies the sense of 'uncivilised' aberrance typically synonymous with the Indian. If the viciousness of Ethan's anger seems irrational and incoherent, it is because it stems from an irrational and incoherent character, who is in conflict with himself. As Andrew Sarris notes, 'the dramatic struggle of *The Searchers* is not waged between a protagonist and an antagonist, or indeed between two antagonists as protagonists, but rather within the protagonist himself' ([1971] 1981: 80-81).

One of the additionally problematic aspects of Wayne's character in the film is the suggested fragility of his sanity. Although the film otherwise constructs the emotional side of Ethan's masculinity as balanced in contrast with the other characters - Martin is almost hysterical on arrival at the burnt-out homestead, and family suitor Brad (Harry Carey Jnr.) gets killed on account of his hysteria when he single-handedly goes to attack the tribe in vengeance - as the narrative progresses Ethan's mental instability is underlined. On discovering the body of Debbie's sister, Ethan returns to Martin and Brad, and begins to obsessively stab the sand with his knife, as if miming an act of rape (Buscombe 2000: 29). Later, in conversation with his girlfriend, Martin attests to his worry about what Ethan will do when he finds Debbie, describing Ethan's 'crazy eyes...I've seen him take his knife and... .' Martin's breaking off in mid-sentence expresses the unspeakable nature of Ethan's instability, and reinforces the ambiguity of the action, the potential sexual dimension of which is unspeakable to the extreme. Symptomatically, Martin introduces Ethan's buffalo-shooting through his voice-over with the words 'Something happened that I aint got straight in my own mind yet', a reaction underlined when Martin later shouts 'It doesn't make any sense!' Ethan's appearance in this scene is marked by a distinctly 'crazy' glint in his eye, as he continues to shoot the buffalo with due excess. Martin's words suggest our own reaction to the scene; that by implication it only 'makes sense' in Ethan's mind further suggests that his mind is not entirely 'straight'. Shortly after this scene, Ethan and Martin arrive at an army camp, and both view an assortment of captive White women rescued by the army during an Indian raid. The women are clearly mad, yet the scene contains a remarkable shot which to some extent blurs the distinguishing line between their own mental states

and Ethan's. Ethan, as he is just about to leave the room, turns around to view a disturbed woman being comforted by a doll; the camera dollies into a close-up of Wayne with his eyes cast in the dark shadow of his hat, his mouth slightly open, his face a mask of disturbance and instability. Interestingly, Wayne is unshaven in this scene, in contrast with Hunter, which notably serves to accentuate the sense of mental fragility effected in Ethan's expression. Such moments corroborate Martin's professed fear of Ethan's actions when he finds Debbie, for it is suggested that his racist mind borders on insanity.

The ending of *The Searchers* is regularly discussed in terms of its incoherence. Prior to a whole-scale attack on Scar's village, Martin secretly enters the village, locates Debbie (who now decides that she wants to return to the White community), and kills Scar himself, thereby displacing the heroic mantle away from Ethan. Debbie gets lost in the midst of the cavalry attack, but is soon sighted by Ethan, and pursued by him into a cave. There, he holds Debbie aloft, but instead of assuming the role of a homicidal 'father', he instead cradles her, in the manner of a protective father, movingly intoning the words, 'Let's go home, Debbie.' Critical discussion of *The Searchers* has tried to account for Ethan's volte-face by offering such possibilities as Ethan's hatred being purged through Scar's scalping (Wills 1998: 259), or that Ethan simply develops 'a new moral awareness of self and humanity' (Gallagher 1986: 336). The gesture of holding Debbie aloft is cited by the above critics as motivating Ethan's rediscovery of humanity, but I would argue that the logic of expectation with regard to what he will do is greater, or more coherently realised, than the logic of this apparent motivation, since the narrative up to this point has inexorably underlined Ethan's desire to kill Debbie. Immediately prior to his rendezvous with Debbie, Ethan - in a confirmation of his aberrance - scalps Scar, emerges from the tent with a close-up establishing a determined look on his face, and pursues Debbie, with the coded language of the film suggesting the worst. On his sighting of Debbie, who responds with a look of terror, the score heralds a shrill burst of brass, and continues to underline the gravity of the pursuit with tempestuous scoring. In vain, Martin tries to hold Ethan back, anticipating, as surely as the spectator does, what Ethan plans to do with the woman 'contaminated' by social and sexual interation with the Comanche. When Ethan holds Debbie aloft, she raises her arms in defence, and Ethan pauses - for no more than a second - before he lifts her down to cradle her, as if she was a pre-sexualised (and therefore 'innocent') child. While motivation is provided for Ethan's change-of-heart, its sudden nature seems too abrupt, too forced, to be coherently realised. The signifiers meant to confirm a sense of resolution - the holding aloft of Debbie which echoes his paternalistic embrace of her near the film's beginning, and the notion of returning

'home' - are fundamentally incoherent. The paternal embrace, conventionally a gesture of familial warmth, is transformed into an ambiguous gesture encompassing the possibility of murder. The 'home' Ethan speaks of is an alien concept to him, something he does not believe in, and something he is ultimately excluded from, as demonstrated in the film's final moments, which problematise any sense of a 'happy ending' suggestively anticipated by the otherwise incoherent character developments. Although Debbie is indeed returned to 'civilisation', Ethan is neither thanked for his actions nor even acknowledged; as everyone else enters the homestead, Ethan turns his back on them and wanders back into the wilderness, as the door of the homestead is shut, registering the finality of Ethan's isolation from the familial milieu. As Robin Wood puts it, Ethan's exit at the end of the film evidences his 'leaving behind him the total wreckage of ideological (not to mention narrative) coherence' (1996: 191).

Centrally, the incoherence of *The Searchers* resides in the film's attitude to Ethan. His isolation from the social and his hatred of the Indian are reflected in the narrative by way of contradicting impulses. The film both affirms the happy domesticity of the social world and celebrates the raw individualism of Ethan. It 'laughs' at the ill-treatment of the Indian Martin 'marries', and then adopts a sympathetic tone when representing her death. As Peter Lehman argues, the ending of the film is 'Not a "happy ending" that mindlessly contradicts the logic of the work, it is the culmination of a work that questions logical certainty, a work whose basic structural pattern is conflict' (1977*a*: 100). Yet the power of the final scene to a large extent resides in its incoherence, in which Ethan assumes a more classically 'heroic' role in returning Debbie to the family, thereby also fulfilling a surrogate paternal role, but is then seemingly ignored by all around him. The elements of a 'happy ending' are there, but they are extremely strained. That Ethan leaves the homestead is not in itself particularly problematic, since the hero's final leave-taking of 'civilisation' is a common trope of the Western. Where *The Searchers* departs from the traditional inflection of such representations is in the fact of the other characters' ignoring of Ethan, which denies the nostalgia of the hero being thanked for his community-saving actions. While the ending of the film certainly has nostalgic evocations, the fact that Ethan cannot be integrated into the domestic milieu, and the manner in which he is treated by those around him, suggests the film's continued discomfort with the character, who has been aberrantly defined throughout, for all his positioning as the film's central character. Tellingly, Ford's formal linking of Ethan's arrival at the start of the film and his exit at the end is contrasted by a track-in at the beginning and a track-back at the end, as if the film is initially drawn towards Ethan as a prospective hero, yet by the end needs to maintain a sense of distance. Ethan's gesture of crossing his left arm across his body to

grip his right arm - famously, Ford's and Wayne's homage to Harry Carey, who used the same gesture in his silent films directed by Ford - itself resonates as a further 'barrier' between Ethan and the family, and suggests both some physical pain on the part of Ethan (perhaps a reference to his arrow wound), and a sense of his steadying himself for the return to the wilderness, away from the social world, to isolation. *The Searchers* simply cannot fully accept its 'hero'.

<u>*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*</u> <u>(John Ford, 1962)</u>

John Ford's last Western with Wayne, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, is arguably the director's bleakest film, its narrative being predicated on the passing of the Old West and its replacement by 'civilised' modernity, a settled but insipid and sterile milieu. Characterising respectively the Old West and the New West are Tom Doniphon (Wayne) and Ransom Stoddart (James Stewart), both men being the nominal heroes of the film, but very different types of hero, and very different types of men. The characterisations are wholly in keeping with the star presences, with Wayne's character being the Western man-of-action, rugged and determined, and Stewart's character being the Eastern man-of-words, overly idealistic and lacking in authority. The paralleling of the emasculated Easterner and the masculinity-epitomising Westerner has a long tradition in the Western, and traditionally narratives describe the Easterner's 'Westernisation', by his association with the Western hero (as in *The Big Country*). In this process, the Western hero's supremacy is typically affirmed through his authority, his influence and the inscribed permanence of his values, inasmuch as the Easterner's adoption of his values attests to the influence of the values of the wilderness over those of civilisation, which holds great resonance for the myth of the West, despite the eventual historical reality. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* effects an intense problematisation of this typical process at its core, although it retains the traditional elements of basic characterisation. As representative of the Old West, Wayne's character is mythical; Tom iconically defines the Old West in the film. Like his characters in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *The Alamo*, and in his last film, *The Shootist*, Wayne macrocosmically represents 'the West' in such a way as to assume a symbolic paternal status as a 'father' of the Old West, its authoritative living representative. Yet, in contrast to *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *The Alamo*, and in anticipation of *The Shootist*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* associates Wayne's mythicised character with dead-end mortality instead of regeneration, and loss instead of fulfilment.

The film begins in the 'modern' setting of 1910, with Ransom, now a US Senator, arriving in the town of Shinbone with his wife, on a train whose smoke-belching trail across the country encompasses the first shot of the film, which serves to problematise the idea of modernity-as-progress, a theme that is developed throughout the narrative. The Wayne character, unlike the other central characters of the film, has no physical relation to the modern West; indeed, Ransom is returning to Shinbone to attend Tom's funeral. That Tom is dead is foregrounded at the start of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, which distinguishes the film from the other Wayne films in which his character dies (excluding *The Alamo*, in which factual knowledge determines anticipation of Davy Crockett's death). Ransom arrives in Shinbone as something of a celebrity, eagerly welcomed by newspaper men who want him to account for his return. When he gives Tom's name, the reporters draw a blank; Tom is part of a mythical Old West they cannot relate to. In the funeral parlour, Ransom discovers Tom in a pauper's coffin, his boots and gun removed. When Ransom demands that Tom is reunited with these accoutrements, it is pointed out to him that Tom had not carried a gun for many years, suggesting a rejection of the heroic identity, and, implicitly, the acceptance of impotence. The sparse attendance for the funeral, its understated interior setting, and the fact that the Stoddarts ultimately leave town before the service takes place, confirm the social marginality of the funeral event, which, as Pye notes, is atypical for a Ford film (1996*b*: 119). That Tom's funeral is defined as such is wholly appropriate, for social marginality is his predestined fate, and the core issue which defines the narrative.

The beginning of the film thus establishes the relative positions of Ransom and Tom in terms of survivability and success (Ransom) and death and anonymity (Tom), and it predetermines their respective roles in the narrative. The star presences of Wayne and Stewart in the film would suggest that, Wayne, of the two leads, would be the exemplary hero, given Wayne's established position as the John Ford Western hero, and Stewart's position as the new Ford hero (he had only previously featured in Ford's *Two Rode Together*). The essential durability of Wayne's brand of Western heroism was an important quality of his Westerns for Ford, where he would endure and rise above the burdens of criminality (*Stagecoach*), defeat (*Fort Apache*), the elements *(3 Godfathers*), age (*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*), and separation (*Rio Grande*). Only in Ford's later Westerns would the Wayne character come to be represented more in terms of loss, as in *The Searchers* and the forced exclusion of Ethan from the social milieu, and *The Horse Soldiers* and the exclusion of Marlowe/Wayne from the world of romance. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, the sense of loss associated with the Wayne character is acute - not only does the spectator know that his character will

end up dead, but he will end up poor, lonely (only five are assembled for the service, including the undertaker), and forgotten, a seemingly irrelevant relic of history.

Tom Doniphon's body lies horizontal at the start of the film, the bodily position aligned in the genre with death or defeat; Ransom, by contrast, stands vertically over Tom's body, marking, in cruel terms, a relative position of empowerment. These positions come to assume much significance as the narrative progresses, the effect being to underline the power relations between the two leading men of the film. After contemplating Tom's body for a quiet moment, Ransom gives the newspaper men the story they want. Beginning the flashback which extends for the vast majority of the film, Ransom becomes the victim of a stagecoach hold-up, in which he is beaten and whipped by Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin), the embodiment of unrestrained violence. Tom is next seen riding into Shinbone at night, with Ransom's limp body trailing behind him on a buckboard, the horizontal and vertical positions reversed. When Tom takes Ransom into the local restaurant's kitchen for shelter, the power relations are reinforced further still. Ransom lies down on a couch, recovering from his injuries, while Tom stands tall over him, asserting his physical dominance in a very obvious manner. As Peter Lehman has noted, Ransom's body is gradually inscribed with greater verticality as the film progresses, marking his authoritative trajectory from beaten Easterner to dishwasher, from schoolteacher to political representative to senator (1977*b*: 60-61). As the newly-arrived 'pilgrim', he is prostrate; as the dishwasher, he is tripped over by Liberty; as the schoolteacher he stands up alongside Tom; as the nominated representative in the bar he stands while Tom sits; and as senator he stands over Tom's prostrate body. Ransom's assumption of a more vertical presence thus occurs at the expense of Tom, whose most damaging and sustained assumption of horizontalness occurs in the political convention scene, where he views the proceedings at distance while lying down on the stairs, effectively 'displaced from centricity and levelled from power' (Lehman 1977*b*: 61). Following this scene, the film returns to the framing story, where Tom lies in his coffin. At the point of the convention, Tom is at his lowest ebb. His appearance - dusty, unshaved - complements his desolate facial expression. Tom's depressed state in this scene, which is immediately preceded by a scene in which he deliberately sets fire to his house, derives from his awareness of his disempowerment, and the fearful (and accurate) prediction that he may fall into obscurity. He is witnessing Ransom achieve political power on the platform of 'progress', with all the marginalising implications the term holds for the Westerner, a power base achieved on the basis of the name that has been built up for Ransom as the man who apparently felled Liberty in a fair fight. In actuality, Tom himself killed Liberty when secreted in a dark alley, so he has brought the

disempowering process on himself; in a further irony, he has lost his girlfriend, Hallie (Vera Miles), to Ransom, in large part because of Ransom's apparent 'masculinisation' in killing Liberty. The traditional narrative trajectory of the Easterner-comes-West film, in which the Easterner becomes Westernised, is problematised from the frame story perspective of an already Easternised West, in which the Westerner has succumbed to the forces which are antithetical to him, but which he has himself unintentionally engendered. Like all of the tragic heroes of the Western, from Jimmy Ringo in *The Gunfighter* to the eponymous *The Wild Bunch*, Tom Doniphon is a victim of history.

When, near the start of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Ransom asks Liberty, 'What kind of man are you?', he raises the issue at the forefront of the film, and, indeed, of all Westerns. Three men vie for power in the film - Ransom, Tom, and Liberty - men are on the face of things very different. Ransom is the Easterner who is additionally emasculated by being characterised as 'soft', Tom is the Westerner whose self-confessed 'tough' masculinity works on the right side of the law, and Liberty is the Westerner whose 'tough' masculinity is on the wrong side of the law, unbridled and out of control, yet as such ironically representative of freedom, as his name suggests (Pye 1996*b*: 119). As the film progresses, however, it is made clear that Tom and Liberty both represent the traditions of the West in broadly similar terms, and by the end of the film, Tom's behaviour aligns him more directly with Liberty. In so doing, the film attests to Douglas Pye's observation on one of the more problematic strands of the post-war Western: 'The hero's kinship with the villain, a fundamental but often suppressed implication of the symbolic structure of the Western, is made increasingly explicit' (1996*a*: 15). As a consequence of this, the moral boundaries which formerly characterised the genre's definitions of the good and the bad are problematised. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* begins this process when Ransom and Tom first meet. While Ransom recuperates in the kitchen after his beating by Liberty, his suggestion that he wants Liberty jailed is derided by Tom, whose code of individualistic justice leads him to say, 'Out here a man settles his own problems', to which Ransom says, 'Do you know what you're saying to me?...You're saying just what Liberty Valance said!' Both Liberty and Tom take pleasure in humiliating Ransom in broadly similar ways, Liberty shooting a gourd to splatter him with water, Tom shooting a can to splatter him with paint. They also humiliate him for his kitchen-help role along the same feminising lines; Liberty referring to 'the new waitress' and Tom sarcastically deriding him for 'helping the ladies'. More generally, Tom's presence in the film is occasionally marked in the same disruptive terms as Liberty's. When Ransom is teaching a literacy class, extolling the benefits of good, 'civilised' government, Tom rudely interrupts the proceedings, his sudden dust-covered appearance evoking the wilderness as he orders

his retainer, Pompey (Woody Strode), back to work, away from the 'civilised' trappings of education.

Most resonantly, when Tom realises that he has lost Hallie due to his illusory granting of the heroic crown to Ransom, he begins to break down in such a way as to behaviourally echo Liberty, whose out of control violence was his defining feature as a villain. As Tom gets drunk with anger, Pompey urges him to go home, and Tom responds, with considerable irony, 'Home sweet home. You're right Pompey. We got plenty to do at home.' He smashes a number of glasses, contemptuously throws his money around (actions which Liberty committed in the same bar moments before), and finally breaks several panes of glass on the saloon door as he leaves. Arriving at his house, Tom sets fire to the extension he was building for the planned moving-in of Hallie, collapsing onto the floor as he does. Although Tom is drunk, the overtones of the scene carry a strong suggestion of suicidal intent, as if Tom realises that he is finished (after throwing the lamp, he collapses into a chair and remains in it, in a conscious state). In suggesting at least the possibility of such an intent, the film expresses a sense in which Tom, as the 'good' representative of the West, effects the death of the West in conceptual terms, in a self-induced, self-sought manner. The act of setting fire to the house must also be read as an emblematic attack on 'civilisation', not just in the sense that the settlement is attacked in a thematically identical way to the attacks wrought on properties by the 'savage' Indian, but also because Tom sets fire to the extension he was building for Hallie, carrying connotations of domesticity and the desire to 'settle down'. This supreme act of unbridled and self-destructive anger is unparalleled in Wayne's career; for all the violent acts committed by his characters in numerous films, none approach the level of intensity in Tom's actions, or the sense of grim finality. Yet for all the shock engendered by this act, when considered in the wider narrative scheme of the film it forms less of a surprise, and more the result of a logical, albeit dark, character development.

With its hero's behaviour assuming something of the quality of the villain, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* also suggests the interdependence of their existence, which underpins the essential tragedy at the heart of this film. When Tom kills Liberty, the act itself hastens Tom's downfall, since both Tom and Liberty represent archetypes of the Old West. The villain forms the precedent for the existence of the hero; without the villain, there is no fully defined wilderness to tame, no 'civilisation' to be tenuously (and even regretfully) brought forward. Of course, the act of the hero killing the villain is common to most Westerns, without necessarily suggesting the downfall of the hero; the typical implication of many narratives is that the hero will go on to pursue villainy

in other towns. What differentiates *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* from these other films is its absolute emphasis on finality. Tom is dead from the outset, and the narrative setting of the Old West in the structured flashback is not just any Old West setting, it is *the* Old West, with the narrative enigma being how this Old West became the dreary, lifeless New West. The film bespeaks iconicity at every level, from its title, which defines the narrative in about as direct a manner as possible, to its narrative structure, which lays bare the tragic process of the oncoming of 'civilisation', to its casting of Wayne, the Western hero *par excellence*, as the protagonist whose actions bring about the tragedy of the film, which is his own. As Pye argues, 'The film refuses what remains generically possible, that Tom could shoot Liberty and continue to lead community into the beckoning future' (1996*b*: 121); in denying the potential narrative open to most Westerns, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* problematises this West, and this Western hero, which also happen to be *the* West, and *the* Western hero. That Tom's dependence on Liberty becomes literal defines the fatalistic role Tom occupies as a hero, who may be archetypal, but who is doomed to die, precisely because of his heroic 'duty'.

As with all Westerns, but rendered in a particularly self-conscious manner in Ford's films, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* sets up an opposition between the wilderness and civilisation, an opposition which forms the definitive structuring device of Western narratives. Within the scheme established in this film, Ransom - who believes in an institutional form of law and order, education, and political progress - embodies civilisation, while Tom - who believes in individually-delivered justice, who scorns education, and has a cynical disposition towards political progress - embodies the wilderness. The film begins by showing the defeat of the wilderness in stark terms - the formerly unspoilt landscape replaced by the railroad, with belching smoke drifting into the air. Ransom and Hallie meet up with the old ex-marshal of Shinbone, Link Appleyard (Andy Devine), who has a melancholic conversation with Hallie concerning the development of the town. As Hallie notes these developments, commenting that 'the place sure has changed', Link says, 'The railroad done that.' Their sad conversation is overlaid with the off-screen sound of the train, accentuating the sense that its apparent bringing of 'progress' to the community is doubtful. In contrast to this new world which Hallie and Link have trouble relating to, Link refers to the fact that 'the desert's still the same', associating the wilderness with a suggestively more 'positive' stability, a continuous presence.

Yet the desert is the only element of the wilderness left; its human representatives, respectively Tom and Liberty, have both been vanquished, the irony being that Tom

caused both the death of Liberty and the 'death', on the level of identity, of himself, inasmuch as he relegates himself to obscurity at the cost of Ransom's achievement of fame and political power. Tom's embodiment of the wilderness, one of the defining qualities of the Western hero, marks his downfall, and his fate is predetermined at the beginning of the film. Yet the dead man remains identifiably a hero in the flashback sequence; he is, after all, played by John Wayne. The film therefore lays bare in a particularly direct manner the destruction of the heroic ideal, beginning by establishing its death, and going on to illustrate the reasons for its death. Half-way through the film, Tom argues with Ransom in the schoolroom, and Ford shoots them in profile with an American flag on the wall between them. The implication is clear - Tom and Ransom embody contrasting types of American masculinity, both of which were historically important in the 'making' of modern America. The suggestion made here confirms the film's strategy - up to the death of Liberty - of positioning both characters as *potential* heroes, although Tom's eventual fall has of course already been established from the outset. After Tom's killing of Liberty, in classical terms a heroically-defining act, his heroic qualities are wholly diminished. At this point of the narrative, however, the spectator does not know that Tom killed Liberty, so a displacement of heroism is implied, the mantle of heroic authority being transferred to Ransom, 'the man who killed Liberty Valance'. Tom's subsequent breakdown is thus naturally motivated by this loss, the severity of which is furthered when Tom reveals to Ransom that he killed Liberty. This revelation, made in the context of Ransom's nomination as a state representative, marks Tom's acceptance of loss, in effect a self-engineered symbolic castration based on the realisation of the strength of the *historical* forces levelled against him.

The notion of 'history' represents a complex signifying force in the Western, whether used as a means of asserting 'reality' or invoking nostalgia for a defining period of America's past. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, both means of negotiation are problematised; most obviously, Tom's confession undermines the authenticity of the historical moment in which Liberty is shot. In addition, nostalgia, which is elsewhere in the film invoked quite conventionally, becomes problematised by the manner in which Tom, the focus of the film's nostalgia, has his heroic qualities destabilised. His angry drunk scene in the bar, and subsequent fire attack on the house, establish this, as does his last appearance in the film, at the scene of the political convention. Tom's unshaven appearance suggests an ambiguous sense of morality, given that Western narrative coding defines uncultivated growth as a sign of moral aberrance, inasmuch as it is usually associated with villains. Significantly, the only other time Wayne appeared unshaven in a Ford Western was in *3 Godfathers* and *The Searchers*, where his growth

was alternately associated with mental instability and post-injury recuperation. Following Tom's revelation, Ransom tells Tom that he saved his life. In a starkly cynical denial of the expected values of the 'hero', expressed with an undertone of vulnerability, Tom says, 'I wish I hadn't.' When, after this, he tells Ransom to accept the nomination, and perpetuate the myth, he says, 'You taught her to read and write. Now give her something to read and write about', a statement which expresses in the fullest terms the transference of myth-making 'honours' from Tom to Ransom. As Richard Maltby argues, although Tom is fully aware of 'the reasons for his condition of irrelevance, he can nevertheless do nothing to change his predicament' (1996: 49); his symbolic impotence is clearly visible. The final irony of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is that the printed 'legend' described by the editor at the end of the film is a myth which denies the legendary and mythical figure of the Western hero, although those qualities were indeed problematised by the preceding narrative. Tom, the embodiment of the West, is consigned to a forgotten past, remaining only as an anonymous, private memory for Ransom, the Easterner whose success is largely predicated on the self-denying myth originally facilitated by Tom himself.

As Ford's last Western collaboration with Wayne, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* paints a despondent picture of the West and the Western hero. Both concepts are viewed, retrospectively, from an age in which they have been either compromised or vanquished. As significantly the only Ford Western to feature a modernist, 'post-West' setting, the film questions both the authenticity of the Old West and the validity of the New West. The narrative 'victory' of the Old West - the killing of Liberty Valance - is predicated on a lie, and it is the acceptance of that lie which builds the basis for the creation of the New West, Ransom's election as state representative ensuring statehood, the development of education, and the coming of the railroad. The validity of the New West is further questioned by the problematic representation of the modern Shinbone, encompassing the train which belches smoke as it passes through the countryside, the maudlin perspectives of Hallie and Link, and the prying, myth-making journalists. As far as the Western hero is concerned, the final image of the living Tom is apposite, summarising his condition at the end of the flashback. At the convention, while Tom watches Ransom re-enter the hall to accept his nomination, the door closes on the lobby area where Tom is situated, in a shot which is thematically reminiscent of the ending of *The Searchers*, the effect in both films being to exclude the Wayne character from a particular milieu. In *The Searchers*, Ethan is excluded from the familial milieu, whereas in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Tom is excluded from history itself, after he witnesses the beginning of his own ultimate marginalisation.

While Ford built up the prototype of the Wayne hero in the earlier films they made, in this film he destroys it, establishing its moral fallibility and its inevitable demise.

The various 'fathers' characterised in the films discussed in this chapter are, to varying degrees, aberrant inasmuch as their identities are either incoherent (*Fort Apache* and *Hondo*), or transgressive (the alignment of Wayne's character with villainy in *Red River* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, and with the 'savage' Indian in *The Searchers*). In more general terms, the three latter films evidence a portrayal of the Wayne character that is fundamentally alienating, creating a definitive 'blockage' in the spectator's relationship to the character portrayed, thus forming a contrast with the vast majority of Wayne's films, which propose to invite an empathetic 'connection' on the part of the spectator to the Wayne character (prominently on account of Wayne's screen combination of an 'easygoing' disposition and an unshakeable but generally fair 'toughness'). The sense of alienation produced in the above films is precisely determined by a problematisation of such characteristics, whereby the disposition becomes objectionable and the 'toughness' becomes overtly volatile. It is additionally enforced by Wayne's performance style, which accentuates an undercurrent of mental fragility (notably in *The Searchers*), the emphasis on the hero's social incompatibility and his anachronistic qualities, and the breakdown of the definitive opposition between hero and villain (*Red River*, *The Searchers*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*).

In addition, romance becomes problematised in these films, at the point of its narrative absence (the near-immediate death of Dunson's woman in *Red River*, and its total absence as an issue in *Fort Apache*), its fulfilment (the consistent Native American signifiers imbuing the relationship in *Hondo*) and its forced rejection (in *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). While Wayne's films often position him against romance, rarely is there such a sense of this being forced, and it is even rarer that the Wayne character is rejected as such. As far as Ford's Westerns with Wayne are concerned, in the period up to *The Searchers*, romance is negotiated as an issue which is narratively resolved in terms of relative optimism. *Stagecoach* unites Ringo and Dallas as a couple, *3 Godfathers* ends with the intimation of a future relationship, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* consolidates Brittles' post-romance identity as fundamentally content, and *Rio Grande* ends by suggesting a conjoinment of the romantic and militaristic strands of York's persona. (Romance is not developed as an issue in *Fort Apache*.) The contrast between the thematic negotiation of romance in these films with the later Ford films could not be starker. In *The Searchers*, Ethan's quasi-incestuous desire for his sister-in-law is quashed by her being raped and murdered, *The Horse Soldiers* has Wayne's character, Marlowe, being rejected for another man, and in the

last Ford-Wayne Western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Tom's rejection is precipitated by himself, and as a result he tries to commit suicide. Ford's refiguration of the romantic possibilities open to his hero attests to a more tragic conceptualisation of the hero, which is evidenced not only by the delimitation of romance, but also by the overall emphasis on more pessimistic narrative conclusions which, in the cases of *The Searchers* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, leave the hero in a state of dislocation, his destiny either rendered as a dark enigma or a fatalistic tragedy.

As part of this apparent 'deconstruction' process, *The Searchers* and the subsequent films are the first Ford Westerns in which the Wayne character consistently becomes a subject of well-reasoned criticism on the part of other characters (he is criticised without good reason in *Fort Apache*, and is subject to an isolated moment of criticism in *3 Godfathers*), and in the process he becomes a subject of more intense narrative criticism, whereby his respectively belligerent, racist, and anachronistic 'qualities' are fully revealed. Although Hawks subjected the Wayne character to a substantial critique in *Red River* at the very beginning of the actor's career as an 'A' list star, Ford always filmically treated Wayne with a more benevolent sense of reverence, until *The Searchers* heralded a new development. One way of conceiving this is to consider Ford's approach to character being influenced in some way by developments in the post-war Western, in which the varied possibilities involved in representing the hero became extended. As I have previously delineated, the hero became a more complex figure, incorporating what Douglas Pye has summarised as a greater degree of humanisation over the previous emphasis on his mythical qualities (1996*a*: 18). The hero comes across as a more neurotic figure, becoming unsure or uneasy with regard to his abilities as a hero, and in the process increasingly becoming a figure of more apparent vulnerability.[4] If Ford's later films incorporate the traces of other generic developments of the period, such as the renegotiation of Native American representations, then one can view his reconceptualisation of the hero within the context of the post-war reconceptualisation of the Western hero.

The overall level of problematisation evidenced in these films becomes more intense in the latter films. While *Fort Apache* and *Hondo* characterise an incoherent father, *The Searchers* represents a monstrous 'father' who is consistently a figure of alienation. His aberrance is underlined from even the standpoint of his military background, this being the only Wayne film in which his character fought for the Confederacy. From thereon, his aberrance is suggested throughout the narrative, logically resulting in his final,

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[4] Key films from the period include *The Gunfighter*, *High Noon*, and Anthony Mann's Westerns with James Stewart - *Winchester '73*, *Bend of the River*, *The Naked Spur*, *The Far Country*, and *The Man from Laramie*.

ultimate exclusion from the social world. While Wayne had played a problematic father-figure in *Red River*, at the end of the film Dunson is accepted back into the world of the surrogate family, his transgressions forgiven. Such is the absolute unacceptability of Ethan Edwards that he is all but ignored before he is shut out of the home and left to wander indefinitely in the wilderness. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Tom's social exclusion is complete. He cannot even be integrated into the myth, unlike Davy Crockett in *The Alamo*, becoming a hero to be collectively forgotten in the annals of history. While Ford's increasing disillusion with the prototypical hero is particularly apparent, the general conclusion to be drawn from an examination of these films is that the paternal identity, as a defining aspect of Wayne's screen persona and a definitive aspect of masculine identity, is problematised from the very beginning of Wayne's 'A' star career, and becomes more intense, more *final*, as the 1950s progresses into the 1960s. After *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, the Wayne hero, and his 'dead' paternal identity, would have to be resurrected.

5) WAYNE - THE AGED FATHER

While the late 1940s to the early 1960s evidenced a strong sense of oscillation with regard to the specific type of 'father' portrayed by Wayne, and the type of characterisation - whether coherent/incoherent, or accommodating/alienating - lent to the portrayal, the last period of Wayne's stardom is marked by a more apparent degree of stability. The principal determinant of Wayne's roles in the period 1969 to 1976 continues to be the 'father', although the stability in question centres on the relative consistency of characterisation. Heeding the passage of time, Wayne's 'fathers' in this period are noticeably aged, and, as an attendant feature, they are consistently more benevolent, in comparison to the earlier periods of his stardom. The continued casting of the ageing Wayne alongside adolescents or young men serves to underline his grandfather-like qualities, as does an increased emphasis on his introspection, suggesting the longevity and experience of a life worth looking back upon. The benign grandfather is a familiar cultural figure, with the onset of retirement and old age being 'naturally' associated with a gentler, 'settled down' demeanour. The 'softened' image of paternalism evidenced in the films discussed below - which variously underline the impact of ageing on Wayne's body, an acute awareness of mortality, and a more sustained and emphatic representation of the emotional bond between fathers and sons - largely represents a more benign and genial authority figure than the films previously discussed, in the context of the consistency of the characterisation during this latter period, in comparison to the oscillation of the 'good' and 'bad' paternal roles which defined Wayne's roles from the late 1940s to the early 1960s.

In this latter period, Wayne's paternal identity is arguably strengthened by the contemporaneous cultural negotiation of his screen persona, which had assumed something of a legendary status by the late 1960s. Wayne's near forty-year career as an established Western star (if his many 'B' Westerns are accounted for) underlined his role as a 'father' of the genre in the popular imagination, a star who had defined the genre over successive decades and significant generic developments. Compared to other established Western stars still working in this period, such as James Stewart or Henry Fonda, neither had been identified with the genre anywhere near as fully or for as long as Wayne, and neither featured in as many Westerns as Wayne during this period (from 1968 to 1975 Stewart and Fonda each starred in three films, while Wayne starred in nine). Wayne's overdetermined iconicity further underlined his identity as a Western 'father', which in this period, defined as it was by a sociopolitical context determined by a sense of ideological fragmentation and instability, created an ideological refuge from the traumas of the period, Wayne's comforting conservatism

forming a buttress against the relative strength of the period's counter-culture movement. Wayne's already-established paternal identity, coupled with his seniority, 'naturally' contributed to the sense of refuge offered by Wayne's persona, by which his ageing father-figure offered symbolic protection against the new cultural threat posed by subversive youth. The fact that Wayne's paternal identity in this period represents a sense of continuity, coupled with the greater sense of stability evidenced by the absence of dramatic oscillation between the roles of 'good' and 'bad' paternal types, helped to ensure that his filmic characters served to counter the instability marking this period, by offering his persona as a reassuring image of stability. The cultural reassurance offered by Wayne's enduring screen presence in this traumatic period in modern American history centred precisely on the notion of endurance; Wayne, the survivor of cancer, was still 'there' to assert his unchanging sense of authority. As the survivor however, Wayne's seniority became an unavoidable issue, which brought its own attendant problems for the later Westerns to negotiate.

The central problem of ageing in Wayne's later films rests on the simple fact of the corporeal reality of ageing, inciting references to his ageing body in the films from those around him and from himself. In addition to the obvious inscription of ageing, the resonance surrounding his introspection works to humanise Wayne, by offsetting the more rigidly stoical character of his typical screen persona, and at the same time suggest a facet of vulnerability in his character. Such was the overdetermined corporeal basis of Wayne's persona that while the actor's later films could admit to some of the more problematic aspects of ageing - in terms of the effects on the construction of a masculine identity predicated on absolute corporeal and psychological assuredness - they also sought to compensate for such admissions by providing narrative opportunities for Wayne to express a sense of corporeal strength, notably in the gruelling, prolonged fist fights of *Chisum* and *The Cowboys*. Inasmuch as these moments represent one of the few instances in Wayne's post-war films in which the actor slugged it out with the villain rather than confront him with firepower, their inclusion in the later films is significant, especially given the particularly violent nature of the confrontations. They serve to underline a sense of masculinity being tested, but the fact that such a physical test apparently needs to be enacted in these later films suggests a core of anxiety surrounding the narrative's embodiment of Wayne's persona. While all of Wayne's last films centre on familiar aspects of characterisation, with the core paternal identity remaining at the heart of his persona, their attestation to anxieties over his corporeal solidity centres the problematic on one of the determining aspects of his screen persona. In spite of this problematic, all of the films examined below emphasise Wayne's essential vitality, the continuity of his

presence as a Man of the West, whose ageing, however unavoidable, is not allowed to fundamentally undermine his character. While ageing becomes a part of his character, introducing problems in its wake, Wayne remains the enduring figure of authority and steadfast upholder of values. He remains, above all, the 'father'.

<u>*True Grit* (Henry Hathaway, 1969)</u>

While *True Grit*, in common with the subsequent two films examined in this section, *Chisum* and *Rio Lobo*, is not among the most emphatic of Wayne's paternally-inscribed characterisations, it does underline Wayne's paternal identity at the level of surrogacy. While this surrogate paternal identity is not a point of consistent emphasis in the film, as it is in other films, it is resonant to the extent that it is imbued with nostalgia, with Wayne as an ageing and partially disabled lawman who proves his enduring capabilities beyond the odds. The film's nostalgia emanates from Wayne's characterisation of an 'original' hero, with a long-established pedigree, who remains an essential, pivotal figure (echoing Wayne's cultural positioning in the era). Nostalgia for an ageing hero comes 'naturally' to spectators, and the greater the hero's seniority in a film featuring considerably younger secondary characters, the more paternal he seems. While *True Grit* is fundamentally nostalgic, it also features Wayne in a fully parodic role, with the focus of the parody centred on the problematisation of Wayne's corporeal authority, which is located in the reality of the actor's ageing. *True Grit* makes Wayne's ageing *central* to his character, emphasising his physical inadequacies - his fatness, his habitual drunkenness, and his loss of an eye. Inevitably, the film seeks to compensate for this admission of an ostensibly weaker corporeal image by asserting the Wayne character's competence in spite of his apparent deficiencies. He successfully defeats the villains in emphatic, indeed overdetermined, fashion, by facing them off in a four-against-one scenario, and at the end of the film jumps over a fence on his horse, an action which the film fetishistically captures in a freeze-frame. Wayne's role in *True Grit* thus 'admits' his age, refusing to conceal it in obvious ways - and even being referred to as a 'fat old man' in the film's final line - while it is simultaneously inscribed with authority.

The film's plot centres on US marshal Rooster Cogburn (Wayne) being enlisted by the adolescent Mattie Ross (Kim Darby) to locate the men responsible for killing her father. When Mattie tells Cogburn that she looks forward to meeting his family, he responds with an awkward expression. Cogburn's accommodation represents an inverted form of domesticity, which is comprised of a Chinese retainer and a cat; Cogburn respectively introduces them as his father and nephew. The notion of 'family' is thus disrupted and re-invented, as it is in a number of Wayne's prominent Westerns

(*Red River*, *Three Godfathers*, *Hondo*, *Rio Bravo*, and *The Cowboys*). Cogburn later reveals to Mattie that his wife left him many years ago, and took his son along with her. At the end of the film, Mattie offers Cogburn a resting place beside her in the family's cemetery plot, which he refuses, saying it should be reserved for her future kin, be it a husband or children. Clearly, Cogburn is distanced from such an idea of 'family', and the only sense of a familial relationship he has is characterised as ridiculous. Concurrently, however, the narrative sets up a space by which Cogburn's paternal identity can be conceived. His domestic past suggests a forced disruption of paternalism, while his present situation invites the possibility of the restoration of the paternal identity, given the relationship he enters into with Mattie. The removal of her own father from the narrative leaves Mattie in a similar familial void to which Cogburn belongs, and opens up the possibility of Cogburn assuming a surrogate paternal role. The fact that Mattie is to some extent tomboyish in her appearance and manner (her hair is cut short and her behaviour is very direct and assertive) arguably positions her, at times, as a surrogate son to Cogburn; on one occasion, he says to himself, 'My God, she reminds me of me!' His role as a lawman, though primarily focused on finding the killers of Mattie's father, also necessitates his being a protective figure towards her (he saves her life at the end of the film). Although protection comes 'naturally' to a lawman, Cogburn's association with Mattie puts him in a position which allows him to enact a paternal role at the level of fantasy. While Cogburn's surrogate paternal identity underlines a serious tone to Wayne's character, the predominant determination of his character is comic. In general terms, filmic comedy serves to undermine a character's sense of authority. In the previously-discussed Wayne comedy Western, *McLintock!*, Wayne's character was represented as a figure of comedy *and* a figure of substantial paternal authority. While Rooster Cogburn is not a fully-delineated 'father', he is also represented as alternately comic and authoritative.

True Grit's comedy is centred on Cogburn's frailties in age, and his weakness for drink. Mattie's first meeting with Cogburn ends with him drinking, and the following morning he is nursing a hangover in bed. At one point Wayne is shot in profile with a slightly low-angle, which serves to emphasise his protruding gut. Cogburn is portrayed as a man with a weakened body, due to an essential lack of control - over his intake of alcohol (he is represented in the film as an effective alcoholic), and his weight. Although *True Grit* makes Cogburn's fondness for drink and his obesity a source of comedy, the significance of the film is that its comedy is wholly derived from the ridiculous - albeit heroic - figure of Cogburn, with the comedy explicitly centred on his body. Given that Wayne's body was one of the most important aspects of his stardom, serving as an unambiguous marker of corporeal authority, this focus is unsurprising,

but it is in a sense problematic in its admission of a weakened body. The narrative seeks to compensate for this by establishing Cogburn's heroic qualities in the fullest possible sense, facing off the last quartet of villains alone, having to carry Mattie after she has been bitten by a snake and his horse has died, and athletically belying his 'fat old man' label in his climactic horse-jump. Cogburn's heroism in these scenes is accentuated by such devices as low-angle shots of his body in the first example, a long shot of his lone figure in the expansive landscape in the second example, and the climactic freeze-frame which records the body-in-movement. *True Grit* finally confirms Deborah Thomas' argument that the implied strength of the Wayne body in his later films was his ability to still function and endure despite such factors as age, fatness and drunkenness (1996: 79). As the second example suggests strength in endurance, the final frozen image in the film, showing Cogburn on his horse just prior to the jump, waving his hat, is ultimately about endurance - a 'fat old man' can still jump fences. In denying his weakened body, Cogburn's body is empowered in this moment, an image which the film captures as a 'permanent' record of endurance.

For all of Cogburn's enduring qualities, he remains an essentially comic character. His nickname registers the weighting of his persona between relative strength and comedy, combining unmistakably masculine connotations with the suggestion of bird-like stupidity. His drinking is a defining point of the film's comedy. When negotiating terms with Mattie, his drinking is accompanied by exaggerated gulping noises. Later, while trekking, he drunkenly falls off his horse, lying on the ground with a dazed expression, and attempting to get up. After trying in vain, Cogburn gives up, telling his partners in mock-seriousness, 'We'll camp here.' His heroic competence is negated here by a comical expression of his lack of bodily competence. Bearing in mind Andrew Britton's observation that the star presence in a film 'refers us to a particular state of the social reality of genre' (1991: 205), it is worth exploring the 'new' image of Wayne offered in *True Grit* in relation to the state of the Western in the late 1960s. The clearest 'social reality' of the genre during this period was the ageing of established and iconic stars, a development which allowed for variations in the roles played by such actors as Henry Fonda, James Stewart, and of course Wayne. Fonda and Stewart went against type by playing outlaws in, respectively, *Firecreek*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and *Bandolero!*, films which self-consciously negotiated and (in Leone's film) parodied the images of the stars. Parody was clearly a feature of the Western during this period, as illustrated by the consistent stream of films which contained such elements (in particular, Burt Kennedy's Westerns - *The War Wagon*, *Support Your Local Sheriff!*, *The Good Guys and the Bad Guys*, and *Support Your Local Gunfighter*). It is possible to read the extent of parody in the genre during this period as being indicative of the

Western's gradual decline, as a sign that the myth could not be taken seriously anymore. Although Western parodies had existed long before the 1960s, the significance of this development lies in its occurrence at a time when the genre was beginning to fragment in earnest, in ways which I have previously discussed at length - the problematisation of all things 'civilised', the near-collapse of the law/outlaw distinction, and a vastly increased sense of nihilism being among the attendant problems of the genre from this period onwards. Parodying the Western in the late 1960s can therefore be considered as a sign of what might be termed as the collapse of mythical coherence; symptomatically, one of the most extensive generic parodies, *Blazing Saddles*, was released at the final point of the genre's demise, and went on to become the highest-grossing Western of all time (Buscombe 1993*c*: 251).

True Grit's place in this development is not fully clear. Its relatively traditional plot, and more obviously the overdetermined ideological nature of Wayne's presence, in a role which retains aspects of the enduring paternal identity, provides something of a protective barrier against the film's absorption of the problematic elements present in the genre in the period concerned. Nevertheless, a case can be made for reading Wayne's presence in the film as a negotiation of some of the developments affecting the representation of the hero. Essentially, the hero was demythologised, and one can read Rooster Cogburn as an example of such, through his comically problematised body. Given that the Western was becoming increasingly nihilistic (and, following *The Wild Bunch*, increasingly emphasising the physical details of bodily damage), and still relying on ageing stars like Wayne, Fonda, and Stewart, one can conceive of a generic situation in this period in which corporeal coherence was problematised. (As I will go on to argue, Clint Eastwood's films of the 1960s and early 1970s evidence this strongly.) *True Grit*, and specifically Wayne's presence in the film, evidences a negotiation of this problematic, inasmuch as it admits to a body marked by a degree of fragility. Yet the film finally underlines the strength of the overdetermined image of Wayne, by immortalising an image of the active body which belies its identification as a 'fat old man'. The Wayne character can be seen to be old and fat, but the ultimate strength of his body must finally be asserted; the myth cannot be *fully* undermined.

<u>*Chisum* (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1969)</u>

Although *Chisum* does not even register a sense of surrogate paternalism to the relatively moderate degree evidenced in *True Grit*, it does contain a resonant suggestion of symbolic, macrocosmic paternalism, as far as the history of the West is concerned. C*hisum* was significant inasmuch as it was the only Western apart from *The*

Alamo to feature Wayne playing a 'real' character. Like the earlier film, this ensures that the characterisation is relatively unproblematic, given the historical basis of Chisum as a legendary cattle baron, one of the more famous names to have helped 'make' the West. As such, he is apt for consideration as a symbolic 'father' of the West; as Crockett paved the way for a future 'free' West, as part of the preservation of an enlarged America, Chisum is an iconic figure in the capitalist expansion of the West, 'making' the West as much as Crockett symbolically 'gave birth' to the West. Chisum's symbolic paternal identity is reinforced by the film's mythologisation of his character, effecting a substantial revision of the 'real' Chisum to make him a more benevolent figure, and to unproblematically accommodate Wayne's persona. Consequently, the film contains no references to Chisum's expansionist nature or to his changing allegiances (after hiring Billy the Kid as a hand, he later proved instrumental in the processes behind the Kid's subsequent death). Instead, Chisum is portrayed as the champion of small businesses and landowners, opposed to the villainous rival baron Murphy (Forrest Tucker) not because he represents competition, but because he represents unregulated capitalism; his relationship with Billy the Kid is also portrayed as essentially benevolent. Together, these factual departures from the 'real' John Chisum work to define the coherence of Wayne's star image during the final phase of his career.

As a capitalist who respects the limits of his power, unlike Dunson in *Red River*, Wayne's role is suggestively resonant at the level of ideology, underlining the essential virtuousness and Americanness of capital at a time when the American capitalist system was under some considerable strain. At the same time, Wayne's Chisum is intriguingly positioned in opposition to governmental policy on Native Americans, contemptuously referring to their entrapment on reservation land, and telling a soldier who manhandles an ageing Chief that he'll kill him if he mistreats him again. While these are admittedly superficial critiques, they do nonetheless admit to the changes in representational strategies regarding Native Americans in Westerns, in line with the other films discussed in this section which team the Wayne character with an Indian sidekick (*Big Jake* and *Cahill: US Marshal*). One would not necessarily expect Wayne to comfortably absorb such a 'liberal' generic development, although in so doing Wayne's characters arguably underline their individualistic, nonconformist ethos as much any sense of 'liberal' sentiment. In *Chisum*, Wayne's 'pro-Indian' stance is framed around a general anti-government stance, that is also found in *The Undefeated*, which centres on the Wayne character's selling of horses to the highest bidder, which turns out to be the Mexican government rather than the American government, whose agents are characterised as emasculated and venal. Of course, the anti-government

stance, linked as it is with allegiances to ethnic Others, formed a persona that could be seen as being receptive towards the counter-culture movement of the period, but the fact remains that the nonconformist aspect of Wayne's screen persona was already well-established, any sense of 'liberal' values being therefore moulded around the pre-existing ideological framework inflecting that persona.

A further significant diversion from the historical 'truth' is Chisum's romantic status - in the film, he is unmarried and childless, whereas in reality he was married with a daughter (Calder 1974: 209). This permits Wayne's character to be defined in terms of his perennial 'loner' status, in opposition to the domestic sphere, but in so doing a sense of poignancy becomes part of his characterisation. When his niece comments on his unmarried status, Chisum remarks, 'This was no place to bring a woman in those days, raise a family. Things are different now... .' His hesitant expression of the last clause suggests thoughts of lost opportunities, alluding to a sense of regret, an admission which recurs with a degree of regularity in Wayne's later films. A similar reference is made to failed domesticity in *The Undefeated*, when Wayne's character analyses the failure of a previous marriage as owing to her 'Easternised' incompatibility with the rigours of Western life: 'She was so busy being a lady that she forgot to be a woman. ...She's now living in Philadelphia with a cad giving piano lessons.' In both films, Wayne's character facilitates romance between younger characters, which underlines, in addition to his distance from romance, his own paternalistic seniority (emphasised by the male romantic leads being Wayne's close associates, and therefore 'sons' of sorts). Unencumbered by romantic affiliations, Wayne's Chisum fits this aspect of the characterisation offered in the majority of his 'A' Westerns, but the expressed sense of regret is specific to his later films.

As Deborah Thomas has argued, a defining aspect of Wayne's screen masculinity is a sense of endurance, an ability to consistently overcome threats against the body, whether shaped by wounds or ageing (1996: 79). *Chisum* begins with an opening credits-based song which foregrounds the lyric 'Can you still keep going on?' over painted representations of adversity during a cattle trail (a thunderstorm, an Indian assault). Having established, by implication, Chisum's endurance in building up his empire, the credits finish to show Chisum sitting tall in the saddle, overseeing his territory. The shot is reprised at the end of the film, when, after he has beaten off the numerous forces which threatened to bring down his empire, he proves that he indeed can 'still keep going on'. In a return to the traditions of Wayne's 'B' Westerns, the climactic showdown between Chisum and Murphy is a prolonged fist fight, ending in Murphy being impaled, appropriately, by an ornamental pair of horns. Significantly,

other than *Chisum*, only three of Wayne's thirty post-war Westerns (*Red River*, *North to Alaska*, and *The Cowboys*) contained climactic fist fights between Wayne and his antagonist, and in the case of *North to Alaska* the impact of the fight as a forceful climactic battle is lessened somewhat by its reduction to the level of a slapstick brawl. Although the Wayne character was never above such 'physical' fighting in the course of narratives, his ultimate and final form of score-settling was overwhelmingly delivered by a firearm, as per the traditions of the genre. The particularly gruelling nature of the fights in *Chisum* and *The Cowboys* attest to a degree of compensation, inasmuch as they occur in the ageing Wayne's later films. Thematically, Wayne's corporeal staying power is expressed in these scenes, which suggest in a very direct manner the endurability of his character; that, despite his age, he can give and take blows over a prolonged period. As much as his climactic violence renders Wayne/Chisum as a man of firm presence, his role in the narrative as a whole centres on the stability of his character. In his capacity as a cattle baron, his business practices are transparent and benevolent, suggesting the endurability of 'good old values'; by contrast, the newly-arrived Murphy's monopolistic control of the town suggests the intrusion of a new type of capitalism anathema to Chisum and the rest of the townspeople. The sense that Chisum has 'been around' is reinforced by the seniority of the people around him, in comparison to Murphy, who, although not young himself, is surrounded by younger cohorts. The collective seniority of Chisum and his immediate associates aligns Chisum figuratively with the Old West, and a benevolent sense of the past in comparison to the corruption endemic in the process of Western modernity represented by Murphy. It was this nostalgic element to *Chisum* that undoubtedly led Richard Nixon to applaud the film for making a positive statement concerning the coming of law at a time when law was breaking down across American cities (Wills 1998: 316*n*). That Wayne's character is identified with such a process is notable, given the way it serves to cement a fairly consistent alignment of his screen characters with law within the context of an apparently fragmenting America, Wayne offering a guarantee of stability during a period of fundamental instability. The mythical dimension of Wayne's characterisation is thus underlined by his being identified as a symbol of Western, and American law, with the presidential seal of approval.

<u>*Rio Lobo* (Howard Hawks, 1971)</u>

Like *True Grit* and *Chisum*, *Rio Lobo* offers Wayne as a surrogate father, through his leadership of a predominantly youthful, vaguely familial group. In comparison to the previous films, Wayne's characterisation here is somewhat more problematic, with the nostalgic evocations surrounding Rooster Cogburn and Chisum replaced by a more

revealing emphasis on the limitations imposed on Wayne's character by his seniority. The problematised characterisation of *Rio Lobo* could be contextualised in terms of the directorial presence of Hawks, who attested at a later point to the difficulties posed by Wayne's ageing (McBride 1982: 118). As such, with regard to Wayne's characterisation, Hawks could be said to be working against the grain in this period, when compared with the characterisations established in the other films examined in this chapter. Since *Rio Lobo* represents the last film of Hawks' so-called 'professional' trilogy, it evidences a trilogy-specific development of the Wayne role, which distinguishes the film from the other films of the period (*True Grit* and its sequel *Rooster Cogburn* have Wayne playing an unchanged character). Hawks' trilogy evidences a gradual decline in the mythical aura of Wayne's character, with *Rio Lobo* marking the culmination of a process which noticeably reduces the level of symbolic authority possessed by the Wayne character.

In *Rio Lobo*, Wayne progresses from the semi-mature 'father' of *Rio Bravo* and *El Dorado* to a character who more resembles a grandfather-figure, in a narrative which frequently and actively refers to his corpulence on the one hand and the renunciation of his sexual impulses on the other. The structured 'family' of the previous two films is here renegotiated; the 'old man' remains, the drunk is dispensed with, and the youthful component is trebled in the shape of two young Confederates and a demure society girl. The effect of the youthful contingent, in addition to underlining Wayne's paternalism, serves to accentuate the age of his character, Union Colonel Cord McNally, and make him a more isolated figure in the group, with no 'friend' character *à la* Dean Martin in *Rio Bravo*. As such, however, McNally is granted a full measure of singular authority over the group as a whole, and the (other) 'old man' of the narrative, Phillips (Jack Elam), is distinguished from McNally's mentally-unencumbered senior status by being characterised as senile. In contrast to *Rio Bravo* and *El Dorado*, however, Wayne's heroic authority is less fully expressed, with the film implying the limitations placed on such authority by ageing. As in *True Grit*, ageing is central to Wayne's characterisation in the film.

While Wayne's characters are often conceived in terms of their sheer corporeal presence, *Rio Lobo* offers a more problematic representation of Wayne's ageing body, intensifying the manner in which his ageing was represented in *True Grit*. On the one hand, Wayne's body is given special treatment. Greg Ford has noted that Hawks post-synchronised the sound of Wayne's spurs, thus 'amplif(ying) further the big, proud stride of his giant, man-mountainous star' (1976: 348). Ford's prose alludes to the sheer corporeal presence of Wayne in the film, which is again heightened by the

contrast between his dominating body and the bodies of his younger companions. Yet Wayne's body in the film is noticeably corpulent as well; as a character remarks when he pulls McNally out of a river he has been knocked into, 'he's heavier than a baby whale!' A running gag of the film refers to McNally possessing a 'comfortable' body, which carries associations of warmth and domesticity in place of the 'harder' connotations of masculinity. The term is first used by the woman in the group, Shasta (Jennifer O'Neill), when she elects to sleep beside McNally instead of the younger man present, Cordona (Jorge Rivero). When McNally awakes to find, with some shock, Shasta next to him, she explains, 'Well, he's young and I thought that...well, you're older, you're...you're comfortable.' 'Comfortable' here underlines the protective qualities of McNally's body, and part of the 'comfort' is surely his corpulence, offering greater warmth. As Deborah Thomas notes, the protectiveness also has 'sexlessness and renunciation' built into it (1996: 79), McNally's older, corpulent body being contrasted with the youthful, muscular, and more overtly sexual body of Cordona. At a later point in the film, when Shasta and Cordona have become lovers, the desexualised nature of McNally's body is rendered in self-renunciating terms. He appears to take umbrage at their slow embrace, ostensibly for his being in a hurry, but the implication remains that he is repressed. When Phillips suggests as much ('You'd like to be doing that yourself'), McNally explains, 'No, not a chance. I'm just comfortable.' In contrast to *Rio Bravo* and *El Dorado*, Wayne is simply inconceivable as a lover in *Rio Lobo*; his body is alienated from the sphere of romance.

In his reading of the film, Ford groups Wayne's 'state as a sexual outcast' with the characteristics of his body and the actor's superior acting talents as the means of 'naturally distinguish(ing)' Wayne from the younger actors (1976: 348). Yet the 'distinguishing' terms of the Wayne character are not particularly distinguished as such. Hawks himself referred to the problematic nature of Wayne's body: 'Wayne had a hard time getting on and off his horse; he can't move like a big cat the way he used to. He has to hold his belly in; he's a different kind of person' (quoted in McBride 1982: 118). As such, one can consider the post-synchronised sound effects of the clinking spurs as something of a compensatory gesture, with the desired effect of inscribing Wayne's corpulent, ageing presence with the qualities of the 'hard' hero. (The effect might also be understood as registering the influence of Leone's use of such presence-accentuating over-dubbing, although it could not be convincingly argued that Hawks is attempting to 'denaturalise' and parody Wayne here, as Leone did with his 'excessive' rendering of character.) The fact remains, however, that Wayne's ageing in *Rio Lobo* is enacted in the main without compensation. His de-eroticised and corpulent body underline his ageing in physical terms, while the more developed sense of his social

isolation in the film marks his character's ageing in social terms, as he finds himself distanced from his youthful companions. Of course, the Wayne character's relative distance from the group was underlined in the group-singing sequence of *Rio Bravo* as well, but there was never any doubt that while he was separated from the group *to a degree* by his role as its 'leader', he still 'belonged' to the group in a very real sense, sharing emotional and professional bonds with Dude, Stumpy and Colorado. *Rio Lobo*, by contrast, underlines the lack of group cohesion. Foremostly, there is no 'friend' figure, no sense of a shared history and understanding. Furthermore, McNally is distanced from the group in other respects. The Confederates Cordona and his colleague Tuscarora (Chris Mitchum) engineer the theft of a Union gold shipment on a train, which in the process causes fatal injuries to one of McNally's closest colleagues. Although McNally's animus is directed against the Union traitor who leaked the train information to the Confederates, the split allegiances between himself and his eventual comrades-in-arms are not fully resolved. The link which solidified the relationship between Wayne and Dean Martin in *Rio Bravo* (alcoholism), is here turned into an antithesis, with Cordona being positioned in opposition to McNally not only by his prior military allegiance, but also by his youth, ethnicity, and sexualised persona. The more youthful still Tuscarora represents a departure from the previous films and their use of the 'youth' character as a means of underlining the Wayne character's instructive, tacitly 'man-making', and fundamentally paternal persona. Already experienced in the military, Tuscarora has nothing to be taught by McNally.

McNally is also distanced from the other two 'group' characters, Shasta and Phillips. Shasta's youth and regarding of McNally as a de-eroticised Other underlines her distance from McNally. The 'trigger-happy' Phillips, in contrast to *Rio Bravo*'s Stumpy and *El Dorado*'s Bull Harris, 'aberrate(s) more violently, seem(s) more apart, more freakish, farcically psychotic, more isolated from any kind of group feeling than either preceding cowboy buffoon' (Ford 1976: 350). By every measure, the Wayne character in *Rio Lobo* is more isolated in the group structure than ever before; the fact that his quest is itself a highly personal one - to avenge the death of his friend - is significant in this respect (while *Rio Bravo* also had personal motivation in the shape of the killing of Pat Wheeler, it was not individually-centred, given that Colorado shares the same motive). One of the encapsulating moments of the film in establishing the isolation of the Wayne character occurs when McNally is at camp with Shasta and Cordona. He separates himself from the couple-to-be, and gets quietly drunk on his own, before retiring. In forcibly isolating himself from youth and romance, McNally underlines his age and his essential celibacy.

Wayne's role in the film is further differentiated from the previous films of the trilogy by his use of violence as an expression of heroic authority, whether as a response marked by excessiveness or by a lack of response. When Wayne's character finds the Union mole responsible for leaking the gold train information to the Confederates, he beats the man, knocking him into the path of an oil lamp. McNally only allows for the man to be smothered when Phillips points out that the man's signature is required on water deeds that he has illicitly procured. Although the man is deserving of death by generic logic, Wayne's sense of violent bitterness in the scene has few parallels in his earlier Westerns (except for *The Searchers*), in which violence was represented either via the more distanced, 'formal' gunfight, or by fist fights which did not culminate with potentially lethal consequences (except for *Chisum*). In either case, the Wayne character was not inclined to express any sense of sadistic zeal in violent retribution, as he does here. If one considers this in terms of persona development, it is significant that *Big Jake* and *The Cowboys*, which successively followed *Rio Lobo*, also feature the Wayne character displaying a greater propensity toward more brutish violence, fuelled by a greater sense of animosity. As a development in Wayne's filmic image, his more 'violent' characterisation did not last throughout his later films, but the fact that this occurs in the later period of his career attests both to a possible compensatory measure - the 'raw' threat of violence remaining even stronger in the ageing hero - and a sense of bitterness associated with ageing in general. That this development did not last suggests that it went against the *essential* perception of the Wayne hero that audiences of the Western had - a hero whose overall 'solidity' suggested that violence need not be a forced affair, and whose easygoing manner suggested the withholding of animosity.

Elsewhere in *Rio Lobo*, McNally elects not to resort to violence when narrative expectation would typically require it. Shortly after arriving in the eponymous town, Tuscarora and his girlfriend are set upon by deputies of the town's corrupt sheriff. McNally simply stands and watches a few feet away, only vocally intervening when the sheriff calls for the woman to be jailed alongside Tuscarora. Although McNally's interjection succeeds in preventing the woman's jailing, and underlines a non-forced sense of authority on his part, the sequence still represents a *failure* of heroism, inasmuch as he fails to intervene against one of the great cultural taboos being broken - the injunction against violence being done to women. Greg Ford describes the sequence's rendering of the Wayne character as 'aloof and quite impotent', as a response due to the fact that he finds himself outnumbered on the street (1976: 351). While the latter is true, this has rarely held back the Wayne character before, so the implication remains that McNally is held back from intervening in full partly because of

his aged disadvantage. If he manages to achieve a measure of authority with his vocal interjection, he resorts back to timidity when the sheriff brusquely suggests that he leaves town promptly. In the film as a whole, his presence as a hero in possession of violent authority is considerably weakened in comparison to the earlier films of the trilogy: *Rio Lobo*'s McNally has only one moment of genuine authority expressed through violence, while *El Dorado*'s Thornton and *Rio Bravo*'s Chance have several. Despite the great similarities in their respective climactic set-ups, there are no 'fireworks' at the end of *Rio Lobo*, as there are in the climax of *Rio Bravo*, which served to 'celebrate' the literally explosive power of the violence employed by the professional male group. Instead, the downbeat climax of *Rio Lobo* has the corrupt sheriff being blinded by his exploding shotgun, before he is shot dead by one of the townswomen, in revenge for his previous scarring of her face in an attempt to gain information. As such, McNally is displaced from the final moment of conventional heroic action, his role usurped by a woman (in what might be a mediated, generically-motivated response to the burgeoning women's movement; a speculative conclusion which can be similarly derived from the narrative in *Big Jake*). After a brief exchange, McNally helps the woman up and they walk away, mutually supporting each other (McNally was shot in the leg in the preceding gunfight). Leaning against McNally, the woman begins the statement, 'You're so...', before McNally interjects, 'Please don't say comfortable', the closing line of the film. Unlike the endings of the previous films of the trilogy, which either cemented the Wayne character's eroticised identity (*Rio Bravo*) or his homosocial identity (*El Dorado*), *Rio Lobo* once again underlines McNally's desexualised identity, as a point of narrative finality.

Hawks' trilogy encompasses an image of the Wayne hero that is both broadly consistent and subject to a significant degree of differentiation. The defining mark of the trilogy is its concern with a professional grouping of men, with Wayne at the centre of the group, the narrative focus of authority and strength. The eleven-year-gap between *Rio Bravo* and *Rio Lobo* would plausibly suggest an inscription of ageing in the films, and Hawks effects this through the corporeal detail of Wayne's characterisations. While John T. Chance has a body that is both impenetrable (in the sense that he fails to receive any wounds) and eroticised, Cord McNally is defined by his renunciation of the erotic. As the Wayne hero ages, the avenues of 'full' masculine expression become limited - unlike Chance, McNally can only fully express himself through violence.

Simultaneous with the negation of the hero's eroticised qualities is the gradual loosening of homosocial ties. As Peter Wollen puts it, in Hawks' films 'the highest

human emotion is the camaraderie of the exclusive, self-sufficient, all-male group' ([1964] 1996: 84). The camaraderie established so emphatically in *Rio Bravo* is practically absent in *Rio Lobo*. The effect of this is not as much a heightening of the Wayne presence, since, as I have argued above, his overall authority is not as apparent in *Rio Lobo* as it is in the preceding films; rather, the more limited sense of group solidarity effects a limitation of their strength, as is symptomatically illustrated in the final action of the narrative by the 'usurpation' of the final active role by the woman. If the potentially regressive ideological consequence of homosociality remains the perpetuation of patriarchy, the progression of Hawks' trilogy effects a sense of gradually diminished patriarchal power, both in the loosening of the cohesive structuring of the all-male group, and the diminishing authority of the Wayne character. Although McNally's age grants him a measure of authority over the pair of ex-Confederates in *Rio Lobo*, his seniority also renders him almost sexless, and less able to express himself in terms of traditional heroism.

Big Jake (George Sherman, 1971)

While *Rio Lobo* evidences a considerably problematic representation of the Wayne hero, in which his characteristic authority is undermined, the actor's next Western, *Big Jake*, evidences the restitution of the father as an emblem of patriarchal authority. A recurring line addressed to the eponymous Wayne character in the film is 'I thought you were dead.' Set in the modernist West of 1909, the film characterises Jake as an anachronism, but his apparently outdated 'Old West' qualities are ultimately revealed to be suited to winning the 'New West' as well, suggesting the perpetual, stable nature of Wayne's heroism. His appearance is delayed for some nineteen minutes, effecting the usual sense of anticipation for the revelation of the star presence. Prior to Wayne's first appearance, the narrative establishes, via a newsreel-type montage sequence, a schematic opposition between the East and the West, in which the typical gendered connotations attached to both milieux determine their contrasting representations. While the East is represented by images of modernity (automobiles and aeroplanes), cultural figures (Don Caruso), high-society ladies and catalogue clothes, the West is represented by images of a lynching, 'rugged' Westerners, and Native Americans. The film 'proper' begins by thematically establishing a world of maternal control, in the shape of a wealthy ranch outfit ran by one Martha McCandles (Maureen O'Hara). The milieu is prominently characterised by a young boy receiving piano lessons, suggesting the possibility of the boy becoming 'cultured', and thus, by generic logic, Easternised and feminised. Martha is first seen in conversation with a foreman, who warns her of the danger posed by rustlers, to which she cynically points out that the year is 1909,

and such threats are surely consigned to the past. Like the East, Martha is thus linked with modernity, but her foreman continues to underline the threat, stating that they were only too evident just fifteen years ago, when Jake McCandles (Wayne) 'hung' - the sentence is left incomplete, Martha's steely face interrupting the foreman's reference to a past viewed negatively by her. The Wayne character is thus conceived in terms of a more violent past, symptomatically linking him with the other 'men of violence' of the period, but also with a resolute, very 'Western' sense of 'justice'. That his paternal, authoritative presence is missing from the ranch is duly evidenced by the arrival of a posse of outlaws, who, after shooting up the place and killing a number of hands, kidnap the young boy. Despite the arrival of the modern age, anachronistic threats still remain, and must be logically countered by anachronistic opposition. The scene is thus set for Wayne to make his appearance, to rectify both the narrative problem, and to reassert a 'good old fashioned' sense of Western masculinity over the modern, feminised milieu that has been established. (While fulfilling generic expectations, Wayne's narrative function could also be regarded as a veiled response to the women's movement, a modern development, given the 'modern' setting of *Big Jake*, which links modernity to feminine control.)

In a subsequent meeting with law officials, Martha states the need for 'an extremely harsh and unpleasant kind of man' to deal with the problem. The film immediately cuts to an extreme close-up of Wayne's eye as his character stares down a rifle barrel at the sight of a lynching which is about to proceed. His ageing is thus illustrated in dramatic terms, and at the same time he is presented with an authority-asserting opportunity. Initially saying to himself that it is not his business to interfere, Jake intervenes when he sees the lynch victim's young son being beaten. While it is not made entirely clear, the impression is given that the lynching is distinctly unmerited; the rough appearance of the lynchers and the characterisation of the victim as a Scottish shepherd suggest the work of a corrupt landowner against a victimised smallholder (thus contrasting with Jake's previous lynchings of presumably genuine rustlers). While the lynchers initially scoff at Jake's demands that the man be set free, they quickly change their mind when he tells them his name. Freeing the shepherd, one of the lynchers points out that he thought Jake was dead. The first appearance of Wayne in *Big Jake* is determined both by a degree of self-consciousness and a strong sense of heroism, invoked by the mythic allure attached to Jake's name. Anticipating his future role in the narrative, Jake is here seen to activate Old Western law against Old Western law, and in so doing protecting the family unit. The scene ends by expressing the tensions involved in maintaining a traditional representational strategy pertaining to the Western hero, while incorporating new strategies. When Jake tells the lynchers to avoid following the

shepherd, he says that if they do, he will kill them all - 'every mother's son of you', a threat suggestive of a vengeful, castrating father, seeking to punish weaker men on account of their maternal attachments. As also evidenced, more strongly, in *Rio Lobo*, Wayne's heroism is expressed here in a vaguely sadistic and strongly bitter fashion, but as he rides off the image is accompanied by a traditionally 'rousing' score. While Wayne's ageing heroes are permitted their moments of bitterness, the effect here seems to be a representational strategy of containment.

The tension evidenced in the above example is effectively carried through the whole film. For all of his characteristic violence, Jake's narrative quest is wholly predicated on the fact that he is a family man. The kidnapped boy he is charged with recovering is his grandson, while he is joined for most of his quest by two of his sons. (Significantly, Wayne's own sons play the grandson and one of the sons, underlining the authenticity of his paternal identity in the film.) At times the film threatens sentimentality (such as when Jake first sees his grandson during the climactic exchange); as if to contain such a threat, Jake's relationship with his sons is characterised from the outset by violence. He punches one off his horse for calling him 'daddy', another for pretending to be dead while unsure as to the authenticity of Jake's presence (Jake expresses a sense of vulnerability in chastising the son for taking years off his life), and beats up both in response to their own punching of him. His volatile relationship with his sons must be contextualised in terms of the gendered parameters set by the narrative. Since both sons are characterised by upper-class mores (particularly in terms of the substance and delivery of their language), they are thereby tainted with the threat of feminisation (unlike Jake, their mother is identified with the upper-class pretensions of servants and meals served on silverware), like Jake's grandson. Jake's acts of violence thus represent a means of asserting masculine and paternal authority over his sons; significantly, Martha disappears from the film as soon as Jake and the sons ride off to find the grandson, leaving the father to redefine the narrative space set initially by the mother.

As Jake is defined as a 'tough' father in contrast to the 'soft' mother, he is also defined as a man of the past, in contrast to not only the mother, but nearly everyone else around him. When he meets up with Martha to discuss the arrangements for recovering the grandson, he comes across a legally-appointed posse, the expectation being that he will join them. In declining ('I'll go it alone'), Jake asserts his individuality over the group, and his anachronistic identity, since the posse's means of transport are two cars and a motorcycle. In response to one of the men imploring 'It's 1909, Jake', Jake replies that his way is 'old-fashioned'. These contrasting points are emphasised in a subsequent montage sequence which parallels the respective journeying of Jake (with

two horses, a mule and a dog) and the posse (in their vehicles). Naturally, the posse fail, getting caught in an ambush. When Jake arrives on the scene, the posse decide to go back, leaving Jake's sons to join up with their father. Their failure in undertaking the duty of 'real men' in the absence of the film's guarantor of 'real' Western masculinity is converted to success when the paternally-oriented familial unit is formed (in a slight echo of *Rio Bravo*). The narrative process of the film up to this point can thus be characterised as the assertion of masculine control over feminine control of the narrative, and given the excessively 'cultured' attachments which define the latter, it is wholly unsurprising that Jake's period of narrative control is defined by a violent assertion of paternalism. If this unit is initially defined by relationships predicated on a degree of violence, in which the mother is an absent figure, the ending of the film implies a return to a domesticated familial unit, and the reuniting of Jake and Martha. In a violent climax, the grandson is rescued, and a freeze-frame ends the film, showing Jake and his male offspring (and Wayne and two of his sons) standing tall and smiling, after Jake has expressed the words, 'Let's go home'. (The irony of this repetition of the last statement of *The Searchers* is that 'home', in this instance, is conceivably inclusive, a place that can be returned to.) The climactic gunfight paves the way for Jake's return to domesticity, not only because of the need to at the very least return the grandson 'home', but also because Jake's Indian scout and dog are killed in the process. With the death of his scout, the possibility of a typically generic homosocial relationship is negated, and the death of his dog removes a principal signifier of Jake's impulses towards violence (similar in function to the animal in *Hondo*, the dog acts like Jake's *alter ego*, attacking his opponents at his immediate behest). Leaving these figures - who are essentially antithetical to the generic notion of domesticity - behind him, Jake goes 'home' with the suggestion that he will fit more ably into the domesticated sphere, but only after his sons have been 'remasculinised' in the process. *Big Jake* thus concludes with the image of Wayne as a father who returns to his family after reasserting his control over it, after the film has established the perpetual relevance of his anachronistic character, and the qualities of his endurability - in being the man nearly everyone thought was dead, Big Jake emphatically proves them wrong.

***The Cowboys* (Mark Rydell, 1972)**

If *Big Jake* positions the Wayne character as something of a resurrected man, as suggested by Garry Wills (1998: 289), in *The Cowboys*, Wayne actually dies, succumbing to injuries sustained in a fight. In killing off the Wayne character, the film is joined by only three other such deaths in Wayne's ninety Westerns - *The Alamo*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, and *The Shootist*. His character's vulnerability is

foregrounded from the outset by stark references to his ageing, which is negotiated in a considerably more problematic manner than in previous films. The issue becomes not as much a focus for parody, as in *True Grit*, but a focus for anxiety. However, the film still seeks to compensate for the ageing of the Wayne character by asserting his corporeal strength in the climactic fight he has with the film's chief villain, even if he is killed in the process. *The Cowboys* presents Wayne as an ageing cattleman, Will Andersen, who, having lost his usual men to a gold rush, is forced to enrol a group of schoolboys as cowboys for a cattle drive. In the process, Andersen becomes a 'father' to the boys, as they become his surrogate sons (Andersen's own sons died when young men). Clearly, the film's plot echoes *Red River*, and as such *The Cowboys* is imbued with nostalgia for the Western, and crucially an *idea* of the 'classical' Western in the past, when the genre was in a much stronger position, and its major stars were comfortably middle-aged. That Wayne plays a father-figure to not just one youngster, but a whole 'family' of them, suggests a self-conscious gesture on the film's part which attests to Wayne's cultural position in this era as the senior living 'father' of the Western (as delineated in this chapter's introduction), and part of the desired effect of the film is to conceive of Wayne as a prototypical, though ageing, American 'father'. (An uncredited magazine review of the film cited by Emanuel Levy asked: 'Do You Think of the Duke as Big Daddy?'; 1988: 334). Unlike the 'father' Wayne portrayed in *Red River*, Andersen is a generally benevolent figure; he is willing to praise, his arrogance is kept in check, and his mental state remains healthy. And, unlike the youthful Matt and his comrades, the boys of *The Cowboys* have consistent respect for Andersen's authority. The nostalgic connection between the two films can be considered in view of the description Paul Monaco has given to nostalgia as 'recollection sweetened, mystified, or mythified' (1987: 100). The relation of *The Cowboys* to *Red River* is based on an amelioration of the 'problems' of the Hawks film, suggesting an appropriation of the earlier 'classical' period of Westerns as desirably less complex than it in fact was. The 'ideological project' of *The Cowboys*, when contextualised against the other, more intensely problematic Westerns of the early 1970s, seems to be an attempt to return to an apparently 'simpler' past, which the film accounts for by its negotiation of typical generic tenets (which will be duly discussed), but what it cannot ignore is the very fact of Wayne's ageing.

The Cowboys negotiates Wayne's age by alternately alluding to its attendant problems and the enduring qualities of Wayne's character in spite of his age. The first appearances of Andersen are compensatory, showing him tall in the midst of a cattle drive during the credits, and then breaking in a rough horse, an act ensuring physical exertion (Andersen falls over and cuts his hand on the rope). When he ultimately enrols

the boys to assist him on the drive, their youth emphasises his age, making Andersen seem more of a grandfather-figure than a father-figure. As he tests the suitability of the boys by getting them to ride a wild horse, and rope in some calves, it is clear that Anderson's age precludes him from such overly-strenuous activity. His age remains a point of concern for him, which is resonantly articulated when he has a conversation with the similarly ageing cook, Nightlinger (Roscoe Lee Browne). As Nightlinger comments on the associated pains of ageing, Andersen remarks, 'Miserable old age - I hate it', with the two men's faces fixed with downcast expressions, and lit sparsely. Such an admission of inner pain is comparatively rare in Wayne's earlier Westerns, yet, symptomatically, such admissions occur more frequently in his later Westerns, when the Wayne character reflects on his changed body, of the various 'pains' of old age (both emotional, as here, and physical, as in *The Shootist*), and the memory of dead loved ones (two sons are mourned in *The Cowboys*, while in *Cahill: US Marshal* Wayne mourns a dead wife; although the Wayne characters of *Red River* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* mourned lost wives, their ageing was an aspect of character portrayal, whereas the resonance of the later films is their 'real' characterisation of Wayne's ageing, making expressions of loss all the more powerful). Andersen's introspective moment alludes to a sense of fear, yet the admission remains only a moment; the determinant effects of Wayne's star persona serves to ensure some further compensatory measures to offset the more problematic emphasis on Anderson's seniority.

Andersen is finally confronted on the drive by a group of cattle rustlers led by a character simply known as Long Hair (Bruce Dern), whose namelessness suggests his greater suitability for appropriation as a type, the most obvious being a villainous Western 'hippie'. (His namelessness might also be read as a riposte to the nameless Man of Eastwood's 'spaghetti' Westerns; Dern's stubbled appearance suggests a likeness with Eastwood's amoral hero.) The ensuing fight between Andersen and Long Hair suggestively pits the dominant and oppositional ideologies of contemporary America against each other in surrogate battle, and, by the 'fair' rules of a fight, Andersen wins it; depleted on the ground as Andersen walks away tall, Long Hair takes out his gun and shoots his opponent from behind. Andersen does not actually collapse until he has been shot for the third time, in the back, so his fight with Long Hair expresses his staying power in spite of the fact that he is twice the age of his opponent. Wayne is clearly seen 'fighting' without a stand-in, and wins the fight comprehensively, leaving Long Hair battered and bruised. The extreme animosity imbuing the central confrontation of *The Cowboys* is unparalleled among Wayne's Westerns. As Garry Wills points out, the Wayne hero very rarely treated his foe with

raw contempt (1998: 25). In *The Cowboys*, the Wayne hero distinctly avoids the casual but assured persona represented in the vast majority of his films, and adopts an outlook of pure aggression instead - Andersen's look of contempt is verbally expressed in his remarks to Long Hair ('On my worst day I could beat the hell out of you'; 'You miserable wretch...Go to hell'). Wills further argues that Wayne's typical lack of raw aggression suggests that 'The Wayne hero could be calm, in a time of the empire's dominance' (ibid). One might therefore read the lack of 'calmness' in this film as symptomatic of the period, when America's sense of 'dominance' was profoundly shaken by the experience of Vietnam, the Western's generic dominance was clearly fragmenting, and the ageing Wayne's sense of corporeal dominance was problematised (the actor had a lung and rib removed in his 1964 operation for lung cancer, precipitating his weight problem, and his health became progressively worse in the 1970s (Wills 1998: 298)). Commenting on Wayne's later Westerns, Paul Smith argues: 'A strident annoyance emanates from Wayne and his movies in his final years, and it can perhaps best be understood as a symptom, not only of the cancer that finally killed him, but also of his inability to turn the western back to its proper paths' (1993: 272*n*). *The Cowboys* is perhaps Wayne's most conservative film of the later period - in terms of its traditional veneration of Andersen as the father-figure, and especially its climax, where the boys are seen to prove their manhood by seeking out and killing the entire party of rustlers, to the accompaniment of rousing music. Yet, at the same time, the Wayne character dies. In this sense, the film attests to Smith's argument; *The Cowboys* cannot be 'proper' to the full. Instead, Andersen's death, and the manner of it - his bullish approach to playing the 'hero' - underlines the price paid for 'taking a stand', which was a recurring theme of Westerns from the late 1960s onwards.[1] Heroism, from this perspective, has a fearful cost; that Andersen is finally beaten by a man who does not respect the generic 'rules' of confrontation (never shoot a man in the back) underlines the fact that he is felled because he plays the hero, and plays by the rules, while his opponent clearly does not.

If we are to speculate that the Dern character is a quasi-lookalike of Eastwood, the implications of the confrontation become more resonant. It is worth noting that Wayne felt a degree of hostility towards the inheritor of his crown, principally for Eastwood's problematisation of standard generic elements (McGilligan 2000: 267). In addition, Eastwood's 1970s films consistently outperformed Wayne's, sometimes by 300 % (Albert 1981: 9), consolidating Eastwood's position as the new Western star. Clearly, Long Hair's villainy is coded according to the logic of the more traditional Western,

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[1] As in *Hombre*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, and prominently, *The Shootist*.

although his hair and stubble invoke a more contemporary code signifying the aberrance of counter-culturalists. If the character does not 'obviously' represent Eastwood, he does nevertheless evoke a sense of a response to the problematised image of the hero as portrayed by Eastwood; here, the hero looks like a hero, and the villain looks like a villain. The destabilisation of generic codes marking Eastwood's Westerns is replaced in this film by a more coherent realisation of those codes, although the Wayne hero's death symptomatically inscribes the more problematic developments then prevalent in the genre.

Despite the damage he has sustained, Andersen's death is not immediate. He is permitted a final, stirring speech, which sustains the idealised image of him as a surrogate father to the boys. After telling the youngsters that he is proud of them, Andersen remarks that 'Every man wants his children to be better than he was. You are.' Unlike the achievements Dunson finally sees in Matt in *Red River*, the boys of *The Cowboys* have not really achieved a great deal at the point of Andersen's death, but their real achievement, at least by the logic of the genre, is reserved for the competence of their revenge against the cattle rustlers, and their successful taking of the herd to market. The memory of Andersen endorses the violent revenge of the boys, with the discrepancy of their youth against the more advanced years of the rustlers forming an inverse parallel with Andersen's defiance of the younger man. In addition, the implied ideological coherence of the climactic violence - in contrast to the insistent *incoherence* marking acts of violence in other Westerns of the period - suggests the renewal of the 'old' conservative generic values, which in this film is represented by Wayne's presence. Here, the 'old' Western 'father' is remembered by an expression of ideological continuity, in which a very traditional mantle of heroism is passed on to the boys as a sign of their maturation. At the very end of *The Cowboys*, the boys arrange for Andersen's gravestone to be inscribed. As the engraver suggests the words 'Beloved Husband and Father', the boys nod their approval, with, significantly, the Mexican member of the group emphasising their approval in speech. Clearly, this White 'father' was an inclusive Westerner, traditionally tough but a perfect role model, an authoritarian figure who disavows racial prejudice and is consequently accepted by racial Others. Unlike the cattle boss Dunson in *Red River*, Andersen's authority is more palpably 'ideal', and certainly more accommodating, in the sense that he is a *singular*, unchallenged authority figure, whose authoritarian posture is checked by a general air of benevolence. Although this 'father' dies, his death is a heroic sacrifice, striking a symbolic blow for the dominant culture, in the sense that his personal loss is validated by the victory enshrined in the development of the boys under his tutelage; according to the film's narrative, the 'sons' of this 'father' will surely grow to be better men.

Cahill: US Marshal (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1973)

In *Cahill: US Marshal*, Wayne plays a biological father, with the plot centred on his troubled relationship with his two young sons. With their mother dead, Cahill (Wayne) is the only parental figure available to the sons, but Cahill's marshalling duties take him away from his paternal role, resulting in the boys engaging in delinquent activity in their father's absence. Alongside the emphasis on Cahill's family troubles, the marshal also expresses a degree of anxiety over his advancing years, although this is limited to one moment. The perceived 'realism' of Cahill's active-lawman status would otherwise be problematised by repeated references to his ageing, and the film's clear intention is to portray Cahill as a man who can undertake his duties with competence and endure whatever threats and punishments he receives along the way. In so doing, *Cahill: US Marshal* follows in the vein of Wayne's previous characterisations, although the suggestion that Cahill's fatherhood is his biggest burden and source of strain is reminiscent of Wayne's earlier Westerns, such as *Rio Grande*. Here, it is rendered with greater intensity, since Cahill's lack of paternal supervision results in his sons becoming criminals. The failure of the paternal role on the part of Cahill underlines a sense of crisis in performing the role of an authority figure in general, since his paternal failure is a consequence of his role as a state marshal. Having established this problem, the film sets out to reclaim Cahill's paternal authority via his investigation of the crime involving his sons, which aligns his roles as marshal and father, and in which he ultimately proves himself in both spheres of authority.

Thematically, *Cahill: US Marshal* underlines the importance of paternal authority, showing the problems incurred by the father's absence, and the strength of the father's discipline when present. Near the start of the film, the criminal activity of the boys is established - they provide assistance in robbing a bank, to a posse of rogues who have befriended the older son; in the process, the town sheriff is killed. Cahill subsequently arrives in town to find the older son, Danny (Gary Grimes) in jail for a minor offence, alongside his criminal associates. (The men were secreted out of the cell by the younger son while the sheriff was distracted, and placed themselves back in the cell after the crime was committed and the loot hidden.) Cahill registers an expression of anxiety on spotting his son in the cell, and promptly takes umbrage at Danny for not setting a proper example to the younger son, and for neglecting his duties in raising the boy. Danny ripostes 'I aint' his pa', leaving the proper father to question his own paternal role. At this and other moments in the film, Cahill provides an admission of being wrong, a very occasional characteristic of Wayne's screen persona first established in *Red River* (where Wayne was fictively aged). Such specific *admissions*

of wrongness occur with more regularity in Wayne's later Westerns, suggesting a greater sense of reflection being brought by old age. In casting doubt upon their certainty, Wayne's older screen characters effectively question their own authority, in contrast to the assuredness more common to Wayne's earlier characterisations. In *Cahill: US Marshal*, the Wayne character is unsure about the way in which he has fulfilled his paternal role, a concern which he gives full voice to in a later discussion he has with Danny: 'I've been gone a lot of times when you kids needed me. And I've missed a lot too. Missed watching you both grow up. I think about it a lot.' Here, Cahill's distressed admission is contextualised by his reference to being a widower, a fact which he brings up as a means of self-justification. He refers to the last words of Mrs Cahill - 'Go get 'em, J.D.' - and goes on to admit that he's been 'getting 'em ever since.' Yet both his recollection of the dying words and his response are spoken with a sense of remorse, with Cahill looking decidedly rejected. His 'duty' is clearly a burden, and a source of regret; in acceding to Danny's request that he spends more time with his sons, Cahill admits that 'Even grown men need understanding.' Such an expression of vulnerability is extremely rare in Wayne characterisations; in earlier films, but for notable exceptions like *The Searchers*, the Wayne character was simply *understood*, and certainly did not seek 'understanding' himself. Cahill's plea for understanding might emanate from something more than the attendant burdens of his job, as suggested by a later exchange Cahill has with a partner of his: 'Amy and me tried for a lot of years to have children. But maybe they came along too late in my life.' Although the very idea of a Wayne character being anything less than fully potent would typically be unthinkable, in this film the possibility exists, given the anxiety imbuing its central familial thematic. While Cahill's remark could be equally referring to a 'problem' on the part of his wife, the film patently refuses to clarify the matter. Arguably, Cahill's subsequent reference to his anxiety over his age, and an attendant fear of mortality, can be related thematically to sterility, with its connotations of 'deadness'. Although Cahill's previous problems remain a point of speculation, the film underlines his doubts and fears in the present, suggesting an anxious core at the heart of his character.

Unsurprisingly, *Cahill: US Marshal* emphasises the essential durability of Wayne's character, as a means of ameliorating the more problematic character aspects discussed above. The film begins with a very direct expression of authority, in which Cahill successfully takes on a posse of outlaws single-handedly; the men laugh scornfully at the perceived absurdity of the ageing marshal's tenacity in taking them on. When the shooting starts, a freeze-frame holds the image of Cahill firing, his shotgun held at arm's length with casual ease, thereby encapsulating his strength. Cahill is wounded twice in the film; he is shot in the arm during the opening confrontation, and he

receives a knife in the shoulder in the final confrontation with the bank robbers. Both these wounds are commented on by Cahill's youngest son with the same remark, 'You're bleeding again', engendering the same reply of 'Goes with the badge.' Cahill endures these wounds with ease, as part of the job, as a consequence of his duty. Such a stoical acceptance of corporeal damage on the part of the Wayne character is resonant in terms of Wayne's real experience with cancer, which served to strengthen the actor's image in the latter phase of his career, suggesting a man whose body could not be subdued. At the end of *Cahill: US Marshal*, there is another freeze-frame, of Cahill walking with his sons, their arms around each other in mutual support. The image affirms Cahill's paternal authority, with his sons back firmly (and quite literally) under his wing. The image is much the same as the familial freeze-frame at the end of *Big Jake*, but in the case of *Cahill: US Marshal* the reunited family has only one authority figure at its helm, with no maternal figure present in the film. Given the 'softened' representation of paternalism in the film, one might consider Wayne's character in terms of Deborah Thomas' argument concerning the occasional adoption of a dual paternal/maternal identity in Wayne's roles (1996: 78). The absence of the mother in this film serves to strengthen such a characterisation, and in this sense the final image suggests the all-incorporative father, who can ultimately function without a mother figure being present. The freeze-frame marks the succession of an affirmative image of paternal authority over the previous failure of Cahill's paternal authority, although the image of paternal authority in the film is considerably less regressive than the adopted image in *Big Jake*. The 'softened' characterisation of Cahill attests to the strength of the image of a more gentle, benevolent paternalism marking the majority of Wayne's films in this period (with the possible exception of *Rio Lobo* and *Big Jake*), a characterisation which both suited the ageing Wayne and helped to define the actor against the increasingly cynical and violent characters occupying the lead role in the other Westerns of the period. Retaining a sense of authority but with a benevolent edge, Wayne's characters function as a nostalgic sampling of a model of masculinity still possible within the context of an increasingly disillusioned generic and social context. That *Cahill: US Marshal*, like *Big Jake*, portrays the restitution of the family, at the behest of the father, additionally registers a sense of 'family values' being reaffirmed by Wayne, against a cultural background in which such values were being increasingly denigrated, as part of an overall 'critique' of the dominant ideology. While the wayward sons in the culture-at-large may have been too often unchecked, Wayne could be finally relied upon to keep his own house in order, even if an initial filial transgression had occurred. Ultimately, paternal authority is shown as a guarantee of familial authority.

In this latter period, Wayne's Western heroes came to assume a broadly similar characterisation, representing a sense of stability in comparison to the considerable oscillation marking the tonal nature of his roles from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. While the 'father' formed a consistent character type during this earlier period, the tonal nature of the characterisation - essentially whether coherent or incoherent - differed to a substantial degree. The primary focus of the films examined above is a recurring characterisation of the prototypical 'father' (most explicitly in *Big Jake*, *The Cowboys*, and *Cahill: US Marshal*). In contrast to the authoritarian 'father' first established in *Red River*, the 'fathers' of the later films are undeniably more humane characterisations, by which patriarchal authority is tempered by admissions of vulnerability and regret, a melancholic sense of familial distance (in *Big Jake* and *Cahill: US Marshal*), and, in the latter film, an explicit *initial* admission of paternal failure. Simultaneously, all of the films inscribe Wayne's paternalism as something of an 'immovable rock', in John Raisbeck's words (1973: 224), by which Wayne's return to the family (or the surrogate family of *The Cowboys*) marks the return of absent authority to 'correct' a familial problem (the return of the grandson and the remasculinisation of the family in *Big Jake*, the masculinisation of the 'family' in *The Cowboys*, and the victory of paternal authority over delinquent sons in *Cahill: US Marshal*).

Speculatively, this narrative theme can be linked to the social context of America in the 1970s, with Wayne's 'correction' of juvenile rebellion assuming a contemporary resonance in the light of the period's counter-cultural movement. In this sense, Wayne's embodiment of an effective and yet benevolent paternal authority functions as a metaphor for a model of authority lacking in the contemporary climate, where, as Robin Wood has argued, the 'questioning of authority' which arose from the loss of Vietnam and the attendant domestic social fragmentation spread 'ultimately to patriarchy itself: social institutions, the family, the symbolic figure of the Father in all its manifestations' (1986: 50). By showing that such authority could still be expressed by a resonant American icon evoked a sense of reassurance, while the inscribed benevolence acted as a caveat, expressing the sense that Wayne's authority was unlike the apparently more brutal enactment of contemporary authority, and more akin to a more benevolent, and successful past enactment of authority (the varied cultural receptions of World War Two and Vietnam being a key determinant of this process). The function of nostalgia in this process is clear, and *The Cowboys* offers the most significant example of a nostalgic underpinning of Wayne's narrative role. As I suggested in my discussion of the film, Wayne's character evokes his role in *Red River*, but the specific nostalgic effect is one of amelioration, with the belligerent, authoritarian persona of *Red River* being replaced by a more benevolent persona, a

grandfatherly figure strong enough to put up a good fight against a callous foe, and open enough to admit his fears; his tutelage of the boys confirms their path to a 'proper' masculinity, which is inscribed in their zealous revenge against the significantly 'hippie'-looking villain. In these films, Wayne's paternalism offers itself as an emblem of necessitated authority, but the humanisation of the modelled authority ensures that it sits comfortably with the later Wayne's screen persona, and with the changing cultural perception of authority during the same period.

While the principal determinant of the Wayne persona during this period is his characterisation of a benevolent yet effective patriarch, the additional key signifier of character in the period is an emphasis on endurance and durability, a concept discussed by Deborah Thomas in relation to the Wayne persona in general (1996: 79), but I would argue that it is in his later films that this quality becomes more apparent, both by narrative underlining and the reality of Wayne's seniority, which inscribed this quality with greater resonance. Rooster Cogburn can still uphold the law despite his corporeal deficiencies, John Chisum can indeed 'keep going on', and Big Jake returns to mete justice on villainy as a 'resurrected' man. The quality of endurance is reinforced by the affirmative references to the Wayne character's stability, where, as in *The Train Robbers*, 'He aint' changed' is transformed from a dismissive statement to one of appreciation for an unbending character. In the somewhat laudatory *True Grit* sequel, *Rooster Cogburn*, Cogburn is described thus: 'I look at you with your burnt-out face and your big belly and your bear-like paws...and I have to say you're a credit to the whole male sex.' The 'real' signifiers of Wayne's ageing are presented as signifiers that make the man, rendering Cogburn as an 'authentic' hero, a man whose apparent deficiencies are inverted as signs of durability and endurance. What all of these films point to is a sense of reassurance, that the ageing hero can still overcome the opposition, can still command authority, and, even when he dies, be assured of the continuity of his legacy, as in *The Cowboys*. Were *Rooster Cogburn* the final film of Wayne's career, his legacy as a Western hero *par excellence* would end on a note of such optimism. However, optimism would not be the final statement to emanate from a Wayne Western. In his last Western (and indeed last film), Wayne would again play a paternally-inscribed hero, but one whose demise was foregrounded from the outset, echoing *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, but with added intensity, given that Wayne himself was dying.

6) WAYNE - *THE SHOOTIST*

At the end of a forty-five year long career as a star, and moreover an icon, of a genre which incessantly affirmed the enduring strength of the protagonist in the face of (often multifaceted) adversity, Wayne's last Western role, in his last film, was of a terminally-ill ex-gunfighter. Given that Wayne's own physical decline was very apparent by the mid-point of the 1970s (he was finally to die of cancer in 1979), the significance of the context informing the production and reception of *The Shootist* in 1976 cannot be overstated. Although there was no specific public knowledge of his illness at the time, the fact that he had the disease before, and was clearly growing old, underlined in a very real sense the limits of Wayne's mortality, and the resonance of a film concerning the last days of his terminally-ill character. Wayne's advanced seniority, coupled with his iconicity, lent a considerable symbolic aura to his presence in *The Shootist*. Wayne's iconicity, arguably at its greatest height by the 1970s - by which time his stance on the Vietnam war cemented his political iconicity as a particular kind of American 'patriot', while his continuing presence as one of the few long-established stars still actively working in the genre cemented his generic iconicity - determined his screen presence in such a manner as to underline a symbiotic relationship between Wayne and the Western, suggesting a symbolic embodiment of the latter by the former, as if Wayne was a 'father' of the Western. The positioning of Wayne *as* the Western in this sense constituted something of a double-edged sword, since as Wayne came to be resolutely identified with the genre in its period of substantial cultural prominence, so he continued to be identified with the genre when it was in a state of fundamental decline, as it was by 1976. Thus iconically defined, Wayne's advanced seniority lent an air of resonant finality to *The Shootist*. As Wayne was old, so the Western was; and as Wayne was close to death, so, ultimately, was the Western.

As I have previously delineated at some length, the Western was a fading genre in the 1970s. Two recurring and interrelated narrative themes of the Western in this period are found in *The Shootist*. Firstly, the film has a modern setting (1901), in which the values and persons associated with the Old West come to be viewed as anachronistic and fated to fade away at the behest of 'progress'. Secondly, the film addresses the mortality of the Western hero. In a genre which increasingly focused on the closing off of avenues open to the hero, developing the post-war generic motif of social exclusion to the point of emphasising the impossibility of the hero's continued existence in an unaccommodating milieu, the ultimate expression of exclusion came to be the death of

the hero.[1] *The Shootist* utilises these motifs to their fullest extent, although in so doing the film makes an attempt to ameliorate the problematic fact of the Wayne character's death, via the familiar route of making it seem like a heroic sacrifice, as in *The Alamo* and *The Cowboys*. In the final shoot-out, J.B. Books (Wayne) dies, although he dies smiling, safe in the knowledge that the boy to whom he has been a mentor, Gillom (Ron Howard), implicitly elects to disavow a future of violence, by discarding his gun. The end of the film is thus incoherent to an extent, in that it both 'celebrates' Books' final performance as a gunfighter, as a means of 'going out in style', and problematises his status as a role-model in finally rejecting this crucial aspect of his persona, evidencing his type of 'old' heroism as a literal dead-end.

Books is a distinctly vulnerable character. While his body slowly deteriorates, he attempts to live out the rest of his days in dignity and in privacy, foregoing his renowned past. Books' predicament arises from the resonance of his identity, which comes to be public knowledge in the town he inhabits, alongside the news that he is dying. The heroic label is thus rendered as an inescapable identity, echoing the tragic focus of *The Gunfighter* (Gregory Peck's fatal inability to escape the identity of a (retired) gunfighter). By the end of *The Shootist*, Books is dead, but through a suggestively heroic enactment, rather than through the cancer, after he challenges three of the town's more nefarious individuals to a duel. In a conventional sense, the film underlines Books' heroic qualities. The film constantly emphasises that while Books was very competent with a gun, he never used it without good cause, thus invoking the crucial ideological tenet of the Western which suggests that violence *per se* is not wrong, and can only be judged according to a variety of contextual issues. Wayne's screen image - with a few notable exceptions - depended on one's acceptance of his violence as justified, as the victim deserving of the violence, ultimately because Wayne, unlike his victim, would 'obviously' have a moral code. *The Shootist* establishes Books' code at the very start of the film, when his voice-over says, 'I won't be wronged, insulted, or laid a hand on. I don't do these things to other people, so I expect the same of them.' To further clarify matters, Gillom's voice-over explains, 'He wasn't an outlaw. Fact is for awhile he was a lawman.' Books is thus an affirmative hero, with a background of legal propriety, but he is, crucially, a hero whose mortality is foregrounded from the outset, and, whose heroism is explicitly part of the past, and therefore anachronistic (as Tom Doniphon is in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). It is Books' embodiment of an essentially regressive identity, arguably, which leads Gillom to finally reject 'heroism', even more so than his being witness to the potentially

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[1] In such notable films as *Hombre*, *Bandolero!*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Wild Rovers*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, and *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*.

fatal implications of being a gunfighter (Wayne's character suffers an atypically bloody demise). *The Shootist* is very much 'about' the myth of Wayne, but the myth is located in the starkly 'real' context of Wayne's ageing and impending mortality, and the acute decline of the Western genre.

Characterised within this narrative scenario, Wayne's role once again confers upon him a paternal identity, through his relationship with the character of Gillom, the adolescent son of the landlady of the boarding house Books inhabits. The characterisation of the 'father' in *The Shootist* departs from the previous films inasmuch as Wayne plays a dying 'father', giving rise to a prolonged sense of mortality from the outset (as in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). The film begins by accentuating Wayne's advanced years, with a montage of clips from Wayne's earlier roles, his comparatively youthful appearance accentuating the historical distance of these roles from the role Wayne plays here (as if to emphasise this sense of distance - nearly forty years - the *Rio Bravo* clip is decolorised). The montage portrays these earlier images of Wayne as moments in the life of his character in *The Shootist*, self-consciously underlining the centrality of the Wayne hero in the genre over time, and the mythic and iconic allure of the actor. (As Steven Albert suggests, the fact that the film clips thematically portray central moments in American history - such as the Indian wars, the Civil War, and the construction of the railroad - reinforces Wayne's iconicity, symbolically identifying him with the 'real' history of the West (1981: 11).) The beginning of the film is thus over-determined; alongside a heavy crescendo on the score when Wayne's credit comes up, one is led to understand that *The Shootist* is as much about Wayne as it is about his character. The montage affects a sense of nostalgia, but in so doing attention is drawn towards Wayne's very real ageing. The opening moments of *The Shootist* underline the fact that Books is an old man whose time is nigh. On arriving in the town of Carson City, Books is marginalised by the trappings of civilisation, which he is alienated from both by virtue of its suggestively Eastern influence and its modernity; after all, this is 1901. A tram line set in the street suggests the ultimate oncoming of the streetcar, and Books finds himself riding behind a figurative precursor of the streetcar, a horse-drawn tram. A low-angle shot obscures the image of Books riding by foregrounding the large wheel of the tram, suggesting that the type of hero represented by Books is in a sense condemned to the background, to obscurity, by the forces of modernity. Books then comes across a newspaper boy, who announces the death of Queen Victoria, like Books, an ageing figure defined by the past (Books later refers to her as a 'museum piece' who 'outlived her time'), and a suitably maternal counterpart to the paternalistic Books. The introduction of a 'real' historical dimension in the film is significantly concerned with mortality. A steam-drawn cart driven by Jay Cobb (Bill McKinney),

one of the men Books ultimately confronts in the saloon, then stops in front of Books, who is abruptly told to get out of the way. In the ensuing argument, Cobb unbuttons his holster, and Books gives him a menacing stare, which unnerves Cobb. Seeking to ease the situation, Gillom, who accompanies and works for Cobb, suggests that Cobb let it go, since Books 'looks all tuckered out'. Reflecting on this after the cart departs, Books admits to himself, 'You're right there, son', as he makes his way to the surgery of the local doctor. For all his assuredness in threatening situations, Books is essentially a victim - of the passing of time, of ageing, and, as his doctor's visit establishes, of cancer.

The casting of James Stewart as Dr Hostetler, who informs Books of his terminal illness, brings another self-conscious dimension to *The Shootist*. Like Wayne although to a much lesser degree, Stewart was one of the established Western stars of the post-World War Two period, a prominent and identifiable generic figure. This was to be the last Western for both actors, and the sense of mortality pervading this scene derives not only from the narrative revelation of Books' cancer, and the sparse lighting, but also from its featuring of two ageing icons of the genre, whose only other Western together was the distinctly morbid *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Edward Gallafent has discussed the process of actors ageing in terms of the 'audience's sense of an end of a life - or of an era', given the length of time encompassing an audience's experience of the actor (1996: 241). 'This awareness', he argues, 'deepens our acknowledgement of mortality: our understanding that the likelihood of an actor's death or retirement can mean that any screen role may now be a last appearance' (ibid). Although Wayne's other roles in the 1970s could have been conceived in such a light, the morbid focus of *The Shootist* reinforces a sense of finality, especially in the way it evokes the disease that nearly killed Wayne in 1964. As Books, it is Wayne's body that is the specific focus of this scene. Wayne, as *the* generic icon, and, 'as a star whose meaning is profoundly corporeal' (Thomas 1996: 75), figuratively embodies the post-war filmic idea of the West, as determined by mainstream American ideology. The tall, broad, strong, physically dominating body perfectly suited an idea of the kind of body survival in the West necessitated, and the kind of body that could make 'progress' in the West, could extend and develop it. In Wayne's later films, his body is still 'strong', albeit overweight, but in this film, his body is the *problem*. Wayne had earlier portrayed characters who were physically deficient - such as the paralysed, wheelchair-bound Frank Wead in *Wings of Eagles* and the one-eyed Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* and *Rooster Cogburn* - but in *The Shootist* the problem is all the more final. Much of the emotional force of Wayne's presence in the film derives from the evident pain of his slow deterioration, which the film offers as powerful admissions of vulnerability.

Books sits on a cushion when he rides in carriages, and he drinks laudanum to ease the pain. It is in the more subtle details of Wayne's performance, however, that a real sense of physical and emotional fragility is betrayed. His movement is slow, mild exertion leaves him exhausted, he winces on drinking the laudanum, his speech is low and halting, he sighs, and his eyes are often downcast. His pain is read on his face as much as it is registered in his body.

In his seeking of privacy, Books sets himself up in a boarding house, but word spreads of his whereabouts and he receives a number of unwelcome visitors. They are set up in opposition to Books, as representatives of the modern, overly 'civilised' Western society Books finds himself in. The sheriff of Carson City, Thibido (Harry Morgan) visits Books to tell him that he is not wanted in town, as his presence could be disruptive and invite challengers with a point to prove. On finding out Books' imminent fate, Thibido joyfully (and gratuitously) begins to dance in front of him, a spectacle which fills Books' face with an expression of loss, which perhaps has as much to do with his regret at witnessing an apparently fitter body than with his obvious disgust at Thibido's lack of feeling. A pulp journalist called Dobkins (Richard Lenz) is Books' next visitor. He calls on Books to attempt to gather material for a book on his earlier days as a renowned shootist. Dobkins points out to Books that the information he intends to gather is desired by 'the papers in the East in particular', and proceeds to ask Books questions of an inward nature, which Books takes exception to. As Dobkins asks whether Books 'brood(s) after the deed is done', Books' downcast expression suggests the affirmative. Books forcefully sends Dobkins away - by kicking him up the backside - but in so doing he becomes exhausted, leaning against the porch and breathing heavily. Although Books is therefore forceful in his own way when dealing with both men, his own physical - and emotional - frailty is betrayed. In addition, Dobkins' reference to Eastern newspapers suggests the encroachment, and growing influence, of Eastern mores into the ever-marginalised Western milieu. This theme is developed in Thibido's second visit, when after blatantly suggesting that Books is an anachronism ('The old days are gone and you don't know it'), the sheriff lists the developments that have come to town, such as indoor plumbing, electricity, and the streetcar. He finishes by telling Books that, after he has died, 'We'll have a goddamn Garden of Eden here', raising the possibility of the end of the desert, given the genre's typical opposition of garden and desert as a continuing negotiation of the principal opposition of an excessively cultivated civilisation (Thibido) and the wilderness (Books). (Again, the film evokes *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, which signalled the end of the 'known' West in Hallie/Vera Miles' line: 'It was once a wilderness. Now it's a garden.' In addition, the film identified Wayne with the wilderness, as it identified

Stewart with the developing 'civilisation'.) Books' last visitor, an estranged lover called Serepta (Sheree North), reveals that she is in league with Dobkins, cynically proposing a quick marriage to give the author of the book to be ghost-written by Dobkins as 'Serepta Books', to increase its saleability. Again, Serepta emphasises that the book would 'sell in the East like hot cakes'. Books is here faced with the prospect of becoming civilised and Easternised to the full, through marriage and through commodification as a mythical gunfighter to please Eastern consumers. In rebuking Serepta, Books asserts his specifically Western identity as one based more on 'reality', rather than an Eastern-modelled myth.

His status as a gunfighter is the determining aspect of Books' persona, but he is forced on the defensive when his past is referred to; indeed, he is a victim of his persona, like Gregory Peck's Jimmy Ringo in *The Gunfighter*. The principal tension in *The Shootist* exists in the relationship between Books and Bond Rogers (Lauren Bacall), his landlady, who epitomises the civilised voice of 'reason' when questioning his past and present identity. The film intimates a degree of romantic tension between the two characters, but they are quite clearly an incompatible couple, despite their joint maturity; as in the majority of his later Westerns, romance functions as a nostalgic memory. Books is a man of the past, whose identity has no obvious place or function in the developing civilised milieu of Carson City. Bond, on the other hand, as a hotelier and a mother, has a social commitment to the town, and her espousal of 'civilised' attitudes further suggests her compatibility with the town of the present and, implicitly, the future. In his self-imposed distance from the town, and his problematic relationship with Bond, Books adopts a socially alienated identity which defines him in opposition to the encroachment of civilisation, as in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Bond's conflict with Books is with his reputation and persona, which she views as a malevolent intrusion into her 'civilised' house. On one of his first nights in the house, Books shoots a pair of would-be assassins who break into his room; in the process, a shot gas lamp sets his bed on fire, as if figuratively registering Books' disruptive presence. The following morning, Bond rails against Books for the violence he has committed, to which Books responds, 'I was defending myself', a justifiable point which affirms the practicality of his actions against Bond's overly idealistic pacifism. Books' defensive attitude does, however, contain a strain of vulnerability, which is later revealed in a more open manner. He admits to Bond his feelings of isolation ('I've been full of alone lately'), and in an angry exchange his acute sense of mortality ('I'm a dying man, scared of the dark'). This last line follows Bond's reference to the heroic image she thinks Books would conceive of himself - 'a godlike creature' - with Books' reply serving to deflate any such image, replacing it with a realisation of the heroic figure

who is not immortal and not without fear. (By arranging the final confrontation as a means of at least dying heroically (even if he is unheroically shot in the back), Books ends up playing the hero, but essentially out of a sense of desperation.) His exchanges with Bond effect a deconstruction of the Western hero prototype, most obviously through the expression of vulnerability, but also through the reference to isolation, since isolation was, to varying degrees, a defining characteristic of the Western hero.[2] By the end of the film, Bond has come to accept Books, but only moments before his death.

Bond's widowhood, and Books' seniority, allows for a reading of him as a father-figure to Gillom, which is suggested in their scenes together. Books initially angers Gillom by calling him 'boy'; when Gillom upbraids him, Books offers a slight smile, suggesting his admiration of the youth's tenacity. Later, his fatherly gestures include giving Gillom a 'do what your mother tells you' glance when Gillom briefly objects to being told to chop firewood, reproaching Gillom for swearing, and giving him shooting lessons. This last act of paternal instruction is particularly resonant in terms of its function in generic lore, which usually inscribes such activity as a crucial aspect of masculine development, as learned wisdom to be handed down from an elder to a younger man. Here, as always, the ritual must be *exclusively* masculine; Books instructs Gillom to not tell his mother of their activity. The irony is, of course, that the lessons Gillom receives turn out to be in a sense unrequired, since Gillom throws away the gun at the end of *The Shootist*, re-entering the world of civilisation outside the saloon without one of the definitive symbolic markers of Western manhood, and *the* defining marker of Books' masculinity, however much he refused to revel in it himself. The implied refusal of Gillom to take up the gun in the future makes Books' death all the more final, since his mantle, with all its legal propriety, is not carried on (in contrast to the ending of *The Cowboys*). In this sense, the significance of Books' adoption of a paternal role is that he is a dying father-figure, which attests to the symptomatic nature of the film in relation to the decline of the Western, in particular its increasing lack of coherent ideological reassurance. The climax of *The Shootist* is notably incoherent, in that it revels in Books' last stand but then implicitly critiques it by revealing it as a model of masculinity unworthy of Gillom to follow.

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[2] The Western hero's relative sense of isolation derived from his suspicion of all things social, ranging from settling down in a 'civilised' town to marriage. The strength of emphasis on the isolated hero differs substantially from film to film, but it has always been an undercurrent in the representation of heroes, from the Westerns of William S. Hart onwards. While a common attribute of Western heroism, it has never been an unproblematic condition, as evidenced by those films which suggest a forcible sense of regret on the part of the departing hero (such as *Shane*). In *The Shootist*, the sense of isolation is enforced by the hero's impending mortality in addition to his social marginalisation.

In his reading of the climax, and specifically Gillom's refusal of the gunfighter role, Steven Albert argues that it attests to an ideological perspective that underlines the inferiority of the young and the superiority of elder authority figures, 'who are, in turn, innately competent, innately wise, and (hence) innately powerful' (1981: 10). While Books is largely characterised by competence and intelligence, the climax of the film evidences the end of the 'power' in question, with the immediate narrative determination of Gillom's decision being his seeing, in visceral detail, the end result of the 'heroic' life. That Books' 'power' is not transferred at the end of *The Shootist* serves precisely to *not* underline a sense of ideological reassurance, since the hero's 'power' is seen to be gone forever. Books becomes a myth consigned to the past, and his own death is mirrored in the implied death of his prototypical heroic figure. Books' deliberately enacted 'one last stand' represents the death of the last Western hero, his overtly bloody demise (in comparison to the other films in which Wayne dies) in this sense compounding the end of a filmic tradition embodied by Wayne, the 'clean death' of one era replaced by the bloody death more attuned to the era of *The Wild Bunch*. Indeed, bearing in mind Wayne's generic configuration as the Western's supreme patriarchal figure, which had particular resonance as Wayne (and the Western) reached seniority, the climax suggestively inscribes the death of the 'father' and his traditions, with Gillom returning to his mother and the 'civilised' world of maternal authority. Finally, there is no place left in this Western milieu for the Wayne hero. As in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, the hero fades into history, a relic of the past, the end of a tradition, but surely the emphasis here is all the more final, given the inescapable fact of Wayne's age, and the fundamental decline of the genre that gave birth to his screen image.

The parallel that exists between Wayne's very last Western and his previous 'last' Western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, which was 'last' in the sense that it was Wayne's last Ford-directed Western, thus symbolically marking the end of an era, merits further consideration of the relationship between the two films, and specifically the narrative role of the Wayne character in each. As Steven Albert notes, *The Shootist* 'turns abruptly away from the good-natured self-caricature that had governed most of Wayne's films in the early 70s', marking 'a regression to a mood and feeling that had not been associated with Wayne since the Ford Westerns of the early 60s' (1981: 9). Both Tom Doniphon and J.B. Books are the last of a dying breed, which underlines the potential nostalgic valour surrounding their character and the morbid finality of their presence. They are defined by their anachronism in a narrative setting alternately framed around a future modernity or set in a 'real time' modern setting, with their attachment to the Old West simultaneously underlining their iconic status and the

inevitability of their demise, even if the narrative has already established the latter. Moreover, the specific circumstances surrounding the demise of both Doniphon and Books are problematised to the extent that a suicidal imperative is suggested. Doniphon's narrative fate is determined by his own maintenance of the lie which disavows his own heroic identity and condemns him to anonymity. While his attempted suicide (the arson attack on his own home) does not serve to suggest that his actual death was a suicide, his self-inflicted despondency surely helps to hasten forward his inevitable and premature demise. Quite unambiguously, Books opts for a suicidal course of action in challenging his three opponents to a duel; indeed, his actions in the immediately preceding narrative, such as having his gravestone prepared, point to his preparation towards this end, a heroic but lethal last stand. There is possibly no less resonant a thematic device in an 'End of the West' Western than to suggest that the only viable route open to the hero is to choose death, since life is unsustainable (as most emphatically represented in *The Wild Bunch*).

However nostalgic *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and *The Shootist* are in narrating the end of an era, the end of the era in question determines the death of the Wayne character. In itself, the problematic basis of this would be intense enough. However, on consideration of the historical context of both films, and *The Shootist* in particular, the problematic basis becomes intensified. As Ford's last Wayne-starring Western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* marked the end of an era, and with it a sense that the possibilities open to Ford in representing a wholly affirmative picture of the Western hero were more limited than before, following on from the direction Ford took in *The Searchers*. If that film marked the death of the concept of the Western hero, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* marked the literal death of the hero, and his passing into the realm of a tragically anonymous history. As the last (Western)[3] film of a 'partnership' that had begun with *Stagecoach* in 1939, the film measures a substantial sense of distance in the conceptual notion of the hero and the portrayal of his narrative fate. The end of the Ford/Wayne Western collaboration signalled 'the end' in more ways than one. Ford's Westerns had changed, and with them the representation of the Wayne character within the narrative. The celebrated notion of heroism, forming the bedrock of the traditional Western, had effectively reached a point of no return. By the time of *The Shootist* in 1976, the genre had reached a point of no return, its decline in a period of increasing modernity (from the generic perspective, by which its icons became fewer and fewer as they aged or died) echoing the enforced 'decline' of the Wayne character in the narrative's 'modern' setting. As such an overdetermined icon of the Western, Wayne's mortal presence in the film assumed a broad, macrocosmic

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[3] Wayne starred with Lee Marvin in Ford's *Donovan's Reef* in 1963.

resonance, encapsulating the concomitant decline of the genre. This sense of finality is further emphasised by Gillom's rejection of the model of heroism offered up by Books, which represents in a wider sense a rejection of heroism itself, a determining foundation of the Western. While *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* more optimistically portrayed the fact that Doniphon, however anonymous in general terms, continued to remain a part of the lives of his contemporaries, *The Shootist* portrays the moment of 'letting go', with Gillom returning to an emasculated existence, in the arms of the mother, in the streets of the town on its way to becoming a 'Garden of Eden'. Figuratively, the 'father' is dead, and resolutely consigned to the past. In both films, the death of the 'father' is seen to bring about the death of the Old West, in the sense that both Doniphon and Books symbolically embody the Old West in conceptual terms. While the paternal qualities of Wayne's screen persona were well established in 1962, by 1976 his paternal identity had reached its peak. The death of the 'father' in *The Shootist* effects a generic void, inasmuch as the definitive Western icon is seen to die, and the values which defined his existence are rejected. The reality of Wayne's ageing, and his previous brush with cancer, enforced the sense of finality ever-present in *The Shootist*. With the paternally-determined and iconic Wayne hero dying and finally dead, it is as if the Western is itself doomed.

7) CLINT EASTWOOD - INTRODUCTION

For an actor whose professional abilities have often been doubted, Clint Eastwood has generated a considerable amount of both journalistic and critical comment. Eastwood's popularity, and his iconic status in American popular culture - largely derived from his positioning as the last (and sole surviving) icon of the Western - ensures critical interest, although his performances are often conceived as mere 'presences' which have little or no recourse to 'acting' as such. (According to Vincent Canby, 'Eastwood doesn't act in motion pictures; he is framed in them' (quoted in Smith 1993: 209).) The very 'lack' Eastwood is often believed to embody - a solid sense of characterisation - has a number of interesting consequences, particularly as the great thrust of critical interest in Eastwood has focused on his brand of masculinity, in conjunction with his iconicity. In apparently lacking characterisation - or, more accurately, in often de-emphasising characterisation - Eastwood represents a masculinity that seems monolithic and indecipherable. As Sergio Leone, his first noteworthy Western director, suggested, 'Eastwood moves like a sleepwalker between explosions and hails of bullets, and he is always the same - a block of marble' (quoted in Knapp 1996: 29). Over the years since his first Westerns with Leone, Eastwood has developed his performance style from the initial possession of an almost wholly expressionless visage to a face marked by particular tics and recognisable expressions, as if attempting to imbue himself with a more fully-delineated, identifiable persona. Yet his star identity, like John Wayne's, is subject to a variety of critical interpretations, the various arguments of which essentially centre on the coherence of that identity, and its sense of heroism, as contextualised by notions of masculinity and 'Americanness'.

The perceived monolithic qualities of Eastwood link him to Wayne in a general sense, although the precise nature of the 'monolith' in question differs considerably. If Wayne was often (inaccurately) conceived as such, it was as an image that was simplistic and thus unproblematic, requiring little further analysis. By contrast, the apparently monolithic nature of Eastwood's image is critically perceived as problematic, inasmuch as it assumes the status of deliberate imperceptibility, a 'block of marble' whose corporeal solidity is as incoherent as Wayne's is ostensibly coherent. Eastwood's screen image was problematised from the outset by his first starring roles in Sergio Leone's 'dollars' trilogy, ensuring Eastwood's identification with the Western at a crucial point of generic transformation. The emergence of the Italian-produced Westerns coincided with a dramatic decline in American production, their more problematic representation of the Western hero establishing the parameters of representation to be subsequently evidenced in the domestic product, notably as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s. In

particular, the Leone Westerns rendered Eastwood's identity as an *American* hero problematic, serving to undermine the authenticity of Eastwood's identity as an American star.

A Fistful of Dollars, *For a Few Dollars More* and *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* were released in America between 1967 and 1968, thus effectively cementing Eastwood's stardom in a relatively short period of time. The commercial success of the films in America announced Eastwood's box-office credentials; although he appeared in the *Rawhide* series between 1959 and 1966, and had small, usually unbilled roles in eleven films over a ten year period prior to his 'dollars' work, by the end of 1971 Eastwood had starred in nine films, of which *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* and *Dirty Harry* were by far the most commercially successful (McGilligan 2000: 157/210). The arrival of Eastwood as a new American (film) star, whose 'Americanness' seemed to be underlined by his identification with the Western genre, was announced, however, in a series of foreign films which sought to deconstruct much of the generic modelling of the Western, most notably the narrative role of the hero. As I will explore this issue at length in the following chapter, it will suffice to note here that the deconstruction of the hero centred on his amorality and lack of identity. Consequently, the *essential* 'Americanness' of Eastwood's first starring roles was rendered problematic; the principal quality of the Man with No Name was an acute sense of alienation. According to Richard Combs, Eastwood's foreign work marked 'the first step in the creation, the direction, of a persona which would be built on a series of alienation effects' (1992: 12). In the model of heroism he offered, the Eastwood character was alienated from the traditions of the American Western; although he is identifiably American by virtue of his (occasional) speech, his 'Otherness' is suggested not only by a lack of morality, but his lack of a history, his lack of definably 'American' apparel, and his lack of a name or even a nickname.

The critical approaches to Eastwood adopted by Edward Gallafent and Paul Smith, the authors of the two most rigorously academic book-length studies currently available, differ in respect of their emphasis on masculinity, and their reading of Eastwood as an ideological construct. While Gallafent is broadly concerned with issues of identity in terms of the narrative spaces which define it, or Eastwood's representation of 'the possibilities of life in America' (1994: 8), Smith is more explicitly concerned with issues pertaining to the body and masculinity, with Eastwood's embodiment of a 'body politic' which is ideologically resonant. While Smith reads Eastwood's persona as largely regressive in this sense, Gallafent reads the ideological currents in Eastwood's work as more of a symptom of the problematic sociopolitical context against which his

stardom was cemented, rather than a reaction to it. In their respective discussions of the 'dollars' trilogy, the different approaches of Gallafent and Smith are made clear, with their respective emphasis on national identity and masculinity, even if in the case of these films Smith emphasises a more problematic reading of Eastwood than does Gallafent. The latter characterises No Name as essentially benign because of his obvious 'Americanness', citing examples of his benignity from the film. As Gallafent argues of *A Fistful of Dollars*, 'we see a plot in which a lone American, caught in a place that is both alien and deadly, proves to contain within himself the impulse towards benign action' (1994: 20). Yet both the essential 'Americanness' and benignity of the No Name character is disputed by Smith, who emphasises the aberrant qualities of No Name in the context of a film which forms 'a critique of the White dominance that is fostered and celebrated in other Westerns' (1993: 13). Other critics have made similar points. Combs discusses No Name as 'a hero so extreme in his cynicism, his aloofness, his Latin ruthlessness' (1992: 14), arguing that a sense of placelessness informs this and Eastwood's other narratives, suggesting 'an actor whose speciality is not being there' (ibid: 12). The emphasis in the 'dollars' films seems to be on a character who cannot be fully grasped, who effectively functions only as a mysterious, indefinable presence. Dennis Bingham suggests the ambiguity surrounding No Name's 'Americanness': 'To leave the Eastwood figure unnamed is to decline to locate him in national identity...and in specific time and place' (1994: 174). Appropriately, the subsequent Westerns in which Eastwood is unnamed - *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider* - underline the fact that he is a ghost. Critical reaction to Eastwood's 'dollars' performances has occasionally discussed No Name's perceived deadness. Lee Clark Mitchell describes No Name as 'a living dead man', citing his spectral, automaton-like presence (1996: 238). Vincent Canby, on the trilogy's original release in America, described Eastwood as 'the perfect physical spectre haunting a world' (quoted in Smith 1993: 209), and Dave Kehr has suggested that Eastwood is 'Not just an outsider, he is somehow beyond' (quoted in Knapp 1996: 31). Such accounts suggest the usefulness of a focus on the physicality of Eastwood's screen presence, and the problematic aspects of that presence in terms of its figuration of masculinity.

Smith explores the physicality of Eastwood's screen image in a detailed manner, reading it in problematic terms before subsuming it under a more directly politicised reading of the actor's persona. Smith argues that Leone's trilogy evidences 'the production of a particular kind of masculinity, which Eastwood as actor lives with for the rest of his career' (1993: 10). While Eastwood retains the 'toughness' expected of the Western hero, he ultimately portrays a 'ritualised, stylised, and heavily gestured masculinity' (ibid). The Eastwood character thus functions as a stereotype, as an

emblem of the archetypal White male protagonist of the Western, but an emblem whose masculinity is rendered problematic; such is the ritualised nature of Eastwood's representation that any coherent sense of character is refuted. The plethora of close-ups and fragmented images of parts of the body do not, as such, signify 'the "real man" of the Hollywood imaginary, as construct instead a mere exterior' (1993: 11), a façade of masculinity, the lack of interiority of which suggests an 'almost spectral presence' (ibid: 12). While Gallafent, by emphasising No Name's benign Americanness, underlines the narrative coherence of Eastwood's presence in the Leone films, Smith underlines No Name's/Eastwood's corporeal incoherence. Given Smith's emphasis on the comprehensively 'foreign' nature of the Leone films, he shows little interest in defining No Name as an American, and his subsequent discussion of Eastwood's later Westerns reflects this, in that he reads the American Westerns as appropriations of Eastwood's foreign work. In *High Plains Drifter*, Smith argues, Eastwood is offered as an 'almost perpetual presence', by which 'the White male demigod (is put) back into the centre of the screen' (ibid: 38). Smith suggests that the film evidences a formal re-presentation of Eastwood as the Western hero, in which the 'excessive' stylistic approach of Leone is replaced by more 'conventional' direction in terms of framing and camera movement. Prominently, Eastwood reverts to the standard shot/reverse-shot in many sequences, but Smith notes that the traces of Leone's 'modelling' of Western masculinity remain in the reverse-shots of Eastwood, which by typical narrative logic would offer some sort of reaction; instead, Eastwood (as director and star) presents 'an impassive and unspeaking visage, an objectified image of his own face or body' (ibid).

Smith's subsequent account of the film argues that the Eastwood character assumes a paternal function, particularly in terms of his relationship with the town dwarf, and that this forms the primary thematic drive of the narrative (ibid: 39-42). This is not an area explored by Gallafent, whose account of this central Western in Eastwood's *œuvre* focuses less on an affirmative sense of Eastwood's masculinity than on what seems to be the film's clear emphasis on its more horrific aspects. Symptomatically, Smith's reading fails to consider the prominent suggestion made by the film that the Eastwood character is a ghost, and a ghost who is less an avenging angel than a darker, vengeful manifestation (ironically, Smith's interest in corporeal matters fails him here). While Smith regards *High Plains Drifter* as a film in which Eastwood 'reassert(s)...ownership of the genre' (ibid: 42), Gallafent's reading of the film refers to the suggestion that the Eastwood character is already dead, and discusses the film's apocalyptic depiction of the 'civilised' community (1994: 112-119). Although Gallafent does not pursue this argument as far as he might, his reading thus alludes to the essential fragmentation of the genre, and the aberrance of Eastwood's character as symptomatic of this

fragmentation. Smith's reading suggests Eastwood's embodiment of a more ideal image in this film, but the film alludes less to Eastwood's paternalism than it does his sense of deadness. As such, if Eastwood is to be (arguably) conceived as a 'father' both to the dwarf and implicitly the genre itself, the suggestion that he is a dead 'father' surely implies that the film attests as much to the critical state of the genre as it does to Eastwood's portrayal of an authoritative hero.

The notion of Eastwood as a 'father' forms a limited area of critical interest, although I would argue this is because, unlike John Wayne, Eastwood can only be rarely conceived as a father-figure, and his paternalistic roles are at once far less emphatically paternal. That they are consistently problematic is significant, however, in the context of Eastwood's screen image as set against Wayne's. As a general point, Eastwood's incessantly narcissistic and asocial characterisations do not lend themselves well to notions of paternalism, any more than does his relative lack of traditionally 'authoritative' Western roles in the shape of lawmen or soldiers. (Of the twelve films I will duly examine, he is a lawman in four and a soldier in two, and of those his status is problematised by the fact he is a dead lawman in two films (*High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*) and an ultimately dead soldier in *The Beguiled*.) Paul Smith's reading of Eastwood's character in *High Plains Drifter* as a paternal figure is largely predicated on his reading of the film as ideologically regressive, Eastwood occupying a paternal role in an 'Oedipalised' narrative structure which positions Eastwood as a violent and vengeful 'father' providing a resourceful example to his 'son', the dwarf who observes his raping of an obnoxious woman and his remorseless acts of violence (1993: 40-42). In neglecting to note the rather crucial detail of Eastwood's character being a ghost, however, Smith bases his argument on a misjudged premise, since the 'father' as such exists in an incoherent vacuum, with only a vague and fundamentally unsustainable relationship to the narrative milieu.

If Eastwood is conceived as an authority figure with a leadership role over subordinate characters, then his paternal function can be traced in a number of his films, yet such relationships are regularly problematised by the fact that Eastwood's paternal role lacks a sense of permanence and/or coherence. In *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, his younger 'son' dies shortly after their relationship is established; in *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*, his character is an incoherent narrative presence, lacking a 'real' physical presence; in the non-Westerns *Every Which Way But Loose* and *Any Which Way You Can*, Eastwood is, impossibly, 'father' to an orang-utan. That Eastwood is an unsustainable patriarchal figure, especially in comparison with the almost consistently patriarchal Wayne, is surely significant in terms of the cultural determinants behind

their star images. The positioning of Eastwood's hero in a vaguely counter-cultural role, as suggested by such details as his generically aberrant facial hair and his alienation, ensured that a paternal characterisation was not freely available to him, since the 'father', as a distinctive figure of authority, carried connotations of a role which sat more comfortably with the dominant ideology, and expressed a more conservative, 'square' image of masculinity, during a period which saw the divisive intensification of such characteristics of identity. (Significantly, in Smith's book, the films which account for the strongest affirmations of Eastwood's paternal identity emanate from the 1980s, the decade of dominant conservatism. Eastwood's own fatherhood was increasingly emphasised in publicity in this period; ironically, the films which Smith identifies as portraying Eastwood-as-father are also among his least economically successful films (1993: 246-262).) It would be premature to extend this area of discussion much further at this point, before analysing in detail the representation of masculinity across Eastwood's Westerns.[1] What remains clear from the above account, however, is the problematic 'fit' of Eastwood's character when placed into a mould befitting a seemingly conventional image of masculinity. The specifically cultural context of Eastwood's star image, which largely determined the lack of coherently-realised paternal roles, is of substantial significance in analysing Eastwood, and has informed a large part of the critical discussion on the actor. To conclude this literature review, I will return to considering the arguments of Smith and Gallafent, both of whom read Eastwood's image against the backdrop of American culture.

While both Smith and Gallafent read Eastwood's films in terms of their mediated relationship to American cultural developments (chiefly Vietnam and feminism), Smith reads Eastwood's body of work as representing for the most part an ideologically conservative response as against Gallafent, who explores the possibility that the films evidence a more problematic, somewhat traumatic response. In their respective readings of the ending of *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, for example, both critics refer to the film's apparent negotiation of the immediate post-Vietnam American cultural situation, in which the reconciliation of the cultural divisions opened up by the war was felt to be necessary. Eastwood's film narrates, in a post-Civil War context, the formation of a surrogate family which in turn becomes a social community, and the Eastwood character's relation to this sense of community. At the end of the film, after a discussion with a former adversary in which an oblique reference is made to the

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[1] The ensuing analysis of Eastwood's roles will not, as in the Wayne section, focus on paternalism, since paternalism does not form a definitive part of Eastwood's screen persona, as it does Wayne's. While the issue of the paternal identity will be occasionally discussed, it will be subsumed under the larger issue of Eastwood's respectively aberrant characteristic identities - namely the parodic, castrated, vengeful and paradoxical 'hero'.

ending of a war and the trauma effected by the war, Eastwood rides off into the sunset. While Smith reads the end of the film as suggesting Eastwood will return to the community (1993: 43), thereby invoking the spirit of the conservative traditional Western, Gallafent accounts for a more equivocal climactic tone (1994: 129-130), both critics reading the film according to their own theoretical perspective on the ideological determinants of Eastwood's persona.

The most interesting aspect of Smith's work on Eastwood remains his theoretical perspectives on masculinity and representation. Even if he ultimately ends up eliding some of the more problematic issues he raises in this context, Smith does nonetheless investigate the 'cracks' in the seemingly monolithic masculine image embodied by Eastwood. In his discussion of *The Beguiled*, Smith considers the masochistic trope raised by the film, in which Eastwood plays a wounded Civil War soldier who is 'castrated' (via a leg amputation) and eventually killed by the women of the seminary in which he has sought refuge - and sexual gratification. As Smith notes, the commercial failure of the film can be explained by the grim damage wrought on Eastwood's body, or as he puts it, 'the masochistic stage of such narratives cannot be presented as a complete castration...the possibility of transcendence must always be kept available' (1993: 162). However, Smith does not contextualise the film, as he does others, when the film arguably invites a contextualised reading. Gallafent suggests that the film can be contextualised in terms of Vietnam, bearing in mind its narration of a wounded soldier returning to a 'feminised' society (1994: 100). One might go further and suggest that *The Beguiled*'s emphasis on the castrated male betrays a level of contemporaneous cultural anxiety, the fear that American men were in a sense 'castrated' in losing a war against a perceived weaker (and quite literally feminised) enemy (Jeffords 1989 *passim*).[2]

While *The Beguiled* offers itself as a central example of an intensely problematic Eastwood text as far as his characterisation of masculinity is concerned, because of its disturbingly direct exemplification of the castrated male, Eastwood's other Westerns also evidence representations of masculinity that are problematic, with varying degrees of emphasis. The Eastwood character always seems to lack something, whether it be a sense of place in a particular narrative milieu, a commitment to a specific cause, or, most prominently, a coherent sense of identity. In essence, his position as the last star of the Western attests to a genre whose foundations are far from secure. The

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[2] The American loss of the Vietnam war was finally confirmed in the evacuation of Saigon and the reuniting of North and South under communist forces in 1975. Although *The Beguiled* was released in 1971, the feeling that the war was unwinnable was widely perceived in official and public circles in America from 1968 onwards (Delli Carpini 1990: 38).

contextual approaches adopted by Gallafent and Smith, among others, will inform the ensuing analyses, by which the representation of masculinity in Eastwood's Westerns will be examined in terms of how it defines, sustains, develops, or refutes the Eastwood persona, the traditions of the Western, and perspectives on masculinity in American culture; precisely how Eastwood can be conceived against Wayne in these terms will be revealed via such an analysis. In examining Eastwood's roles, I intend to develop the arguments proposed by Gallafent and Smith by conjoining issues of representation and ideology, and of masculinity and its narrative context. In so doing, I aim not, as in Smith's critique, to emphasise Eastwood's 'regressive' star persona, but to underline the considerably problematic nature of the star persona.

8) EASTWOOD - THE FOREIGN/PARODIC HERO

Eastwood's Western career, spanning from *A Fistful of Dollars* in 1964 to *Unforgiven* in 1992, witnessed a number of significant developments inside and outside the industry, notably the decline and relative 'death' of the genre followed by the ephemeral revival of the early 1990s, and America's fateful waging of war in Vietnam. One development specific to the Western, however, was in fact predicated on Eastwood's early Italian films, which paved the way for increasingly violent representations in the genre. In addition, they positioned Eastwood as a star, and ultimately as a new icon of the American genre *par excellence*. In spite of the 'serious' nature of the two genres most associated with him, the Western and the thriller, Eastwood's performances have often suggested a considerable degree of self-reflexivity, and have frequently contained parodic leanings. Leone's trilogy establishes the benchmark for Eastwood's subsequent performances in this sense, and in the sense that his character is markedly narcissistic, his abdication of social attachments being initially registered by his lack of even a name. Eastwood's presence in Leone's films is, ironically, predicated on a strong sense of absence, the indefinable and distant qualities of his presence (his lack of a definitive national and named identity) reinforced by his minimal use of language and facial expression. For an actor whose 'speciality' has been described by Richard Combs as 'not being there' (1992: 12), Clint Eastwood's cultural positioning as the last surviving icon of the Western and a masculinised icon of America suggests a star persona steeped in complexities. Despite his iconic status, Eastwood's career began in a Western which was not only Italian, but considerably alien to the traditions of the American Western. Yet the alienated image of masculinity proposed in the Leone Westerns, in spite of its 'foreignness', would go on to become an irrefutable component of Eastwood's star persona, a component which would be variously inflected through emphasis or de-emphasis in his subsequent films, and most notably in his Westerns.

A Fistful of Dollars (Leone, 1964); *For a Few Dollars More* (Leone, 1965); *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (Leone, 1966)

The trilogy of 'Spaghetti' Westerns directed by Sergio Leone[1] proposed a type of Western hero previously unknown to the genre. Eastwood portrayed a Westerner with no name, with no roots, and devoid of a strong moral code. The Man With No Name was a profoundly alienated character, with no sense of attachment to either the wilderness or civilisation, and little attachment to other characters. The considerable divergence of the hero's characterisation from traditional generic modelling was

[1] Hereafter predominantly abbreviated as, respectively, *Fistful*, *For a Few* and *The Good*.

determined in many respects by Leone's distance from Hollywood; Leone was in no sense bound by the tenets of Hollywood Western representation, as American directors in the early 1960s might have been. A starting point by which Eastwood's role in the 'dollars' trilogy can be examined is the very 'foreignness' of the films, the simple fact that they are foreign *appropriations* of the Western genre. Aside from the obvious matter of dubbing, the films are set in obviously 'Mexican' towns, with Whites and Indians replaced by Mexicans, and evocations of Protestantism replaced by those of Catholicism. The milieu of all three films is distinctly 'un-American', although both *For a Few* and *The Good* seek to incorporate a more 'American' feeling with more apparently American characters and references to the Civil War. (For all the film's surface appearances, many members of *Fistful*'s cast and crew are listed in Americanised pseudonyms, as if attempting to imbue the film with a more American identity.)

From the very beginning, *Fistful* establishes a sense of confusion over the constitution of 'Americanness', a confusion furthered by the strange 'un-Western' music score accompanying the credits, which mark the symbolic qualities of the iconic 'man and horse' by repeating its image at numerous angles and in various shades of colour, evoking an almost psychedelic effect. The credits at once emphasise a prominent Western icon and displace it, through the deconstructive imaging of the icon and the 'aberrant' music overscoring the credits. The sound effects of gunshots employed in the credits registers a sense of self-reflexivity which is repeated in *For a Few* and *The Good*. The former has the credits being 'shot' and variously tilting and dropping down the screen as if 'dead', while the latter employs cannon-blast effects in accompaniment to Ennio Morricone's excessive score. The rendering of the 'man and horse' as a symbol in the credits of *Fistful* represents a significant introduction to the narrative, since, as I will go on to argue, the Eastwood character is deliberately (and excessively) represented in this film - and indeed *For a Few* and *The Good* - as an iconic Western hero, and deconstructed in the process. The confusion over the film's constitution of 'Americanness' is reflected in Eastwood's character, who consistently represents the most 'obviously' American character of the respective milieux of the three films, leading Edward Gallafent to emphasise No Name's essential benevolence as a corollary of his American identity (1994: 20). However, the coherence of this identity is problematised by Eastwood's appearance and his characterisation, which render his 'Americanness' somewhat vague and fragile. He sports an ethnic-coded poncho for most of the trilogy, and remains in a sense un-American precisely by virtue of his character's consistent *refusal* of the heroic codes expected of an American hero. Before addressing this aspect of the Eastwood character, however, it is worth

considering Eastwood's entrance in *A Fistful of Dollars*, in conjunction with the following films of the trilogy. The first film in particular marks his first appearance as a star of the Western genre, and simultaneously problematises his positioning as a 'Western' star.

Fistful opens on the image of a parched harsh landscape, over which a mule ambles lethargically. Shot from behind, the ponchoed figure of No Name is seen to be the mule's rider, although Eastwood is not actually identified as the figure until, after tying his mule to a well, he drinks the water, and a close-up of his face is offered. The very fact of the animal being a mule, and not a horse, represents a departure from generic expectations. The genre typically views the mule in terms of comedy, and as a form of undignified transport for ostensibly 'weaker' examples of Western masculinity, such as preachers. Eastwood's introduction to the Western thus positions him in a manner unbecoming of a Western hero, and in so doing arguably adds to the sense of confusion and ambivalence over Eastwood's identity as an American hero. That he does not actually speak until some minutes later additionally renders a lack of coherence to his character. The use of music in this sequence also effects a disruption of conventional generic representation; the trill-like flute motif accompanying the close-up of Eastwood has an irreverent feeling about it, both in terms of its playfulness and its total lack of familiarity as recognisably 'Western' music.

The first appearances of Eastwood's character in *For a Few* and *The Good* are similarly distinctive in their revelation of Eastwood's character, which is delayed for some fifteen minutes in both films. In *For a Few* No Name is first sighted, from behind, walking down a rainy street; as he stops to light his cigarillo, the camera observes his midriff and his hands by his sides, before moving up his body to view his head tilted as the cigarillo is lit, and then revealing his face. He enters a saloon, and silently deals and plays a hand of poker before shooting his prey. A playful flute motif accompanies the gesture of his twirling gun as he replaces it in the holster. In *The Good* No Name is not 'wholly' identified (by a close-up of his face) until after being identified by the fragmented markers of his presence - Eastwood is shot from behind, with the camera observing his lighting of a cigarillo and then pulling down to show his hand readying to draw. After the shooting of the bounty-hunters, a close-up of his gun is accompanied by the 'wailing' theme used in the credits. In all three films of the trilogy then, the first appearance of the Eastwood character is marked in a sense by his being 'incomplete'; he does not seem to be fully 'whole', functioning instead as something of a 'spectral presence' (Smith 1993: 12). His incoherent presence in these sequences forms an appropriate introduction for a character who will ultimately be marked as incoherent,

as I will discuss in due course. No Name cannot be taken as a 'complete' Western hero, which inevitably renders his identity as a 'hero' ambiguous from the beginning. The initial degree of ambivalence marking the identification of Eastwood as a 'genuine' Western hero is made more acute throughout the trilogy by the emphasis on the amorality of the Eastwood hero, which represents a fundamental departure from the traditions of Western heroism.

The amorality of the Man With No Name is signified by his status as a mercenary, an occupation typically regarded by the Western as loathsome unless it is attached to a sense of morality (as in *The Magnificent Seven*). *Fistful*'s narrative revolves around his playing off two rival criminal families, the Baxters and the Rojos, against each other, for financial gain. As Christopher Frayling notes, No Name's 'identity is defined by the self-interested moves he makes' ([1981] 1998: 188). Although No Name leaves the town at the end of the film with a sense of social order restored, as both families have been removed, the legacy left by his dangerous game includes the particularly brutal massacre of the entire Baxter family. While the family is definitively corrupt, there is no sense of them deserving their fate; indeed, Leone has one of the Baxter sons adopting a 'crucified' posture in death, and emphasises the execution of the family mother. At the end of the film, after No Name has vanquished the principally 'villainous' family of the narrative (who carried out the massacre of the Baxters with No Name as a witness), there is no obvious sense of a victory, moral or otherwise. Instead, there is a morbid emphasis on the death throes of Ramon Rojo (Gian Maria Volonté), the camera adopting a subjective view of his disorientated vision, after which No Name gets back on his mule and departs from the scene, perhaps to precipitate similar events in another town. (The exact fate of No Name is deliberately left unclear, so as to deny the spectator a sense of narrative clarity.) Unlike the typical Western hero, No Name does not make any sacrifices for the community he lives in; instead, he cynically lives off the community he has happened upon. As Smith argues, Leone's films deny 'the moral superiority of the Western hero by exposing the emptiness of his character and the egotism of his violence' (1993: 15). The one apparently 'moral' example of No Name's actions is the reuniting of a family after he rescues the mother from captivity by the 'villainous' Rojo family, a gesture which, according to Gallafent, characterises No Name as a man of 'benign action' (1994: 20). However, as Frayling notes, the incident is ultimately intended to escalate the rivalry between the two families by way of making the Rojos think the Baxters have sprung Marisol ([1981] 1998: 183). In any case, one has almost forgotten about No Name's 'moral' act by the time of the climactic shoot-out, which is more focused on his uncanny display of apparent impregnability (as I will discuss below).

The mercenary nature of the Eastwood character is established in the successive films of the trilogy. In *For a Few* No Name allies himself with the shadowy figure of Colonel Mortimer (Lee Van Cleef) in pursuit of a wanted man (Indio/Gian Maria Volontè) for bounty. It turns out that the Colonel has a personal motive, seeking revenge for the rape and ensuing suicide of his sister several years previously. No Name is not privy to this information, but he provides Mortimer with assistance, and is finally rewarded with the bounty, which Mortimer wants no part of. The film in effect displaces the traditional heroic mantle onto Van Cleef's character, insofar as he has wholly honourable reason, according to generic ethics, to engage in killing. No Name significantly takes no real part in the climactic confrontation of the film, where he is 'reduced' to refereeing the duel between Mortimer and Indio. In *The Good*, Eastwood/Blondie partners up, on and off when required, with a rapist murderer, and ultimately 'uses' the Civil War to locate buried gold (as the American poster exclaimed, 'For Three Men The Civil War Wasn't Hell. It Was Practice!'). Although both these films, like *Fistful*, occasionally suggest the Eastwood character's altruism (particularly in the dying soldier-in-the-chapel scene in *The Good*), his essential amorality is the lasting impression we are left with, as especially evidenced in the final scenes of both films. *For a Few* ends with the contrasting images of Mortimer riding into a glorious sunset and No Name driving a cart full of dead bodies across the arid landscape with only a plain sky as background; in *The Good*, Blondie leaves Tuco (Eli Wallach) perilously perched on a grave with his head in a noose, only to shoot the rope at the last minute. As Tuco falls to the ground, the three archetypal characters are held in freeze-frame and titled as they were at the start of the film, again establishing the irony of Blondie's 'The Good' label (as I will discuss in more detail below).

The aberrant identity of the Eastwood character is further suggested in the trilogy by the insistent defining of his history as precisely undefinable to the extreme. Out of all three films, only *Fistful* contains the slightest allusion to No Name's past, and even then his utterances are wholly equivocal. When Marisol (Marianne Koch) enquires as to his reasons for helping her, No Name explains, 'I knew someone like you once and there was no one there to help.' The only other reference to his history in the film is his response to the rhetorical question of whether he likes peace: 'It's not easy to like something you've never known.' Eastwood's typically flat delivery of these lines problematises their apparent strain of morality, insofar as the intonations 'seem as automatic, as mechanical, as anything else he does' (Mitchell 1996: 238; this issue is addressed in more detail below). The dialogue largely functions in the form of empty stereotypical expressions, flippant allusions to the typical speech of a hero. No Name's references to the past are as unspecified and vague as his name, and his history, as

much as can be understood by it, is characterised by cynicism and pessimism - nothing of the essential optimism favoured by the traditional Western is evidenced here. Inasmuch as No Name has 'never known' peace, one is led to believe that he has been a mercenary for all of his adult life, that death has always followed him. A significant exchange in *Fistful* involves No Name being asked by sheriff Baxter to make himself at home; No Name replies, 'I never found home that great.' In addition to underlining his total rootlessness, one might enquire as to the constitution of 'home' that is being effected here. Given No Name's lack of a precisely defined identity, 'home' might be taken to signify America, and in this context an American past ambivalently defined in negative terms, thereby further problematising the ideological construction of 'Americanness' in the films, as centred in particular on the dubious nature of the 'American' hero portrayed.

In *For a Few* No Name's lack of a history is specifically contrasted with the historical associations of Colonel Mortimer, who is defined by his military past and his personal investment in pursuing Indio. In *The Good*, Blondie fails to respond to Tuco's rhetorical question: 'Don't you have any parents, Blondie? A mother or a father?' The incomplete and negatively-defined history characterising the Eastwood hero in the trilogy emphasises his alienation, and renders the possibility of spectatorial identification all the more problematic. In contrast to the more coherently American image embodied by Eastwood as *Rawhide*'s Rowdy Yates, his physical appearance in the trilogy is altered (and to some extent masked) by the beard, the poncho, and the cigarillos, and his alienating 'qualities' are confirmed by his relative lack of speech and expression, and foremostly by his characterisation as a harbinger of violence. The very first scene of *Fistful*, which effectively introduces Eastwood as a Western star, firmly establishes his character's problematic relation to the heroic archetype, and a rejection of a surrogate paternal identity, confirming a further point of departure from Wayne's heroic type. On arriving in the town, No Name sights a small boy trying to sneak in to the building holding his mother (Marisol) captive. He is abruptly ejected by the family heavies, who proceed to beat up the boy's father, the boy crying in despair all the while. As witness to this sorry spectacle, No Name is seemingly expressionless; he does not obviously frown as one would expect from a Western 'hero'. Indeed, the only expression he betrays is an eroticised smile at the entrapped Marisol, behind a barred window. In response, she shuts the window in disgust.

Marisol's effective 'shutting out' of eroticism at the start of *Fistful* is a significant gesture for the trilogy as a whole. Women rarely feature in any of the three films, and when they do they tend not to represent a potential love interest for the star, as was in

the main required by the traditional Western. The hotelier of *Fistful* informs No Name at the start of the film that San Miguel is just like a cemetery, and that all the town's women are widows. Marisol is already married with a young child; the only physical contact No Name makes with her, ironically, is a mistakenly-delivered knock-out punch (symptomatically the sole moment of physical interaction between No Name and women in the trilogy). In *For a Few* the figure of a woman functions only as a shocking memory (a sister raped), which No Name has no knowledge of. Finally, *The Good* features two women whose narrative function is minimal and confined to the first reel; the wife of the farmer killed by Angel Eyes (Lee Van Cleef), and the prostitute who is brutally assaulted by Angel Eyes. The Leone trilogy does not entirely refute the traditional Western mediation of the functional role of women, but rather offers an ambiguous negotiation of their traditional mediation. While the Western traditionally affirmed the presence of women as a potential love interest for the hero, the achievement of such a union was not always finally affirmed. In the 'dollars' trilogy, the only woman No Name meets who could be said to characterise a potential lover is the already-married Marisol, and his valiant act of assisting the family in escaping San Miguel only serves to further remove any possibility of his eroticised smile at her at the start of the film being returned in kind. Of the other two women featured in the trilogy whom No Name fleetingly comes across are the ageing Mrs Baxter in *Fistful* and an admiring hotelier's wife in *For a Few*. In the latter case, any sense of eroticism is displaced by the woman's comic representation (her ginger hair is fashioned into an exaggerated beehive style, and her large mouth is emphasised by garish lipstick). When No Name leaves the hotel, he strides past her without saying a word. Interestingly, a scene featuring No Name bedding the woman was filmed (as was a sexual encounter in *The Good*), but later discarded; as Frayling argues, 'It was as if the self-contained, iconic hero would be diminished if he showed his vulnerability in this way' (2000: 261).

Although Marisol in *Fistful* and the dead sister in *For a Few* retain an important narrative function (essentially as symbols of 'innocence' caught up in a repugnant scenario), their potential as a love interest is discounted from the start. This is quite appropriate, for No Name's discernible 'outsider' status in the 'dollars' films rests on his sense of distance from everything surrounding him. Just as No Name refuses to attach himself to one side in particular, the narratives ensure there are no women representing the 'threat' of attachment. Yet this represents another refusal of the traditional American model of Western heroism, since the ideal of commitment even as a possibility is rendered as an impossibility from the start. No Name's total lack of involvement with women inevitably points to a narcissistic edge to his character, portraying him as wholly self-enclosed, refusing all vestiges of social authority in

attachment to either a woman or a specific cause, or even a particular town, as emphasised in his nomadic status. As I will go on to discuss, however, the relative narcissism of No Name is effectively deconstructed and parodied throughout the trilogy, especially the narcissistic characteristic most identified in No Name, namely his apparent omnipotence.

A particularly apparent aspect of Eastwood's character in all three films of the trilogy is his omnipotence and seeming invulnerability. Considered out of context, these features could be said to characterise No Name as a traditional Western hero. The trilogy, however, inflects No Name's 'qualities' in such a way as to deviate from a coherent image of this traditional heroic model. Such is the forced emphasis of the films' characterisation of No Name as omnipotent and invulnerable that one is led to see Eastwood's character as precisely a *parody* of the traditional Western hero; No Name's characterisation frequently verges on the ridiculous (Frayling notes in parenthesis that Ennio Morricone laughed throughout the screening of the films; [1981] 1998: 165). Again, this avenue was more open to Leone as a foreign observer on the Western - parodies of the genre had been produced in America but they were more explicitly (and therefore 'coherently') labelled as 'comedies'. The three films between them contain too many 'serious' moments to be labelled as parodies in a complete sense (although *The Good* borders on total parody), but it is Eastwood's character that remains the main focus of the parody. In *Fistful*, No Name recovers from a severe beating, crushing his tormentors with wine barrels and escaping by hiding in a coffin. In his final confrontation with the Rojo family, he is felled several times by a rifle at near point-blank range only to rise continually from the ground after each shot. No Name's supernatural invincibility is duly revealed as the result of his wearing a metal sheet positioned over his chest, an action which ultimately serves to undermine the archetype of the traditional hero by posing his invulnerability as a façade. By thus exaggerating this aspect of the Western's mythical structure, Leone draws attention to it, and reveals it as a convention which borders on the ridiculous.

In Eastwood's character, heroism is seen to be performative; like the metal sheet, something to be worn and discarded at will. *For a Few*, as previously noted, establishes Mortimer as the more obvious hero of the film, at least by traditional coding, but also renders the expectant performance of heroism in parodic terms. When No Name and Mortimer confront each other for the first time, the anticipated 'masculine' confrontation is comically deflated by a tit-for-tat routine centred on the shooting of hats. *The Good*, as the film with the most obvious comedic inflections, makes a complete mockery of Eastwood's heroism by humorously drawing attention to

his 'godlike' status. Blondie and his bandit associate Tuco devise a scheme whereby Blondie 'captures' the wanted Tuco, receives the bounty, subsequently frees the about-to-be-hanged Tuco, and repeats the trick in the next town, with a duly increased bounty. At Tuco's second 'hanging', the villainous Angel Eyes comments to another bystander that Tuco is protected by 'a golden haired angel (who) watches over him.' There is an immediate cut to the figure of Eastwood situated a hundred yards away aiming his rifle to shoot through the rope around Tuco's neck, accompanied by parodically blaring, 'religious' choral music. In a later sequence in the film, Blondie comes across a dying Confederate soldier in a ruined chapel. Blondie offers the soldier his cigar, accompanied by suitably elegiac scoring, and on the soldier's death covers the body with his coat. Significantly, this act of benevolence is followed by Blondie's taking of another item of outerwear, which happens to be the distinctive poncho worn in the earlier films. Gallafent correctly identifies the moment as marking the return of the No Name persona (1994: 30), although he reads the benevolence inscribed in the scene as indicative of No Name, based on his own debatable reading of No Name as a distinctly American figure given to benign action in a foreign land (ibid: 20). One can instead read the poncho-donning as a performative revelation, in which a kindly American persona is temporarily employed and then discarded in favour of the 'original' No Name persona; significantly, the Eastwood character immediately goes on to cynically scheme his way to the fortune buried in the cemetery in the film's climax. The given image of a more obviously moral-centred American hero can thus only be a temporary image, a cameo, to be displaced by the predominantly self-centred characterisation offered by No Name.

Significantly for a trilogy that has often been discussed in terms of its portrayal of the 'death' of the traditional Western hero, the 'dollars' films not only reek with death but arguably point to the suggestion that Eastwood, as explicitly an American hero, is symbolically 'dead'. Aside from the scene in *Fistful* of No Name's escape in a coffin, there are further associations linking No Name with death. The coffin-maker himself is the only character in the film to give No Name a name - 'Joe' - and when No Name undergoes some work in the cemetery in the company of the town's hotelier, he is told, 'You look as though this place suits you very well.' More speculatively, one might read his choice of transport - the mule - as suggestive on this front, given the typical sterility of the animal. At the climax of *For a Few*, No Name leaves the town of Agua Caliente driving a wagon full to the brim with bodies, thus assuming the role of undertaker himself. These evocations of death would not be so significant but for the representational strategies otherwise used by Leone. One much-discussed area of the trilogy is the relative 'silence' of Eastwood's character in relation to the other characters

of the films, and the flat, monotonal delivery of his fleeting dialogue. Paul Smith comments that No Name's lack of expression emphasises 'His laconic and even animal aura' (1993: 12), suggesting an almost bestial Otherness, while according to Lee Clark Mitchell, Eastwood's performance 'is one of inexpressive mysteriousness - of tightly clipped words, impassive face, economical gestures - that make it seem as if he were less a person than simply a body' (1996: 253). Mitchell cites a quotation made by Leone in reference to Eastwood: 'I looked at him and I didn't see any character...just a physical figure' (1996: 232). This overt sense of physicality suggests that the character of No Name is built on absence, and what is most prominently refused is a delineated sense of character. No Name's lacking of a name and a past underline a lack of identity which is further suggested by Eastwood's near-impenetrable visage and his lack of speech. The relative 'silence' of Eastwood's character suggests his total anonymity and, indeed, an identity predicated on narcissism. Steve Neale has discussed the theoretical implications informing a reticence with language, noting that such a reticence suggests a more 'enclosed, self-sufficient', and narcissistic self (1983: 7). Neale argues that Eastwood's identity in the 'dollars' trilogy is fundamentally narcissistic, and that it is thus significant that his character in the films appears to be 'powerful and omnipotent to an extraordinary degree' (ibid: 6). The point remains, however, that No Name's omnipotence is performative, parodied, and rendered a convention. Far from representing the 'natural' power of the Western hero, No Name is the ultimate incarnation of the Western hero as an artifice, a constructed character. The very 'extraordinary' nature of No Name's apparent rising-from-the-dead in *Fistful* is finally revealed as ordinary, albeit a well-conceived conceit. Another way of looking at Eastwood's character in these terms as represented in the trilogy would be to argue that No Name does not represent a dead man as such, but, as meriting a parody of the Western hero, a mere convention, a character without a character. As Mitchell argues:

> The completeness with which Eastwood's character is rendered anonymous - not simply his lack of a name but his lack of a past or of future intentions, of glib conversation or ready emotion, of facial expression altogether - suggests that Leone is less interested in *using* the mysterious hero than in killing it by parodying it *as* a convention (1996: 231; emphasis in original).

The scores written for the trilogy also 'conventionalise' Eastwood's character through the use of specific motifs which identify him not strictly in terms of character but more in terms of performative gestures. *Fistful* attaches a 'whistling', trill-like flute motif to No Name. It functions in a very different way from theme music as typically employed in American film; the motif barely lasts three seconds, and accompanies in a very deliberate manner silent, gesture-specific close-ups of No Name (variously, for

example, as he drinks from a well, smokes a cigar, and opens his eyes after feigning drunkenness). In *For a Few* a similarly short, whimsical flute motif accompanies such actions as No Name's twirling of his gun into its holster. In *The Good*, a hysterical, tarzan-like choral wailing marks Blondie's presence; given the overtly comedic aspects of the final film of the trilogy, one might interpret the wailing as a form of laughter. In addition to their overtly playful and irreverent resonance, the various themes attached to the Eastwood character effectively render him as something of a caricature rather than a fully-defined character, thereby assisting Leone's ostensible project in rendering the Western hero as a convention.[2]

Leone's consistent use of close-ups in the trilogy is worth considering in respect of the above points. This formal aspect of the trilogy has been principally discussed in terms of its marking of the films as a departure from the Hollywood Western (which very rarely used close-ups, let alone in the manner Leone did), thus giving the trilogy a distinct stylistic identity. In addition, Leone's use of close-ups also 'subtract(s) from the interiority of character', as Paul Smith suggests (1993: 12). The close-ups not only seem to divorce characters from any social context, but they also divorce characters, in a sense, from their own 'human' selves. The fact that the faces occupying the close-up frames seem mainly to be precisely devoid of emotion carries this point further. (The emotionless faces belie - and parody - the very notion of interiority that Hollywood films used the close-up to suggest, typically to emphasise an emotion-laden face.) Close-ups also draw attention to the fine-detailed facial gestures characterising a star's identity. Eastwood, however, is defined in his close-ups as practically gestureless; his close-ups 'do not so much signify the internal qualities of the classic cowboy, the "real man" of the Hollywood imaginary, as construct instead a mere exterior, a purely physical demeanour that stands in for masculinity itself' (ibid: 11). The masculinity marked here, however, is problematised by the excessive and parodic elements attached to the representation of Eastwood as the hero. If the films fail to mark No Name as a '"real man"', they mark him as a man of fantasy so excessively as to precisely mark him as an "(un)real man", or a fantasy of masculinity.

Leone's process of rendering Eastwood's hero as a subject of parody and irony reaches its culmination in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, whereby the three leads are labelled according to one of the stereotypical title roles. After the latter two roles are respectively identified in the figures of Lee Van Cleef and Eli Wallach, Eastwood is introduced as 'The Good', but not until a considerable delay has elapsed. After Blondie

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[2] Morricone suggested that his scores for the trilogy served 'to "complete" certain characters on the screen, to complete them as *types*' (quoted in Frayling 2000: 155; emphasis in original).

has elected to break his illicit partnership with Tuco, on account of the risk factor of being recognised in the next town being too high, he abandons Tuco in the desert and to a probable death. Responding to Tuco's understandable hurling of insults, Blondie turns and comments, 'Such ingratitude, after all the times I've saved your life.' It is at this point that Leone freezes the frame on Eastwood and labels him as 'The Good'. As if to underline the huge (and comic) irony of this label, it is scored by the 'wailing' theme discussed previously, suggesting extra-diegetic laughter. In this film, Eastwood's character is no more 'good' than the preceding two films, and remains as self-interested. Leone's delaying of the title here is significant, for it draws increased attention to the highly ambiguous context behind the label. As a crooked bounty-hunter (an occupation in itself typically frowned upon in the American Western, as previously noted), in collusion with a crook wanted for, among other crimes, rape and murder (accusations which the narrative gives no reason to doubt), Blondie could hardly be characterised as 'good' without a significant trace of irony. The point of departure made by *The Good* from the previous films in 'naming' Eastwood's character still reinforces a stereotype, and, interestingly, the moniker emphasises a physical Otherness from the Mexican point of view, inasmuch as the name is Tuco's form of address. This emphasis on ethnicity underlines the Anglo-Saxon, American appearance of Blondie, who is also more 'Americanised' in this film by his wearing of a long duster-type coat. While therefore apparently affirming Eastwood's identity as more coherently American, this moniker also forms an ironic attachment to the incongruous label of 'The Good', inasmuch as the archetype of the Anglo-Saxon Westerner is in fact not readily recognisable in this film. Blondie is essentially as amoral as No Name was previously, although it is true that the earlier-discussed ruined chapel scene negotiates a more moral identity for a fleeting moment (as *Fistful* did with the Marisol rescue sequence). Although this character may have a 'name' of sorts, we are still explicitly given his history as anonymous, as with the previous films. *The Good* also establishes a sense of continuation in its general representation of Blondie, which is markedly fetishistic. In the first scene featuring Blondie, three bounty-hunters cajole Tuco after capturing him, discussing the money they are due. Blondie's voice (off-screen) is heard to exclaim, 'Yeah, but you don't look like the one who's going to collect it.' We then see his tall, lean figure from behind as the bounty-hunters square up for a shoot-out; it is not until Blondie has killed the bounty-hunters that his face is identified, and we see this is Clint Eastwood. The film relies completely (and ultimately plays on) Eastwood's image, insofar as we can only identify him initially by his familiar monotonal language. Leone again invites a consideration of parody here, in the sense that Blondie's voice 'announces the threat that can be carried even by his disembodied presence' (Gallafent 1994: 27). Like the incessant close-ups of the trilogy, the disembodied voice also, in a

sense, marks the fragmentation of the Western hero. In this scene Eastwood does not appear as a 'coherent whole', but only in aspect, in fetishised detail - his body, his lighting of the cigarillo, his hand over the gun.

The fetishised representation of Eastwood here could be described in the same way Mulvey describes the use of Marlene Dietrich in Josef von Sternberg's films: the body, 'stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look' ([1975] 1992: 30). The intention is not to eroticise Eastwood, but to mystify his character; the effect, however, is arguably the same, inasmuch as the notable corporeal signifiers of both actors - whether the prominent face or the slim hand and squinting eyes - are celebrated as images worthy of themselves. (That Leone does not subject his female characters to such fetishistic treatment is arguably more ironic than overtly significant, indicative of a generally phallocentric rather than a specifically homoerotic aesthetic.) Leone films similar moments in the rest of the trilogy in a similarly fetishised manner, although this approach is particularly apparent in *The Good*, where the filming of the climactic gunfight is highly fetishised. The confrontation is precipitated by Blondie's placing of a rock - on which the name of the gold-containing grave is apparently written - onto the ground; there is a lingering close-up of Blondie's hand on the rock, accompanied by a frantic flamenco guitar on the soundtrack. Obviously this is a dramatic narrative moment, but its emphasis is excessive, and this excess is carried through into the face-off proper. Extreme close-ups of the actors' eyes, and their hands on their guns, are repeatedly intercut in quick succession, accompanied by Morricone's precisely timed score, achieving both an Eisensteinesque sense of montage and, arguably, a slightly comic effect. The fetishistic nature of this climactic duel has not escaped critical attention. Steve Neale has discussed this scene in terms of its 'spectacle of male bodies', but goes on to argue that, contrary to one of the characteristics of the fetishistic gaze, it contains 'no trace of an acknowledgement or recognition of those bodies as displayed solely for the gaze of the spectator' (1983: 13). While the bodies are displayed, our gaze at them, according to Neale, 'is heavily mediated by the looks of the characters involved. And those looks are marked not by desire, but by fear, or hatred, or aggression' (ibid). Neale's argument necessitates a measure of qualification. Firstly, Leone seems to be precisely inviting the spectatorial gaze in this scene, in which five minutes of screen time is taken up by images of men silently readying themselves for a gunfight; their 'display' is the crux of the sequence. Secondly, the diegetic gazes during this sequence are not quite as clear-cut as Neale suggests. Although both Angel Eyes and Tuco sweat a little in contrast to Blondie, suggesting his greater composure, a sense of 'fear, or hatred, or aggression' is not established as firmly as it might be, while Tuco at one point registers a strange

smile. In the final quickly-edited sequence of respective pairs of eyes in extreme close-up, the orientation of the gazes becomes incomprehensible, as they merge together into a montage of eyes which effectively address the spectator as much as each other, suggesting, at one level, the fetishistic quality of the sequence (Ellis [1982] 1992: 47). Neale seeks to distinguish the qualities of the fetishistic gaze in this scene with the gaze found in the Sternberg films analysed by Mulvey, emphasising the lack of a 'cultural or cinematic convention' which would permit male bodies to be represented in the same way as Dietrich (1983: 13). Again, the directorial intention may well be different, but the effect is not dissimilar. The precise way in which the spectatorial gaze is determined in this sequence rests on the fact that Leone turns a cliché of the Western into a spectacular event, and if, as Neale suggests, 'the narrative drive' of the scene negates its fetishistic qualities, given that the spectacle of the gunfight is only a temporary pause before the narrative resolution (ibid), it is worth pointing out that the resolution of typical Westerns is not to be found here - while 'The Good' kills 'The Bad', they are not representative of the typical hero and villain, nor is their confrontation. As Gallafent writes, 'there is little connection between Angel Eyes and Blondie, no motivation from revenge or justice'; there is no suggestion that either men are aware of the acts which define the problematically heroic or villainous identity of the other (1994: 32). In the climax of this Western, the spectacle effectively overrides the impact of the narrative; it becomes, arguably, the *raison d'être* of the climax.

In a provocative account of the sequence, Marcia Landy argues that Morricone's scoring of the scene 'serves to render the affective intensity of the bodily interactions', thereby calling attention 'to the sexuality of the masculine body', the only body foregrounded in the films, given the narrative scarcity of women (1998: 218). While Landy could be said to exaggerate the point, the scene does contain eroticised elements - notably the fetishised filming and the excessive music. Leone's filming of the climax effectively 'shows off' the men participating in the duel, which, if not 'sexual' as such, is fundamentally excessive. Leone is obviously more interested in the spectacle than the event, and the spectacle offered by him emphasises, in an essentially parodic fashion, the ritualistic qualities of a Western confrontation, and, by extension, portrays masculinity itself in ritualised detail. As Paul Smith argues, Leone's deconstruction of the 'standard (Western) hero' rests on the turning of 'his self-sufficient and calm toughness into a kind of ritualised, stylised, and heavily gestured masculinity' (1993: 10); a masculinity that is, in effect, performed.

The 'dollars' trilogy directed by Sergio Leone 'revealed' masculinity as a performance, inasmuch as the films register Eastwood's hero in a fetishised visual sense, and all the

while insist on our not taking his character overtly seriously. The simultaneous disturbance of and play with 'heroism', a negotiation complexly embodied in No Name, renders heroism as a convention, a performative identity to be used expediently. Given that the Western model of the hero is predicated on the cultural representation of masculinity, one would expect a consequent problematisation of masculinity to be evidenced in the trilogy. In fact, Leone's filming itself asks questions of masculinity, inasmuch as it renders masculinity as a convention through its formal techniques. The extended face-off, at its most excessive and 'hysterical' in *The Good*, emphasises the ritual of masculine confrontation in the Western, only to (literally) deconstruct the ritual in a frenzied montage of body parts, rendering the conventional prior-to-the-shooting stare as a scopophilic symphony, with the look itself becoming a magnified 'source of pleasure' (Mulvey [1975] 1992: 24). The incessant close-ups of the trilogy draw attention to the masculine visage in order to 'play' with it, to denaturalise the 'natural' image of masculinity in the Western. Heroism and masculinity define Leone's trilogy as much as they define the 'traditional' Western. However, while the latter tended to represent heroism and masculinity within a 'sincere' narrative framework in order to maintain the generic identity, the 'dollars' films locate their representations within a fundamentally parodic narrative framework in order to deconstruct the genre, from its conventions to its representations, problematising the Western from the very root of its American identity. Eastwood, occupying the central role in these narratives, would go on to straddle, in an ambiguous manner, the divisions between his foreign heritage and the more established domestic generic heritage, negotiating a path in his later films between these two respective histories. Like the Western itself in its latter phase of mainstream production, Eastwood's subsequent American films would offer both authentic and parodic representations of the Western hero, both more 'traditional' heroes and protagonists whose 'heroism' would be rendered intensely problematic. The innate 'foreignness' of the Leone/Eastwood Western would serve as an influential template of characterisation for Eastwood's American Westerns, which would feature a similarly dislocated hero, by way of generic expectations if not, as in the Leone films, those pertaining to geography. Ambiguity would continue to be a defining characteristic of Eastwood's heroes, whether it was focused on the hero's identity, his morality, or his sense of attachment to the social world. In addition, the American Westerns, by virtue of their being American, mediated some of the issues arising from the era's sociopolitical fragmentation, such as Vietnam and feminism, to a greater or lesser extent. If the Leone/Eastwood hero, by way of audience reception, existed in a cultural vacuum, Eastwood's subsequent Westerns would position him in a more recognisable cultural milieu, by which the actor became an ostensibly more coherent figure, but no less problematic as a consequence.

9) EASTWOOD - THE CASTRATED HERO

Shortly after the release of the Leone trilogy in the United States (in 1967), Eastwood sought to disown his part in the films, perhaps in reaction to the predominantly negative reviews the films received in the American press. He also turned down Leone's offer of an appearance in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, thereby further refuting his 'spaghetti' heritage.[1] The 'Americanisation' of Eastwood can be traced through his characterisations in the films examined in this chapter, which encompass both Westerns 'proper' and hybrids which combine elements of the Western with the police thriller (*Coogan's Bluff*) and the gothic melodrama (*The Beguiled*). While the process of 'Americanisation' suggests a process marked by ideological regression, in the sense that the Leone Westerns effected a radical, doubly-foreign departure from the representational system governing the depiction of heroism, among other thematic areas, the effect of Eastwood's 'Americanisation' brought in its wake a more 'traditional' representation of heroism *and* problematic strains of its own making. The very fact that Eastwood was now removed from the 'unreal', somewhat parodic narrative milieu that characterised the Leone Westerns, and placed into a more apparently 'real' and authentic milieu, ensured that whatever 'damage' was inflicted upon the Eastwood character was more keenly felt by American audiences. The period addressed in this chapter spans from 1968 to 1972, a period which witnessed the intensification of America's ideological fragmentation. While the realisation that the Vietnam war was desperately unwinnable took a greater hold on American public opinion, internal developments, such as the growth of the women's movement, served to further undermine the strength of the dominant ideology during the period. While Vietnam does not became a major source of symbolic allusion until Eastwood's first Westerns as director (*High Plains Drifter* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, to be addressed in the next chapter), the feminist movement becomes an issue that is filtered through the narratives of *Coogan's Bluff*, *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, and, more prominently, *The Beguiled*. The films evidence the 'eroticisation' of Eastwood, and in so doing his characters develop a more social identity, in comparison to the excessive narcissism characterising the Man With No Name. Yet this 'normalisation' of Eastwood's characters, by which a sense of active virility replaces the de-eroticised character of the Leone films, does not become a conventional means of asserting an unproblematic masculine identity. Instead, Eastwood's socialisation comes at a price, in

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[1] Leone wanted to use Eastwood, Eli Wallach and Lee Van Cleef in the film's opening sequence, in which The Man with the Harmonica (Charles Bronson) confronts three gunfighters at a deserted train station and kills them (Frayling 2000: 245). One can speculate that Eastwood's refusal may have emanated from a general objection to being killed on screen, given the context of Hollywood at the time and Eastwood's position as a rising star whose most recent characterisations were, at least on the surface level, apparently omnipotent. Eastwood's later films would ultimately negotiate the issue of mortality in relation to his character.

the shape of emasculation (*Two Mules for Sister Sara*) and, far more traumatically, symbolic castration and death (*The Beguiled*). The 'domestication' of Eastwood may serve to 'solidify' his characters, in the sense that his heroes are given names and more clearly-defined pasts (in comparison to the Man With No Name), but at the same time the 'Americanisation' of Eastwood's Westerns, and his brand of heroism, forces upon both a troubled mediation of the intensely problematic developments in American culture, within and without.

***Hang 'Em High* (Ted Post, 1968)**

Eastwood followed his foreign venture into the Western genre with his first American-produced Western in 1968, *Hang 'Em High*. The film can be read as both a refutal and an appropriation of Eastwood's 'spaghetti' heritage, a process of 'Americanisation' by which the surface signifying elements of Leone's films (excessive violence and use of close-ups) are appropriated, and the more problematic negotiation of the hero suggested by the films (his amorality, lack of identity, and Leone's parodic inflection of heroism) is notably discarded. Significantly, Eastwood's character is granted a name, Jed Cooper,[2] and his identity is cemented both in his clean-shaven appearance and his Americanised Western clothing, including leather chaps, a corduroy shirt, and a neckerchief (in contrast to the 'disguises' formed by the beard and poncho of the Italian films). The film thus unequivocally asserts the 'Americanness' of the Eastwood character. Additionally, unlike his previous Westerns, it grants Cooper the security of an identifiable past; protesting his innocence during the film's first sequence, he twice asserts that he was formerly a lawman. Interestingly, the film opens with a quite explicit invocation of *Rawhide*, with Cooper driving cattle across a river (thereby evoking a more fertile landscape compared to the incessant sterility characterising the 'dollars' landscapes). In a reminder of the benign character of Rowdy Yates, Cooper stops along the way to help a labouring calf out of the water.

This more comforting and recognisable image of Eastwood (and ultimately the American Western) is subsequently disrupted when a party of men arrive on the scene. Cooper is falsely accused of murder and cattle theft, and duly lynched. He is subsequently found by a passing marshal, cut down, and is seen to come back from the brink of death, although in contrast to the Leone films there is no sense of over-determinedness, of 'hysterical' parody. Indeed, there seems to be an attempt to underline Cooper's apparent 'resurrection' in all sincerity; the driver of the wagon

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[2] Patrick McGilligan suggests the resonance of this name, arguing that it alludes to Gary Cooper, and the sincere associations becoming of his heroic identity. 'In a sense *Hang 'Em High* would provide audiences with their last glimpse of the Clint once thought to be a possible successor to Coop' (2000: 161).

transporting Cooper back to town looks disturbed on sighting his bleeding neck, to the accompaniment of gothic-sounding organ music. When Cooper later confronts one of the lynching party, removing his neckerchief to expose his scarred neck, the man registers a palpable sense of shock, quite as if he had seen a ghost. While *Hang 'Em High* thus invokes the 'resurrection' motif which figured strongly in *A Fistful of Dollars*, it can be said to do so 'earnestly', in the sense that Cooper survives the hanging by sheer genuine strength, whereas No Name survives being repeatedly shot by stealth, by a masquerade of strength, in effect. (Although it is true that No Name recovers from a severe beating in *Fistful*, the assault is obviously not as potentially fatal as a hanging, and, revealingly, his wounds take significantly longer to heal.) *Hang 'Em High* further repudiates the more problematic aspects characterising the hero in Leone's trilogy, in its mediation of the hero's morality and his relationship with women.

After being rescued by the marshal at the start of the film, Cooper is offered the badge himself by the territory judge and given the task of finding the men who lynched him. *Hang 'Em High* is significantly the only Western in which Eastwood plays a lawman (other than *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*, in which Eastwood plays *dead* lawmen). As usually mediated by the genre, the lawman was undeniably a figure of social authority whose upholding of the law was identified with a sense of progress and the establishment of civilisation. For an actor whose persona is more or less consistently narcissistic, Eastwood's lack of Western lawman roles is therefore unsurprising, particularly when one also considers the genre's problematisation of figures of the law that was increasingly evident in the late 60s and beyond. (Although Eastwood plays a lawman in his *Dirty Harry* and related roles, these films contain no suggestion of progress, and definitively no sense of civilisation.) Although *Hang 'Em High* portrays Cooper as a marshal who is motivated by personal revenge, he works within the law by arresting the men he apprehends, and his revenge is, of course, legitimated by its legality. The only people who act outside the law in the film are the lynching party men. (In contrast to the 'dollars' films, where No Name's freewheeling mercenary was much preferable to law/authority figures such as the corrupt sheriff Baxter in *Fistful* and the brutal Union guard who administers a horrific beating to Tuco in *The Good.*) By virtue of his representing the law, Cooper's morality is clarified and confirmed in this film. After he has killed the first man he confronts (the man drew, despite Cooper's begging him not to do so), he formally goes about getting statements from the present witnesses, and gives the undertaker his own money to oversee the man's burial. Cooper's morality is further underlined as he continues his search for the men who hanged him. While on the trail, he comes across a young man, weeping over the murder of his parents and begging for assistance. Despite his lack of territorial

jurisdiction, Cooper duly diverts from his path to help the young man track down the guilty party. When the men are found, Cooper's precise sense of law makes him prevent their lynching by the angry posse. *Hang 'Em High* ends with Cooper riding back into town intending to give his badge up, after he has confronted the leader of the lynching party (who hangs himself rather than give himself up, thus providing a coherent and appropriate counterpart to the beginning of the film). However, after encouragement from the judge who first gave him the badge, Cooper elects to keep the badge and thus the role of lawman, thus ensuring the keeping of an identity quite the antithesis of that formulated over the three 'dollars' films, and more akin to the heroic identity traditionally established in the Western. In place of No Name's narcissistic self-centredness, Cooper's attachment to the law establishes his possession of social authority, as does, to some extent, his relationship with women in the narrative.

Hang 'Em High's representation of Cooper's relationship with women registers a departure from Eastwood's previous Westerns. As suggested earlier, the 'dollars' trilogy is marked by a complete lack of women functioning as love interests for the hero, whereas *Hang 'Em High*, significantly, grants its hero two encounters with a lusty prostitute and a more 'developed' relationship with the film's heroine, Rachel (Inger Stevens). One way of conceiving this change is in terms of Eastwood's more apparent eroticisation in this later film. His more clean-cut image signals this, and the start of the film can be said to figure Eastwood as, in Edward Gallafent's words, 'the glamorous, eroticised young settler or cowhand' (1994: 106), specifically in contrast to the variously older, pock-marked and unshaven lynching party men (the younger men in the group are distinctly less attractive than Eastwood). The rendering of Cooper's eroticised masculinity is entirely conventional; his courtship of Rachel is initially thwarted by her frigidity (she was a previous victim of rape), but she ultimately succumbs to him during a rainy evening. At the end of the film, however, Cooper leaves the town with no sense of commitment to Rachel (in key with the traditional model of the Western). Yet he leaves the town as a sexualised hero, in contrast to the 'dollars' films (which denied the possibility of sexualisation and, in the case of *For a Few*, ended with the notably 'sterile' image of No Name leaving Agua Caliente driving a wagon full of bodies). The precedent set in *Hang 'Em High* is followed through in Eastwood's later films, which also propose the actor as an eroticised figure, but which generally render that eroticism in much more problematic terms. Eastwood's first American Western attempts to invoke some of the motifs of Leone's trilogy, notably a more grimy emphasis on violence, but it essentially tries to alleviate the more problematic aspects of the previous films, by asserting Eastwood's identity, morality, legality, and sexual achievements. Fundamentally, it offers Eastwood as a more

'comforting' and coherently *American* hero in word and deed, above the ambiguities of No Name's post-synchronised speech and dubious motivations. Not insignificantly, Howard Thompson of the *New York Times* seemed impressed that the film 'makes sense' (quoted in Smith 1993: 29). As Eastwood's most conventional Western, the 'sense' made by *Hang 'Em High* would be disrupted in his later films, principally by their refusal to portray the Western hero in such coherent terms.

Coogan's Bluff (Don Siegel, 1968)

Although not a Western 'proper', *Coogan's Bluff* is the first of Eastwood's films to appropriate his Western persona in a non-Western setting (*Bronco Billy* later positioned Eastwood in a contemporary setting which rendered the old Western mores distinctly anachronistic). Eastwood plays the role of Coogan, an Arizona deputy transplanted to contemporary New York to extradite a hippie-like prisoner, Ringerman (Don Stroud). The central theme of the film as such is Coogan's 'out-of-placeness', which is both insisted on by Coogan (he wears Western clothes and refuses to abide by city police regulations) and forced on him (he is placed in situations in which his Western identity is effectively ridiculed). While *Hang 'Em High* asserts Eastwood's 'Americanness', in this film his character's specific *type* of 'Americanness' is the point of issue, and the milieu in which Coogan is located renders this type, and the type of masculinity it represents, as at times an object of parody. On his arrival in the city Coogan is constantly asked which part of Texas he is from, and whether he is a rancher or a rodeo man. More interestingly, characters objectify Coogan with explicit references to his vaguely fetishistic costume, and the film itself has a slight investment in the fetishistic qualities of Coogan's apparel. His first arrival in the police station is marked by objectification from both prostitutes and two homosexuals, one of whom opines with raised eyebrows, 'Hmm. Do you work out?' The film plays on the fact that the 'exotic' ambience conveyed by Coogan's apparel is in part determined by the 'gay' connotations surrounding Western apparel in the East; indeed, he is mockingly branded a 'faggot' by a woman at a later point in the film. In the same exchange, the woman remarks on 'Buffalo Bill with the fancy hat - and look - boots with the pointy toes. Very fancy!' The camera follows her commentary by pulling down to 'show off' Coogan's boots, in a shot which arguably effects a sense of objectification. Although these objectifying moments would seem to be balanced by the film's emphasis on Coogan's virile heterosexuality - which is expressed through three implied sexual encounters (with different women) - the sexual encounters expressed by the film also objectify Eastwood's body. In the first encounter, with an Arizona-based girlfriend, Coogan's lover forces him to take a bath, after Coogan removes his shirt. This moment

invites two areas of consideration. The typical restrictions on male nudity in the Western are relaxed here by the fact that this is not a 'real' Western. Symptomatically, the bath scenes of Eastwood's 'real' Westerns are less objectifying (in *Two Mules for Sister Sara* Eastwood takes a bath fully-dressed, and in *High Plains Drifter* his body is not as exposed as it is in *Coogan's Bluff*). On a second point, the relative display enacted in this film attests to the eroticisation of the Eastwood persona being enacted during this period as a response to the substantially de-eroticised nature of the Eastwood character in the 'dollars' trilogy. Eastwood's very first American Westerns, and sub-Westerns, reflect a desire to create a more substantialised, realistic masculine persona than that previously established in the Leone films, while still being in a sense subject to the more problematic strains of the representations of masculinity in those films, such as in the parodic strains of this film and Eastwood's subsequent Western, *Two Mules for Sister Sara*. While *Coogan's Bluff* authenticates Coogan's masculinity in terms of his virility, it elsewhere emphasises the unsuitability and vaguely ridiculous nature of Coogan's Western identity in the setting of New York.

Centrally, the film establishes the inappropriateness of Coogan's law-related activity. He flouts regulation by deceiving the authorities at the psychiatric hospital holding Ringerman into letting him go, only to be knocked out and have the prisoner taken off him at the airport. When Coogan finally captures Ringerman after much effort (he is beaten up in a bar-room brawl before going on an extensive motorcycle chase), Coogan agrees to let the prisoner back into the hospital to finish his allocated stay there. In terms of pure narrative logic, Coogan's actions are largely impotent, inasmuch as the situation with Ringerman remains unchanged. There is, undeniably, a sense of Coogan's masculinity being tested in a conventional sense, and, aside from his original ineptitude in letting Ringerman escape, Coogan passes the physical tests set by the narrative. He wins the fight in the bar - albeit not before receiving several blows himself - and wins the chase against Ringerman. Yet these masculine achievements should also be considered in light of the film's comic references to Coogan's macho sensibilities, which rest on his Western identity. When Coogan's New York police contact, McElroy (Lee J. Cobb), hears his reference to his 'personal' investment in recapturing Ringerman, he wryly replies, 'Yeah, I know. A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. Is that it, Wyatt?' The distinction is made here, as elsewhere in the film, between legitimate and illegitimate approaches to law, and the reference to the historical, often mythicised figure of Wyatt Earp serves to underline the anachronistic and ironically larger-than-life qualities of Coogan. McElroy's ironic sense of Coogan's presence is later reflected in a scene featuring Coogan's visit to a hippie nightclub, in which shots of a bemused Coogan making his way through the crowd are intercut with

close-ups of psychedelic visualisations of breasts, thus imbuing Coogan's presence with a distinctive sense of incongruity. Although the hippies themselves are made to look incongruous, their regarding of this 'funny cowboy' is essentially a view shared by the film.

The climax of the film, in which Coogan catches Ringerman following a motorcycle chase in a park, evidences Coogan's strengths in a more 'natural' milieu which, if not visually akin to the West, at least represents a reserve of nature that can be differentiated from the urban city. While Coogan achieves a measure of success here, it is implied, as Gallafent suggests, 'that Coogan will only succeed in this anomalous place' (1994: 157). This contemporary 'Wyatt' can only do what he has to do in a place which, in relation to New York and like himself, does not 'fit'. This 'outsider' trope is, of course, common to Eastwood's films in general, and is particularly apparent in his Westerns, perhaps unsurprisingly given the genre's traditional emphasis on the hero whose social integration remains problematic. In Eastwood's Westerns, however, even the possibility of integration can be discounted from the start, in for instance *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*, which suggest that the Eastwood character is already dead. *Coogan's Bluff* explicitly renders the 'Otherness' of Coogan, particularly in the visual sense, but also in the wider sense of characterisation, by which the methods he uses do not entirely work. His final success can only occur because of an original failure - a dichotomous negotiation which to some extent reflects the film's negotiation of the Eastwood persona. The persona is conventionalised in the sense that Eastwood again plays a sexualised hero whose 'Americanness' is without doubt. In contrast to *Hang 'Em High*, however, the film continues the more anti-heroic characterisation established in the 'dollars' films. Coogan's lack of concern for the details of the law in general is reflected in his rifle butt beating of an Indian suspect at the start of the film, and he later deceives his city girlfriend, Julie (Susan Clark), into getting the address of Ringerman's girlfriend, who he subsequently sleeps with - ostensibly in order to get information, although given his non-reaction to Julie's complaint after she finds out, it is inferred that seeking information is not his only priority. As will become clear, the anti-heroic characterisation becomes a predominantly consistent marker of Eastwood's roles in his subsequent Westerns. Again in contrast to *Hang 'Em High*, the film employs a rich vein of parody in representing the Eastwood character, again setting the scene for his subsequent Westerns, which contain parodic elements to varying degrees of emphasis. However seriously it suggests itself as an action film, the principal motif of *Coogan's Bluff* remains the emphasis on Coogan as not only an outsider, but an outsider whose mockery is ostensibly shared by the film, with the subject of mockery being Coogan's Western persona.

Two Mules for Sister Sara (Don Siegel, 1969)

Two Mules for Sister Sara comes across as an attempted appropriation of the 'spaghetti' Western in its near-entirety, in contrast to *Hang 'Em High*'s utilisation of Italian elements within a broadly Americanised narrative. Significantly, however, the departures from the conventions established in the 'dollars' trilogy in Siegel's film are not dissimilar from the departures evidenced in *Hang 'Em High* and *Coogan's Bluff*; the Eastwood character becomes involved with a woman, and his dialogue is quite extensive. This evident moderation of the extreme narcissism of Eastwood's first screen identity suggests, as I have previously argued, an attempt to partially relocate that identity in terms more 'appropriate' to the traditions of the American Western, to Americanise an identity ambiguously situated within a foreign context. The beginning of *Two Mules for Sister Sara* evidences an explicit and deliberate attempt to establish its context in terms of authenticity, with the title 'Filmed in Mexico' inserted in the credits over various shots of the local wildlife. In contrast to the obviously foreign, but not wholly discernible settings of the 'dollars' films (which masqueraded Spain for Mexico and America), the film strives for an apparent sense of realism, a clearly defined sense of place. While the film thus attempts to distance itself from Leone's work, it does, however, contain an irreverent Ennio Morricone score (although the music is rather more conventionally orchestrated than the 'dollars' films). The central ambiguity defining the film's cultural identity is its status as an American impersonation of an Italian Western that was in turn an impersonation of an American Western.

Eastwood's role as the Western hero in this setting is, initially at least, problematically defined. As in the 'dollars' films, he wears a poncho (with its connotations of 'foreignness'), but the more obvious signalling of ambiguity is evidenced immediately after his character, Hogan, rescues 'Sister' Sara (Shirley MacLaine) from being raped by three bandits. Having killed the men, he approaches her as she stands naked, but for the cover of a part of her habit. His wordless approach, and a low-angle shot of his boots, accompanied by suspenseful, 'agitated' low strings on the soundtrack, position his character as a potential rapist, the film having adopted the victim's point-of-view on Hogan's approach. Eastwood's characteristically bearded visage associates him, on a purely visual basis, with the three bandits; although one probably 'knows' that Hogan won't rape Sara, Eastwood's previous characterisation as the anti-heroic No Name, the role which is being impersonated here, helps to further introduce a degree of ambiguity into the moment. The film goes on to portray Hogan's heroic qualities in a dubious fashion: he robs the dead men of their belongings, nonchalantly whistling as he does so. From this point of the film onwards, however, Hogan's characterisation becomes less

associated with No Name, as he finds himself becoming a travelling companion to Sara. In the process, Hogan becomes less excessively narcissistic, by virtue of his attachment to Sara and finally his attachment to the revolutionary cause of the Juaristas (albeit motivated by personal gain).

The role of the female character in *Two Mules for Sister Sara* is significant, particularly in view of the privileging of MacLaine's name above Eastwood's in the credits. Both *The Beguiled* and *Unforgiven* were to contextualise Eastwood's position in the narrative within a milieu in which the presence of women formed a determining factor, and in this film Eastwood's association with the female character serves to deride him. Although it is not revealed until near the end of the film that Sara is in fact a prostitute, Hogan is successfully deceived by a masquerade that the spectator is able to see through as he is not. On the pretence that she needs to relieve herself, Sara goes off to smoke a cigar. When praying at a shrine, Sara crosses herself to the accompaniment of heavily ironic music. Hogan's disadvantage becomes a source of comedy in the film, by which, as Don Siegel put it, 'Eastwood thinks that he's leading her around but she's leading him - he's the second mule in the title' (quoted in Petley 1993: 306). In addition to signifying a person of low intelligence, the mule, as an animal physically inferior to and less intelligent than the horse, represents a lesser form of transport in the Western, as noted in the previous chapter. The suggestion that Hogan is like a mule is thus particularly insulting as far as his positioning as the hero of the film is concerned. His deception by Sara is made the more humorous by his obvious attraction towards her ('I sure would like to have met up with you before you took to them clothes and them vows'), by which she further controls Hogan in keeping him permanently repressed. While Sara and Hogan do finally cement their relationship, it is presented in comical terms, with Hogan joining Sara in the bathtub fully dressed, except for his hat, removed on her request. (Symptomatically, Eastwood's only Western to end on a sexual encounter de-eroticises the encounter, in addition to presenting it as comedy.) A discreet focus on the discarded hat is followed by the closing shot of the pair on their travels, with Hogan looking on in disdain at Sara, who is garishly dressed in whorish clothing. This final image sets up both characters for comic appraisal. While the spectator is invited to share Hogan's disdainful look, the film simultaneously provides a reminder of his mule-like status, inasmuch as Sara does indeed seem to be leading Hogan, rather than vice-versa. Although rendered comically in *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, the disturbance of gendered control evidenced here, by which the female character in a sense usurps the controlling narrative role usually held by the male, forms an effective precursor to Eastwood's next Western-flavoured film, in which his character's sense of control would be diminished entirely.

The Beguiled (Don Siegel, 1971)

The Beguiled cannot be purely characterised as a Western. The film is ideally classified as a hybrid, part-Western, part-Civil War story, with some trappings of gothic horror. One of Eastwood's few relative box-office failures, *The Beguiled* features perhaps the most complex and multi-layered negotiation of Eastwood's masculine identity. The narrative, set in the South at the time of the Civil War, revolves around Eastwood's character, Union Corporal John McBurney, being wounded in battle and duly rescued by a young girl who belongs to a local plantation house seminary, to which McBurney is taken to recuperate. He subsequently becomes involved with three women at the seminary, one of whom is its head, and the ensuing complications devastatingly result in McBurney first having his leg amputated (following it being broken) and then being murdered. The film can be usefully considered in terms of its broad narrative structure, which starts with a measured assertion of McBurney's masculinity (albeit partly compensated by his being injured) in respect of his sexual conquests, and ends in the negation of his masculinity through his apparent 'castration' (an allusion explicitly made by the film) and his ultimate death at the hands of the seminary woman. (As the film's title evocatively suggests, McBurney is both charmed and finally deluded.) The fact that Eastwood's character dies can be conceived in terms of the then current fad in American film for more pessimistic conclusions (a development which can be readily considered as a mediated response to the sociopolitical destabilisation then evident in America), and it represents a divergence from Eastwood's previous films. (Following *The Beguiled*, Eastwood's character would die in *High Plains Drifter*, *Honkytonk Man*, *Pale Rider*, and *The Bridges of Madison County*.) Significantly, his death is not represented in victorious or elegiac terms; the last shot of him is a close-up of his greying, drained face, his eyes open, as he is sewn up inside a body bag by his executioners.

It is apposite that the seminary women are seen to 'possess' Eastwood at the end of *The Beguiled*, for his character is objectified by the women throughout the film. When McBurney first arrives at the seminary, one of the girls, seeking confirmation of a Southern myth regarding Union soldiers, implores, 'One way to tell if he's a bluebelly - take off his pants. Yanks got tails.' The young girl who found McBurney at the start of the film opines in voice-over, 'I think he's ever so handsome', and smiles in an eroticised manner. The most obvious moment of objectification is realised when McBurney's body is cleaned and dressed by the school head, Martha Farnsworth (Geraldine Page), and the servant Hallie (Mae Mercer). As they tend to the soldier's prone, half-naked body, nervously-edited close-ups emphasise their clumsy

movements, overly sweaty faces, and averted eye movements. As McBurney positions the women of the seminary in terms of sexual attraction, so the women position McBurney in the same manner. Their objectification of him arguably finds its culmination in what is clearly the key moment of *The Beguiled,* the amputation of McBurney's injured leg following his falling downstairs.

As I suggested above, the film invites one to regard the amputation as a symbolic castration. The reasoning behind it is itself spurious. Martha immediately elects to cut the leg off on coming across McBurney's limp body on the presumption that gangrene would set in and kill him if the leg stayed; when questioned as to her confidence of being correct by her deputy head, Edwina (Elizabeth Hartman), Martha flippantly replies, 'I'm sure.' Yet there is a strong sense that McBurney is being 'punished' for his philandering; he fell down the stairs after being pushed by Edwina (for whom he earlier declared his love) following her discovery of him in bed with a younger girl, Carol (Jo Ann Harris). (McBurney also intimated his affections for Martha an hour earlier.) As a punishment, the amputation is a form of displaced masochism in which the punished body of McBurney is sexualised after being 'castrated' by Martha in the arguably 'feminised', domestic setting of the dining room. Gallafent suggests that the women present at the scene 'experience together an intense physical relationship to his body' (1994: 78). McBurney's position on the table suggests a crucifixion-like pose, emphasised by overhead shots and a level view of his body at the foot of the table. Martha earlier experienced a dream featuring the erotic fantasy of a *ménage à trois* involving herself, Edwina and McBurney. The dream ended with a cut to a painting, hanging on Martha's wall, portraying the body of Christ tended by women, in which the figures were positioned identically to the final postures of McBurney and the two women in the dream. The sexualisation of the amputation on her part represents for McBurney an effective castration. If, as Gallafent suggests (ibid), one should regard the moment as a form of displaced group sex, then it is instructive to note McBurney's own dream earlier in the film, in which he positioned himself as the desired lover of Martha, Edwina, and Carol. This dream, like Martha's, carries connotations of group sex. Yet McBurney's masculine fantasy is horrifically denied by a 'group' castration, and this unquestionable blow to McBurney's phallic authority is vociferously registered when he comes to after the amputation. After he yells, 'Why the hell didn't you just castrate me?', Martha throws his crutches against the wall, underlining her position as the castrating woman. With McBurney thus 'castrated', there is no obvious point of return to an affirmative image of masculinity.

Writing in 1977, Leo Braudy noted 'the decline of the star' as a condition of 'sixties and 'seventies American cinema. He argued: 'In part it occurs because the audience no longer identifies with the sexual and psychic energy of the figure on the screen so much as it identifies with his impotence or failure in one kind of film or his self-indulgence and self-centeredness in another' (177). Although Braudy's suggestion relies on a degree of generalisation, it is especially appropriate to consider in terms of Eastwood's career at this point. *The Beguiled* was sandwiched between Eastwood's performances in *Kelly's Heroes* and *Play Misty For Me*, in which he played more self-centred characters who did not 'fail' as such. In *The Beguiled*, it must be said, McBurney's character is self-indulgent as well - his philandering and his blatant lies about his heroics on the battlefield (which are contradicted by flashbacks of the 'actuality') suggest as much - but Eastwood's character is finally revealed as an 'impotent' failure. Following a short-lived reassertion of authority, in which he steals a pistol and drunkenly rails against Martha in front of her girls, McBurney is tricked into joining the women for a conciliatory meal, at which he consumes poisonous mushrooms and dies. During this scene, ironically, McBurney is seen to assume the patriarchal role of the 'father' by invitation - he is seated at the head of the table, and asked to say grace. (As I will discuss in more extensive detail in the conclusion to this thesis, the rare allusions to a paternal identity on Eastwood's part are intensely problematic, and often, as in *The Beguiled*, merely temporary.) Just when McBurney is adopting a more 'ideal' image of masculinity, at which point one might almost forget that he has lost a leg, he is killed by the women, his castration in effect complete. Paul Smith, assessing the reasons for the film's lack of commercial success, argues that *The Beguiled* underlines 'the fact that Hollywood dramas have induced certain expectations about the masculine corporeal, and cannot readily break them' (1993: 162). Don Siegel suggested shortly after the film's release that 'Maybe a lot of people just don't want to see Clint Eastwood's leg cut off' (quoted in ibid). Moreover, it must be said, such people would not want to see that amputation realised in terms of a castration, culminating in Eastwood's death at the end of the film. The essential problem thus posed in the film is its refutal of what Smith considers to be a necessary 'rule' of mainstream American film representations of male masochism: 'the masochistic stage of such narratives cannot be presented as a complete castration...the possibility of transcendence must always be kept available. The masochistic trope in this sense must be no more than a *temporary* test of the male body' (ibid; emphasis in original). There is no transcendence in *The Beguiled*; indeed, it could be argued that the film ends on a somewhat masochistic note, in that the women at the end of the film effectively objectify the prone body of McBurney in his shroud, as they did before with McBurney positioned on the dining room table prior to the amputation. On both occasions, the film registers their power over the weakened

(passive) male body. Ultimately, *The Beguiled* ends by confirming the completeness of the castration visited on the film's central character.

McBurney's castration is defined as much by his failure at enacting a socially authoritative role as by the obvious denial of his corporeal potency. *The Beguiled*, in positing the three different women vying for McBurney's affections, offers a clear avenue for social authority; indeed towards the end of the film Martha suggests to McBurney that on recovery he could assume the 'head of the house' position. One might note that Eastwood's dialogue in this film is extensive, further suggesting a persona to be considered less in terms of narcissistic than social authority. Significantly, just before his death, Edwina announces their plan of marriage (appropriately, in this scene McBurney is polite and jovial, suggesting a masculinity fit for social authority). *The Beguiled* communicates a sense of crisis in the realm of male and female relations, and therefore in the real possibility of social authority, a theme also explored in *Play Misty For Me*, Eastwood's directorial debut, and released the same year (1971). Both films can be read as mediated responses to the contemporaneous development of the feminist movement, in their negotiation of the masculine identity of the Eastwood hero as much as in their portrayal of 'active', amenable-to-violence women. Significantly, as Gallafent notes, the weapons used in both films are 'domestic' - knives and scissors (1994: 73) - and the setting of both McBurney's amputation and murder is the definitively domestic, feminine setting of the dining room.

Unsurprisingly, given the relative commercial failure of the former film, *Play Misty For Me* ultimately ends by asserting, albeit in measured terms, the 'triumph' of masculinity; the transgressive, hysterical woman felled by a knock-out punch. Both films, however, seek to problematise a wholly affirmative image of the Eastwood character. His almost predatory sexual inclinations are ultimately responsible for the acts of violence committed against his body (in *Play Misty For Me* he is slashed by a knife). While his philandering in *The Beguiled* is contextualised by the forced repression suffered by him during the war, he offers a familiar line to Edwina after he is caught kissing Carol ('She means nothing to me'), to which she responds, 'That's just what my father said to my mother', thus framing her criticism in patriarchal terms. This represents a somewhat ironic reply given the narrative logic of the film, which, as I have previously detailed, portrays the *failure* of McBurney's attempts to 'perform' the patriarchal role. His attempts to assume an active status within the seminary ultimately belie the passive, bedridden position he is forced into throughout the film, a passivity made the more damaging, as Gallafent notes, by being enforced in an enclosed world of women (1994:

75). Eastwood suggested that one reason for the film's poor returns was its lack of favour with audiences who 'wanted a character who could control everything around him' (quoted in Bingham 1994: 199), a character who would conform to the patriarchal ideal. After falling down the stairs, however, McBurney absolutely loses any notion of control, and the sense that he is fully controlled by the seminary women is emphasised in a montage sequence following the soldier's realisation of his 'castration', in which shots of the seminary women are superimposed over a close-up of McBurney's face, drained but clearly ridden with anxiety. McBurney's passivity is grimly underlined in the final moments of the film, where Martha 'uses' his body to teach a new stitch to one of the girls as they sew his body into its shroud.

As Gallafent suggests, a context additional to feminism within which one might consider the film is America's grim Vietnam experience, given that the narrative thrust of the film - the wounded soldier returning to a world of dominant women - could be said to betray the anxieties of the period regarding the veteran's return to a 'feminised' society (1994: 100). As Susan Jeffords discusses in *The Remasculinisation of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (1989), the sense of loss felt by the veteran was intensified by the apparent 'victory' of feminism. One might also consider, by the same terms, the contextual significance of *The Beguiled*'s emphasis on the damaged, castrated body of the soldier, which surely formed a disquieting resonance and perhaps helps to explain the film's lack of success. Eastwood noted that by his playing a 'loser', the film may have alienated its potential audience: 'Dustin Hoffman and Al Pacino play losers very well. But my audience likes to be in there vicariously with a winner' (quoted in McGilligan 2000: 189).[3] In playing a 'loser', Eastwood's star image, as negotiated in this film, undergoes a subversion at least as (if not in fact more) profound as the subversions to be found in the 'dollars' trilogy. As the more problematic aspects of those films were eschewed in *Hang 'Em High*, Eastwood's body would never suffer the iniquities of *The Beguiled* in his subsequent films, although two of his later Westerns, *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*, would intriguingly posit Eastwood's character as dead from the beginning, while preserving his body in a relatively undamaged state.

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[3] Despite the often-conceived predication of Eastwood's star persona on characterisations defined by omnipotence, one is struck by the incidents of death in his Westerns, when compared to other stars whose images were similarly conceived in terms of omnipotence. Most obviously, the 3 deaths in Eastwood's 15 Westerns (*The Beguiled*, *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*) can be contrasted with the 4 deaths in Wayne's 90 Westerns (*The Alamo*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *The Cowboys* and *The Shootist*). Furthermore, it can be argued that the characterisations in *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider* are specifically constructed around the theme of mortality to a degree matched only by *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and *The Shootist*.

This grouping of films - the first post-Leone Westerns and sub-Westerns - represents the domestication of Eastwood's image. The hero is named and placed in a more clearly defined, 'authentic' setting. While this apparently greater sense of 'realism' removes the more problematic aspects of ambiguity defining the 'dollars' trilogy - such as the potential reading of the hero as an incoherent presence - its authentication of the 'real' in the clearly American hero and the (*Two Mules for Sister Sara* aside) American milieu introduces its own problems, in the sense that when the hero is seen to be damaged, or his authority otherwise problematised, the domesticated context in which this occurs ensures that the damage becomes more coherently realised. On the specific point of the representation of bodily damage, the punishments received in these films - notably a hanging and an amputation followed by death - are more severe than those received in the Leone films (beatings and sun exposure). While Leone's films offered the image of a masculinity that seemed to be 'unreal', in Eastwood's American films the emphasis is on a more clearly defined masculinity, which arguably renders the damage in these films as in a sense more 'real' itself, and thus more problematic. Clearly, *The Beguiled* offers the most severe example of damage to the Eastwood body, in which his death is not only preceded by a 'castration', but unedifyingly dwelt upon in the image of Eastwood's face in death. If, as Gallafent suggests, we subject the film to a contextualised reading, the sense of damage becomes altogether more damaging in terms of masculinity, given the traumatic context of Vietnam and feminism (1994: 100). But what I wish to explore here is the possible resonance a contextual reading might have in relation to the other films discussed, given the prominence of both issues in American culture during the period addressed here - 1968 to 1971. All of the films have the Eastwood character becoming involved with women, and *Two Mules for Sister Sara* and *The Beguiled* have as their central point of narrative interest the relationship between Eastwood and women. Concomitantly, the films propose a greater sense of the Eastwood character's social integration. This can be read as another sign of the 'Americanisation' that I have suggested marks these narratives, and that is particularly clear in *Hang 'Em High* in terms of its position as Eastwood's first American film as a star. The extreme alienation of the 'foreign' unnamed protagonist is countered in these films by a hero who serves a particular cause - variously the law, a revolution, and an army. Although his character's attachment to these causes is not wholehearted - Coogan ignores legal procedures, Hogan joins the revolution for financial reasons, and McBurney is removed from the army at the start of *The Beguiled* - Eastwood is nevertheless seen to identify with something other than himself, and thus belong to something, in contrast to the persona established in the 'dollars' films. Interestingly, in *The Beguiled*, this sense of belonging is forced onto the Eastwood character, with devastating consequences for his masculinity.

If this group of films are to be contextualised in terms of Vietnam and feminism, it seems significant that the early films exhibit a desire to accommodate women and place them in a relationship with Eastwood. In *Coogan's Bluff* and *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, the relationship becomes more problematic, with Eastwood being paired with increasingly assertive and powerful women who increasingly undermine his authority. In *The Beguiled*, the patriarchal order is entirely subverted, with women both having full control over, and damaging, Eastwood's already-crippled body. McBurney, the wounded soldier, leaves one traumatic arena (the war) only to enter another (the excessively feminised seminary). Neither context allows McBurney to unproblematically express his masculinity, since both contexts represent loss in various ways - the initial wound received in the war; the 'castration' and death at the hands of the women. *The Beguiled* comes after its Western predecessors have effectively sought to establish the Eastwood character's virility to varying degrees, as most blatantly evidenced in *Coogan's Bluff*. Significantly, *The Beguiled* emphasises the sexualisation of McBurney in his various seminary relationships before he is 'castrated', the point being that McBurney is punished for his virility in a particularly resonant way. In terms of the idea of masculinity and national identity shaping Eastwood's star persona at this time, the film evokes a sense of crisis in both aspects of the persona. *The Beguiled* evidences this crisis by illustrating the punishment of the virility of the persona, and the irrecoverable damage inflicted on the physicality of the persona. The American male is himself seen to be beguiled into thinking that a feminised milieu offers a safe place of sanctuary from a war, when in fact the threat of castration becomes more pronounced. It cannot be accurately said that *The Beguiled* is 'about' Vietnam as such, but it appears to mediate a central fear resting upon the idea of the extent to which the American male can be reintegrated into a feminised society, and the consequences of such a move for masculinity, a fear predicated on contemporaneous cultural developments. While the Eastwood character can to some extent integrate successfully in *Coogan's Bluff* and *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, he cannot in this film. His masculinity already physically damaged, McBurney seals his fate when he enters a world of women.

If *The Beguiled* is to be understood as a mediated reaction to feminism, and to a lesser extent the traumatic consequences of Vietnam, then it represents an admission of loss in these terms. The domesticated masculine image built up and sexualised in the previous films is here castrated and destroyed. Symptomatically, the greater the dominance of women in Eastwood's world, the more threatened is his masculinity. Significantly, the films examined here underline a gradual increasing of female dominance, reaching its peak in a film which inscribes their damaging of a man already damaged by war.

10) EASTWOOD - THE VENGEFUL HERO

In Eastwood's first-domestically-produced Westerns, his image of heroism was renegotiated with a view to creating a hero who was not simply a domestic version of the Leone/Eastwood 'hero'. From *Hang 'Em High* to *The Beguiled*, the Eastwood hero was alternately 'Americanised', reintegrated into a social milieu, and subjected to a more emphatic degree of damage, to the point of his symbolic castration and death in *The Beguiled*. In *High Plains Drifter* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, the Eastwood hero is subject to renegotiation further still, assuming a more substantial relation to the characterisation of the 'dollars' films in the former, and marked by a sense of nostalgia in the latter. As Eastwood's first Westerns as director, these films granted Eastwood the opportunity to interrogate his own screen persona, the principal determinant of which was the Western hero. By harking back to a more 'spaghettiesque' characterisation - as evidenced by a more pronounced narcissistic streak, more minimal use of speech, and the return of the beard (which was predominantly absent from the first American-produced films) - Eastwood signalled a desire to return to an ostensibly darker, less 'coherent' characterisation than previously witnessed in his American Westerns. *High Plains Drifter* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* differ somewhat in the overall tone of their characterisation, with the mediated nostalgia of the latter film softening the 'angry' tone more prevalent in the former film. Nevertheless, the fact that both films evidence characterisations that form a point of departure from Eastwood's previous films suggests a need to account for this development. That *High Plains Drifter* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* are Eastwood's first Westerns as director partly accounts for this moderate evolution, in the sense that it gave Eastwood a creative impetus. However, given the cultural determinants at work in his previous films, the issue merits further consideration from this perspective.

Eastwood's characterisations in *High Plains Drifter* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* are arguably determined, in part, by the sociocultural context forming a background to the period spanning the production and reception of the films - 1972 to 1976. The primary determinant of the sociocultural context in this period was the Vietnam war, encompassing the imminent American defeat, and the attempt to come to terms with the resounding sense of loss following the confirmation of defeat in the 1975 evacuation of Saigon ahead of the communist take-over and the reunification of the country. *High Plains Drifter* portrays the vehement anger of a vengeful ghost returning to destroy the social community that killed him, while *The Outlaw Josey Wales* has Eastwood adopting a surrogate, albeit problematised, paternal role as the 'founding father' of a small commune set up as a refuge from the ravages of war (the

Civil War in this case, but reflective dialogue like 'We all died a little in that damn war' would have struck an ambiguous chord for American spectators in 1976, as would the 'counter-cultural' associations set up by, among other things, Eastwood's character being an ex-Confederate, and thus 'anti-government' soldier). It would be wrong to overstate the significance of Vietnam as a metaphorical template in these films, but the war and its aftermath form one of the contexts against which the films should be considered, alongside the generic context identifying the films as belonging to a generic tradition which, by the 1970s, had become wholly unsure of itself, and as a consequence increasingly represented itself in a problematic manner, particularly with regard to the basic security - or permanency - of the hero's role in the narrative milieu in which he was placed.

High Plains Drifter (Eastwood, 1972)

High Plains Drifter represents Eastwood's first Western as a director, and its characterisation of the Eastwood hero works partly on the basis of its invocation of the No Name figure in the 'dollars' trilogy. The film poses Eastwood's character, whom one can call the Stranger, as an enigma from the start; as in *A Fistful of Dollars*, the character rides into a town (Lago) at the beginning of the film and shortly thereafter engages and kills three disagreeable men in a gunfight. (Interestingly, the men interrupt the Stranger's attempts to get a shave, after which he remains hirsute, *à la* No Name, for the rest of the film.) Fearing the vengeful return to Lago of three outlaws released from jail for a crime previously committed in the town, and recognising the Stranger's obvious strengths, the town council elect to give him *carte blanche* to do as he pleases, if he will assist them in their hour of need. The Stranger agrees, but proceeds to make a mockery of the town in the process, typically by underlining the inadequacy of the town males. He has sex with two of their women, makes the town dwarf, Mordecai (Billy Curtis) sheriff, and leaves the men at the mercy of the outlaws near the end of the film, when after giving rudimentary training to the men he rides out on them. It ultimately emerges that his actions are a vengeful response to a previous conspiratorial crime committed by the men of the town, in which the old town marshal was murdered. In time, it emerges that the Stranger is none other than the ghost of the previously-wronged marshal.

High Plains Drifter implicitly offers this suggestion in its opening images. In a long shot of the sandy landscape, hazy in the rising heat, the Stranger suddenly appears, as if out of nowhere, by means of a gradual dissolve. The score accompanying these images is coded as ghost-like, foregrounded by a distant and ethereal choir (a motif

which the film returns to at key-moments of the Stranger's avenging violence). On first entering Lago, the Stranger recoils on hearing the cracking of a bull-whip (which the film later reveals to be the weapon used to kill the marshal); as he sleeps in the hotel, there is a flashback of the murder motivated as a dream (the camera zooms in on his face) in which there is, via a dissolve, a match-cut of the outline of both his face and the marshal's face. The only point of equivocation is the marshal's clean-shaven features, set against the Stranger's bearded visage. The beard functions here as a mask preventing immediate identification of the Stranger by the townspeople, but it might also underline the aberrance of the character, in view of his being a dark, undead avenger (an issue I will discuss further below).[1] The Stranger's ride through the town at the beginning of the film accentuates this sense of aberrance, since he rides impassively, staring straight ahead while failing to return the gaze of the townspeople who observe his entrance. That the Stranger is starkly underlit further underlines this, serving to render the presence as one that cannot be fully defined and, moreover, a presence marked as aberrant by the logic of filmic coding. In addition, as Dennis Bingham has pointed out, the sound effects of the Stranger's horse and spurs are amplified (1994: 164), suggesting a presence that is threatening as well as other-worldly.

The connection between the marshal and the Stranger is ultimately clarified. After sleeping with the Stranger, the wife of the town's hotel-keeper begins a conversation seemingly unmotivated on her part, in which she comments that 'the dead don't rest without a marker', referring to the marshal's burial in an unmarked grave. After the Stranger has had the town painted red and renamed Hell, killed the men responsible for the conspiracy to kill the marshal, and killed the outlaws who actually carried out the killing, he leaves the town at the film's climax and passes the unmarked grave on the outskirts, now being belatedly marked by Mordecai, who points out that he still has not caught the Stranger's name. The Stranger replies, 'Yes you did', and rides out into the horizon which opened the film, now effectively 'disappearing' into the hot rising air, as he magically 'appeared' at the film's beginning.

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[1] Facial hair has formed an important coding device in the Western throughout its history, with the clean-shaven (civilised) hero traditionally contrasted with the hirsute villainous characters. Among the changes heralded in the genre by the Leone films was the problematisation of this code (Pumphrey [1989] 1996: 53-54). Subsequent Western heroes could sport facial hair in 'defiance' of civilisation, representing a refiguring of the code in terms of the developing generic destabilisation of the civilisation/wilderness opposition. Eastwood's position as the first regularly bearded Western star testifies to this development; significantly, his first American Westerns up to *High Plains Drifter* (apart from the 'spaghettiesque' *Two Mules for Sister Sara*) had him clean-shaven, as if the 'excesses' of the dollars films necessitated a more traditional image of the hero even as the code was being problematised elsewhere. In *High Plains Drifter*, the Stranger's beard establishes his defiance of civilisation (as do his subsequent actions), inasmuch as the 'civilised' citizens of the town organised and colluded in his killing.

The fact that *High Plains Drifter* at least initially renders the suggestion of Eastwood's 'already dead' status in (slightly) ambiguous terms has interestingly led to some interpretations of the film positing Eastwood's character as someone other than Duncan's ghost, and therefore not dead.[2] This invariably suggests the typical predication of a strong star image on 'living' representations and the connotations of potency imbuing such representations, and the difficulty had by critics like Paul Smith in conceiving of Eastwood's characterisations without recourse to this 'ideal' image. Smith describes Eastwood's character in the film as a 'White male demigod' (1993: 38), although my reading of the film suggests the damaged and demonic 'qualities' of Eastwood. Smith's argument is based on a view of the film as part of a restitutive exercise, by which Eastwood as director places himself at the centre of the narrative, via the formal strategy of reverting to traditional filming techniques - notably the shot/reverse shot-principle - which assert Eastwood's recovery of his foreign heritage, while close-ups still privilege the individual presence of his Leonesque character (ibid: 38-39). In a further gesture of restitution, according to Smith, the paternal nature of Eastwood's role is emphasised by his benevolent relationship with ethnic Others, and a surrogate son figure (ibid: 40-42). As such, Eastwood's prominent role in the narrative - particularly as an 'avenging and enigmatic father' - allows the actor/director to reassert his 'ownership of the genre' (ibid: 42). The central flaw in Smith's account of the film is his failure to mention at any point in his discussion that Eastwood's character is in fact dead. His character may well be, in formal terms, at the centre of the film, but as an undead avenger, his presence can only be viewed as dislocated and incoherent, as can any trace of a paternal identity. Smith seeks to read *High Plains Drifter* as an 'ideal' Eastwood vehicle, when it is a film so steeped in mortality that, if the actor can be said to assume 'ownership of the genre', by the terms of this film he inherits a genre marked by his own hand as dead.

High Plains Drifter negotiates the status of its 'hero' as alternately vulnerable and invulnerable. The Stranger, in the 'present time' of the film, is portrayed as invulnerable in terms similar to the parodic renderings of the 'dollars' films - he fails to receive any bullets when he is repeatedly (and at point-blank range) shot at while taking cover under bath water, and he survives an assassination attempt with apparent mind-reading expertise when he seemingly knows in advance, without any benefit of foreknowledge, of the assassin's intentions (they break into his room and 'beat up' his carefully-placed pillows while he, standing on the balcony outside, lights up some dynamite and throws

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[2] Gallafent notes that the dubbed version of the film released in France posited Eastwood's character as the brother of the deceased marshal (1994: 116-117). Interestingly, Eastwood himself has at different times suggested both that the Stranger is a ghost (quoted in Combs 1992: 14) and the dead marshal's brother (Knapp 1996: 61).

it into the room). However, this scene is also marked by supernatural evocations - the Stranger's uncanny foreknowledge is underlined by the eerie main theme accompanying the revelation of his presence on the balcony - and as such reminds one of the Stranger's ghostly status. Eastwood's character's invulnerability, then, is invariably contextualised by the 'past time' of the narrative, which the film consistently relates to. In the previous defining act of the narrative, Eastwood's character is patently vulnerable, inasmuch as he is killed. In addition, the manner of his death - he is bull-whipped in the open street - seems particularly humiliating. Thus while the film presents Eastwood's as an invulnerable hero in the 'present time', he is really only invulnerable because he is a ghost; the 'natural' and assumed invulnerability of the traditional Western hero is therefore exposed as something unreal, a fiction. Those critics who, like Smith, fail to discuss this aspect of the narrative, tend not to consider the full implications of the film's final shot, which brings us back to the fact that the Stranger is already dead. Following his advice to Mordecai that the dwarf always knew what his name was (as the name of Jim Duncan is carved into the gravestone), the Stranger vanishes into the haze, returning to the milieu of the Western 'undead'. Explicitly, *High Plains Drifter* attests to the death of the Western hero; the only way in which it can posit the Stranger as invulnerable is by marking him as already dead.

An important aspect of the film in this respect is its portrayal of the Stranger as a fundamentally alienated character, any chance of his finding some commitment with the town of Lago denied from the outset by his disdainful treatment of the town following his appointment as Lago's 'protector'. A degree of alienation inevitably follows from being dead, but the Stranger's distance from everything around him (apart from perfunctory associations with Mordecai[3] and the hotelier's wife) inevitably reminds one of the narcissism marking the Man With No Name in the 'dollars' trilogy. The excessive narcissism of the Stranger in this film is even more pronounced than those earlier films, in which the Man still retained an occasional sense of benevolence, albeit not for purely altruistic purposes. The Stranger in this film is defined by an obsession with his own personal revenge which entails a contemptuous attitude to the town as a whole. Interestingly, many of the Stranger's avenging acts - the rape of a woman, the disregard for the 'sanctity' of the church, the ridicule of the picnic set-up greeting the outlaw's arrival into Lago - represent an attack against obvious symbols of civilisation which can also be characterised as emblems of social authority. Following on from the parodic rendering of the Man's narcissistic omnipotence in the 'dollars' films, however, the Stranger's extreme narcissism is ironically tempered by his being dead.

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[3] Although Smith suggests a paternal-filial relationship between the Stranger and Mordecai (1993: 40-42), my own reading of Eastwood's aberrant role in *High Plains Drifter* refutes this argument, inasmuch as the Stranger's paranormal status attests to the unsustainable, impossible nature of a coherent, 'earthly' relationship.

In Leone's trilogy, Eastwood's portrayal of an alienated Western hero pointed towards a symbolic sense of the death of the Western hero, but in *High Plains Drifter* the death of the Western hero is an actual reality. As such, his actions in the film are wholly unlike the actions expected of a traditional Western hero; indeed, they are worse than the excesses of The Man in the 'dollars' trilogy. His first act on entering Lago is the rape of a woman, who in effect 'comes on' to the Stranger (and ultimately seems to consent to the act), although this does not wholly alleviate the Stranger's positioning here as, effectively, a rapist. The Stranger continues his assault on civilisation by forcing the town hotel to expel its guests in order to make the entire hotel available to him. As the begrudged guests complain in the night outside, Lago's reverend protests to the Stranger of the treatment of 'his brothers and sisters', leading the Stranger to suggest that the reverend should therefore gratefully accept the said 'brothers and sisters' in his church. The Stranger's final act of disgust towards the town is to order its re-painting entirely in red; when the reverend disdainfully enquires as to whether he also intends to paint the church red, the Stranger replies, 'I mean especially the church.' His particular animosity towards the church is partly contextualised by the church's functioning as *the* archetypal emblem of civilisation (the flashback specifically notes the 'civilised' citizens of Lago, including the reverend, passively witnessing the murder of marshal Duncan), and the Stranger's renaming of the town as Hell confirms his 'statement' in this respect. However, both these acts can be additionally explained by the quasi-devilish connotations imbuing the character of the Stranger.

If Eastwood's portrayal in this film is essentially that of a mysterious, dark avenger, it is also a portrayal that, by association, suggests a background darker still. Bruce Surtees' cinematography lights the Stranger very sparsely at key moments of the film which suggestively hint at the Stranger's devil-like status. When he first enters Lago, his face is tightly framed and yet almost unidentifiable, as he is watched all the while by the town's inhabitants with a somewhat disturbed look on their faces. His rape of the woman moments later ends with a low-angle shot of the Stranger's whole body, standing tall after the act, again extensively shadowed. Appropriately enough the culminating mark of the Stranger's potential origins comes in his completion of his revenge, when he kills the three men who previously killed him. His revenge is here set against a background of fire (after the Stranger has set alight to several buildings in order to draw the attention of the killers), which casts the Stranger's body in darkness, though illuminating him from behind. This ostensible visual underlining of Lago's new identity as Hell thus also suggests the Stranger's ambiguous position in the town he has renamed, a position alluded to in an earlier piece of dialogue delivered during a church meeting concerning the Stranger's liberty-taking: 'It couldn't be worse if the devil

himself had ridden into Lago!' (More suggestively, as Gallafent points out, the Stranger's painting order is delivered in the setting of the cemetery (1994: 119).) That *High Plains Drifter* characterises Eastwood's 'ghost' with vaguely satanic connotations serves to underline the film's effective statement that the Western hero (as early 1970s audiences knew him) is truly dead; in his apparently 'living' form, the Stranger is unrecognisable as a hero, but does at times seem like a devil.

High Plains Drifter ends with the Stranger leaving the town in a state of ruin, its buildings shattered and smouldering; the town is left for dead, and the Stranger returns to the world of the undead, his identity now established, but only to confirm his deadness. Clearly, the film represents a stark inversion of generic expectations - villains, not heroes, are supposed to lay waste to towns. The archetypal, that is to say essentially affirmative, representations of both the nominal hero and the 'civilised' town are turned upside-down, and if both archetypes are to be conceived in terms of their place in an essentially American tradition, their specific interaction in *High Plains Drifter* seems particularly resonant when one considers the temporal context of the film. The ghost of a damaged and dead man returns to wreak an almost satanically-inspired havoc on the 'civilised' town that caused his death, suggesting a symbolic alignment with Vietnam, if one substituted the terms of 'hero' and town with the veteran and America. The image of the burning town also brings to mind images of burning American inner-city districts, like Newark and Watts, images which would have been still fresh in the American imagination in 1972. The apocalyptic image of the destroyed town that ends the film marks an image very much of its time, when a genre in a state of ideological fragmentation could offer such a fragmented image. (As an *American* image of destruction the film anticipates the more devastating images of destruction offered in the disaster cycle of the mid-1970s.)

While the returning, angry ghost of *High Plains Drifter* can be contextualised by Vietnam, the principal ideological determinant of the period, on another level it can be read as a text indirectly registering the impact of feminism. In both *The Beguiled* and *Play Misty For Me*, Eastwood played characters who were directly threatened by women, being killed when held captive in a seminary in the first film and pursued by a homicidal stalker in the second. Both films attest to a primal fear of female power, by displacing female control over male control, and playing on fears of disempowerment and castration. Although *High Plains Drifter* does not replicate the more direct reactive mediations of the women's movement evidenced in the earlier films, it suggests traces of a mediation in two respects. Firstly, the treatment of the two principal women in the film revolves around firm notions of masculine control over and anger against

women. The rape is characterised from the Stranger's point of view as 'just punishment', since the woman deliberately bumps into him to seek attention, and then takes umbrage when he suggests they 'get acquainted'. When she is raped, her initial objections are replaced with an orgasmic response. Her positioning as a threat to the Stranger is subsequently emphasised by her failed attempt to shoot him when he is vulnerably situated in a bathtub, and her similarly failed attempt to entrap the Stranger in the afore-mentioned assassination attempt, when she sleeps with him and vacates the room prior to the arrival of the pillow-beating assassins. In both cases, the sexual act (or the act of rape in the first case) is associated with the possibility of death (even if the threat is levelled against a man who is already dead). While the woman who finds the Stranger's 'virile' brand of masculinity unacceptable falls by the wayside, the hotelier's wife accepts him on his own terms, after initially objecting to his brusqueness. She seems to understand the enigma before anyone else in the town does, her sleeping with the Stranger obviously providing more intimate knowledge of him (perhaps the implication is that they had a relationship in his past life). While the representation of these women suggests a mediated reaction to the development of feminism, it is the representation of Eastwood's character which attests more comprehensively to the growth of the women's movement. As the returning ghost of the murdered marshal, the Stranger is threatened, but his angry assertiveness overcomes the threats posed against him. Not only does Eastwood play a much more intensely angry character in *High Plains Drifter*; his masculinity is also characterised as much more aggressively virile, in comparison with his previous Westerns (no romantic affiliations feature in the Leone films, while *Hang 'Em High* and *Two Mules for Sister Sara* feature a total of three sexual encounters, all wholly consenting).

As a man who seems to 'belong' absolutely to the wilderness, from which he emerges and vanishes at the film's beginning and end, the Stranger is an excessively 'wild' character, as suggested by his woman-raping and town-burning acts, however seemingly 'motivated' they are. The film sets up an opposition between the 'wild' Stranger and the 'civilised' town at every level, from his eerie arrival to his exit, backgrounded by the smouldering frames of Lago's buildings. As a corollary of this, the Stranger's individuality is posed against the social structures of the narrative, against which his anger is directed - the town, the town council (who were party to the original conspiracy), and the church. Both of these interrelated oppositions are negotiated in the Western genre at large, but traditionally the focus is on a conciliatory opposition, whereby the hero resolves to rid the town of villainous elements to facilitate the development of civilisation, although whether the hero stays to settle in the town or leave it to return to the more 'familiar' wilderness differs from film to film.

The hero's equivocal response to civilisation can be partly conceived in terms of gender, since if the rugged wilderness posits a liberated 'masculine' milieu, the 'civilised' town, with its attendant social conformity, posits a 'feminine' world which carries the implicit threat of 'containing' masculinity. In common with many other Westerns of the period,[4] *High Plains Drifter* portrays civilisation in a very critical light, the film's villainous elements being part and parcel of the 'civilised' elements; even those not fully involved in the conspiracy are, from the Stranger's point of view, guilty by implication. The Stranger's 'wild' assault on 'civilisation', in which his masculinity becomes marked essentially by a lack of control, thereby further disrupting his potential identification as a hero,[5] suggests an expression of masculinity gone into overdrive, his forcible use of sexuality and violence forming an appropriately gendered response to the iniquities heaped upon him in his past life, when 'civilisation' in effect symbolically castrated him. If the Stranger's revenge against Lago can be characterised as a compensatory act of 'masculine' aggression, however, his masculinity can only be conceived in terms of Otherness, being dislocated from the concrete actuality of the 'real world', and the generic expectations of the Western hero. If more 'traditional' heroes offered, on the level of fantasy, the figure of the ideal ego, whose 'idealness' was predicated on his embodiment of a unified image, in *High Plains Drifter* the 'hero' offers a certain fantasy of masculinity, but a fantasy that is fundamentally incoherent, emanating from an 'unreal', disembodied image of masculinity. The Stranger has no physical place in the narrative milieu; indeed, he has no possibility of belonging. If other Westerns in the era of Vietnam killed their heroes off, Eastwood's film kills off the *ideal* of the Western hero, by making him a quasi-satanic dead man, who does not come to save the town, but to destroy it.

***The Outlaw Josey Wales* (Eastwood, 1976)**

The disturbing and anonymous anti-hero of *High Plains Drifter* is replaced in Eastwood's next Western, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, by a relatively more affirmative representation of a hero. Eastwood's eponymous character in this film is ostensibly potent in the sense that he consistently overcomes life-threatening situations with relative ease, and the film presents these situations with a degree of seriousness, compared to the parodic underlining of No Name's seeming omnipotence in the

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[4] In particular, *Death of a Gunfighter*, *Tell Them Willie Boy is Here*, and *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* share the thematic strand of *High Plains Drifter* in locating the 'civilised' forces of civic and business figures as the main source of threat to the hero. In contrast to earlier Westerns which portrayed business figures as localised villains whose threat was easily countered, the later films portray the threat as more substantial, emanating from large business interests and entire communities, and succeeding in their lethal task.

[5] Westerns typically contrast heroes and villains according to their relative grasp of 'control', with the callous and often indiscriminate violence of villains measured against the more controlled response of heroes (who would never, for example, shoot a man in the back).

'dollars' trilogy. (Although the film does contain moments of parody, which I will discuss below.) In contrast to No Name, Josey Wales is given a past in the film, a past defined in traumatie terms and situated prior to the opening credits. Wales begins the film as a Missouri farmer with wife and child, the first film of his career in which he portrays a father, and the only Western in which he does so alongside *Unforgiven*. Yet this image of a domesticated masculinity does not last; Wales' plot is raided by Union army irregulars and his wife and son are killed in the process. In Wales' failure to protect his family, there is a sense that he has failed to play the role of the father, a failure which, as Gallafent notes, has to be 'linked with a failure of masculinity' (1994: 121). (As a 'type', and moreover a masculine ideal, the paternal role simply does not sit comfortably with Eastwood's persona, as it did, consistently if not always comfortably, with Wayne. Naturally, this issue shall form a central part of the conclusion to this thesis.) As Wales says a prayer over one of the graves, he breaks down, keeling the makeshift cross over as he collapses to the ground. Following this admission of 'weakness', a betrayal of emotion unprecedented in Eastwood's Westerns, the film goes on to evoke a sense of remasculinisation.

Wales discovers a gun amid the waste of his ravaged farm, regards it for a few moments, and then apparently learns to shoot, the implicit point being that his lack of gun expertise rendered him incapable of protecting his family when previously required. This sequence, rendered in a montage which intercuts the target practice with subjective, briefly edited memories of the farm before its ravaging, has interesting implications. The montage effects the impression that Wales is 'shooting at' the vestiges of his identity as a farmer; Wales subsequently joins a troop of Confederates who have not recognised the surrender and are intent on pursuing the irregulars who caused Wales and others in the territory so much pain. Significantly, at the point of Wales becoming thus militarised, the film duly shows him sporting a beard, thus visually identifying him with the image of Western masculinity that Eastwood personified in many of his previous Westerns. Wales' physically altered identity suggestively reflects his changed identity from farmer to soldier, and, more implicitly, the development of a more narcissistic persona (given that Eastwood's more narcissistic characters - notably the Man With No Name and the Stranger of *High Plains Drifter* - previously sported beards).

As I have delineated above, the 'reborn' trope was figured in Eastwood's earlier films; parodically in *A Fistful of Dollars*, more seriously in *Hang 'Em High*, and problematically in *High Plains Drifter*. (The Eastwood hero would subsequently be problematically 'reborn' in *Pale Rider* and *Unforgiven*.) In key with the characters of

No Name and the Stranger, the 'reborn' Wales is defined by a reticence with language, by periodic and sustained silences, and by a penchant for habitually repeating the same phrases (principally the laconic and distinctly non-committal 'I reckon so'). Paul Smith has noted that Wales' lack of speech and his chewed tobacco-spitting habit 'bespeak two parts of his masculinity - his reticence in the face of emotional situations and his ruggedness' (1993: 11). Crucially, his reticence is marked in terms suggestive of narcissistic authority in moments of confrontation with bounty-hunters intent on capturing him, whereby his composed silences are contrasted with the agitated talkativeness of his would-be capturers. That they talk too much is not only illustrated inasmuch as they give Wales enough time to overturn the situation, but by the avowedly 'revisionist' slant imbuing their speech. The first bounty-hunter Wales comes across, referring to the reputation preceding Wales through his Confederate warring, mockingly states, 'Always wanted to face out one of these big-pistol fighters they raise all a fuss about!' This attempt to 'deconstruct' the myth of the 'big pistol fighter' is, however, answered by the lethal firepower of the big pistol in Wales' hand. He who mocks Eastwood's heroism does so, it would seem from this, at his own risk. As actor and director, however, Eastwood parodies his own screen persona at several points in the film.

Although Eastwood's characterisation of Wales is for the most part 'serious', it is also considerably performative, accentuating specific gestures and phrases, as if parodying the fetishistic characterisations of the 'dollars' films, which were themselves parodic. The film places considerable emphasis on Wales' habitual spitting of tobacco, which he often employs as a gesture of contempt, but which is also marked in comedic terms. In response to a carpet-bagger's claims that his elixir 'works on most anything', Wales spits on the man's gleaming white suit, enquiring as to how it works with stains. Later, when Wales and his adoptive 'family' reach the homestead, Wales turns to spit but, in deference to grandma Sarah (Paula Trueman), swallows the wad instead, with an exaggerated gulp. Wales' spitting in the film becomes his defining gesture, marking the immediate prelude to the violence in his confrontational moments, and replacing speech, forming an effective corollary to the Eastwood stony stare that also marks these sequences. This potentially comic underlining of character is evidenced elsewhere in the film. During the Union camp attack sequence, Jamie (Sam Bottoms), one of the surviving rebels, comments incredulously, 'You can't get 'em all, Josey!', to which Wales replies, 'That's a fact.' When asked of his motivation, Wales responds, 'Because I've got nothing better to do.' Such dialogue registers the omnipotence of the hero, and his sense of motivation, in somewhat parodic terms, although, like the spitting gesture, it simultaneously underlines the narcissism of the Eastwood character by emphasising

Wales' laconic, unspecific speech (as the spitting emphasised the essential irrelevance of speech).

Theoretically, Wales' reticence with language can be suggestively linked to the previous killing of his family, given that the antithesis of narcissistic authority is social authority. The 'play' between these two poles forms one of the principal tensions of the Western, evidenced in the Westerner being torn between the pull of masculine individualism and freedom and the security of marriage and settlement (Mulvey [1981] 1989: 34). In *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, the farmer is forcibly removed from the position of social authority, so in a sense the only option available to him is narcissistic authority. Wales' potency is strongly suggested in the first confrontation the film details after the opening killings, when Wales effectively takes on an entire Union army camp after seeing his rebel comrades, including Jamie, being tricked into surrendering and duly cut down by gunfire (Wales being the only man not to surrender, again registering his narcissism, and almost suggesting a 'sixth sense' on his part). After killing a number of soldiers, Wales rides off with Jamie, who is now mortally wounded. At this point in the narrative Wales once again assumes a fatherly role, tempering his narcissistic identity with a degree of quasi-maternal commitment to the wounded man. However, as Wales more fully adopts the 'maternal' persona in treating Jamie's wound, he is disrupted by the arrival of the two bounty-hunting hill-billies, significantly marking 'the vulnerability resulting from this (maternal) role' (Gallafent 1994: 121). Wales kills the hill-billies (although he is helped in doing so by Jamie), and Jamie dies shortly afterwards, again marking Wales' failed attempt to carve out a parental role, and allowing him to go it alone once again, free of attachments. Yet this phase does not last, for Wales is ultimately joined on his travels by numerous people, who together make for an effective surrogate family (and find their 'home' in a settlement abandoned by a relative of one of the party).

Consequently, Wales' position as the 'father' of this new 'family' is both affirmed and problematised by the film, inasmuch as an alternative father-figure is offered in the character of Lone Watie (Chief Dan George), an ageing Cherokee Chief who Wales immediately comes across after the death of Jamie. As Gallafent notes, the film suggests a transposition of the father/son roles in its visual connection between the two scenes: Wales ties Jamie's body low onto a horse and directs it across a Union camp, allowing Wales to ride past unnoticed; he subsequently takes Lone Watie by surprise by directing his riderless horse towards the Chief (1994: 122). If the death of the 'son' thus paves the way for Wales to become Watie's 'son', the respective 'father' and 'son' roles are far from coherently realised. The tension between their respective roles is

humorously demonstrated in a vignette following the introduction of a third party to the group, a Navaho girl Wales rescues from an attempted rape, Little Moonlight (Geraldine Keams). Wales gets up in the night and approaches her sleeping spot, anticipating a consensual desire for sex. (Wales was earlier informed by Watie that Moonlight told him that she considered herself as belonging to the 'Great Warrior' who rescued her; asserting his narcissism, Wales insists to Watie, 'You tell her that I don't want nobody belonging to me.') Wales finds her, however, already accompanied by Watie, who informs Wales that he does not feel so old after all. Although this moment is treated as comedy, it ultimately represents an undermining of Wales' masculinity, inasmuch as it evidences a usurpation of the paternal role from Wales. Nevertheless, Wales retains an authoritative role insofar as he takes by far the most active role in saving the group from danger. (An authoritative role is significantly denied to Lone Watie. In an attack against the homestead, he merely provides defence, along with various other 'family' members, within the confines of the building, while Wales faces the attackers directly outside; in two earlier scenes Watie is a mere bystander to Wales' action, in one instance effectively made 'impotent' by being captured after clumsily falling down a rock-face right under the villains' noses.)

When Wales and his new 'family' arrive at the homestead, Wales has a socially authoritative role forced upon him, especially when, as 'head' of the 'family', he goes to negotiate with Ten Bears (Will Sampson), a Comanche Chief who takes objection to this new presence in his territory. Wales delivers an impassioned speech in praise of peaceful coexistence, one of the most sustained pieces of dialogue ever spoken by Eastwood in a Western, and as such indicative of a tempering of Wales' narcissism; here, Wales effectively paves the way for the establishment of a community. Yet this new emphasis on social authority does not last, even though Wales initially cements his more socialised identity by sleeping with Laura Lee (Sondra Locke), a young woman in the group who was earlier rescued by Wales from Comanchero bandits and a near-rape. Interestingly, the film emphasises her virginity - in contrast to Little Moonlight, who bears the scar of the 'dirty nose' sign marking her being taken by numerous braves in the past. Laura's near-rape is halted by a prominent bandit who points out that she will be worth more money if 'fresh', and she later takes to wearing a white dress, an item of clothing connoted with virginity in more than a few Westerns. Fittingly for his position as star of the film, Eastwood's sexual encounter is presented in considerably greater detail than the encounter between Lone Watie and Little Moonlight, and is as such marked by the film as a significant narrative development. Invoking a consciously 'artistic' device used in an identically-marked scene in *Play Misty For Me*, Wales and Laura are backlit and highlighted as they make love. Smith has read the relationship

between Wales and Laura in positive terms as suggesting the possibility of Wales being eventually granted a new son, thus negating Wales' formerly narcissistic identity (1993: 44). The source novel on which the film is based ends on such a note (Gallafent 1994: 129), but the ending of the film is much more ambiguous, as I will discuss below in more detail. On the specific point of Wales' relationship with Laura, in the film there is no evidence that points to its development. Laura's role appears to form a bridging device in the narrative, as Wales subsequently goes on to undertake his final violent act of revenge in pursuing and killing the leader of the irregulars who attacked his family, 'Red Legs' Terrill (Bill McKinney). Laura's role is less about the potential starting of a new family, arguably, than it is about Wales simply renewing his sexual self prior to the oncoming storm. Eastwood's negation of the novel's clarity in portraying a more fulfilled relationship between Wales and Laura is surely significant, given the strength of the narcissism informing Eastwood's characterisations. In undertaking his revenge after taking leave of his new 'family', including Laura, Wales seems to be re-establishing his narcissistic self. Pointedly, neither the 'family' nor Laura are ever seen again.

After killing Terrill, Wales returns to a ghost town which he passed through earlier, and enters the saloon only to discover there the presence of Fletcher (John Vernon), a former comrade of Wales turned scout for the Union, and two Texas Rangers, who request information on his whereabouts. Wales is protected by the misinformation provided by the saloon patrons on his behalf, who address him as Mr Wilson, and refer to Wales as dead, with great emphasis ('He is dead. He surely is dead. He's dead alright.'). Given that one of the more interesting features of Eastwood's star persona at this time centred on his evocation of the 'death' of the traditional Western hero, this emphasis is of some interest. The emphasis here is couched in mythical terms, with the story of Wales' 'death' invoking the clichéd scenario of a gunfight ('bullets were flying, people running every which way'). The point is underlined that this account is indeed a myth in terms of its fabricated nature, but it is also a specifically *Western* myth, the fantasy of the lone heroic gunfighter. The fantasy ends, however, on the noted death of the gunfighter. 'Mr Wilson' leaves the saloon only to be pursued by Fletcher into the street, who tells him that he'll try to find Wales and 'tell him the war is over.' Wales, who is noticeably bleeding from a gunshot wound sustained in the fight with Terrill's unit, tells Fletcher that 'we all died a little in that damn war.' The extra-textual resonance this line would have had for American audiences in 1976 is quite obvious, and gives the scene considerable power. While the line has a reconciliatory tone, its reference to the traumatic American experience in Vietnam is additionally interesting when one considers the effective fragmentation of the Western genre evidenced in the

years prior to the production of *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, a fragmentation which can be read as something of a mediated (and arguably forced) response to the trauma effected by that conflict. Symptomatic of this fragmentation was the increasing sense of nihilism pervading the genre, and in particular the increasing occurrence of the death of the leading 'heroic' character(s).

At the end of this film, Wales is certainly alive, but by his own admission he is 'a little dead'. Given the film's more traditional representation of Western masculinity, it would be difficult to read this moment as indicative of a coherently damaged masculinity on Wales' part. However, in view of the suggestion of Wales' assumption of a new identity, it is worth asking just who is being referred to here. The film offers two distinctive masculine identities which are variously embodied by Wales. He is at once a peaceable farmer, and a highly skilled gunfighter (a motif to be repeated in *Unforgiven* two decades later). Which identity does Wales suggest the 'death' of? Wales the farmer is effectively 'replaced' from the outset of the film by Wales the gunfighter, although as the narrative draws towards its end Wales comes close to regaining his former status, living on an agrarian settlement with a new 'family' and enjoying the company of a woman once more. By the very end of the film, however, Wales has left the settlement, leaving behind him the possibility of social attachment, and it remains unclear whether he will return to the community or not. The manner in which the ending of the film can be finally read depends on how one regards this point. While Gallafent explores the ambiguities of the ending, Smith argues that 'it is strongly suggested' that Wales will return to the community, effecting a double-regeneration of community and family (1993: 44). Yet he offers little evidence of such suggestions, other than referring to the conciliatory mode of the conversation with Fletcher (ibid: 43). Pointedly, Smith fails to consider even the slightest possibility of a more ambiguous reading. Immediately after killing Terrill, Wales shuts his eyes, and then looks around in a manner marked as 'confused' as the score adopts an ambiguous, wavering tone, effectively betraying Wales' ambivalent sense of identity. After his conversation with Fletcher, Wales rides off into the setting sun, with the somewhat triumphalist main title theme returning for the end credits. *The Outlaw Josey Wales* thus ends on a somewhat ambiguous note. While the film goes some way to reasserting the more traditional model of the Western hero, it ends on the image of the hero whose identity is not entirely coherent, and is to some extent marked by a degree of fragility; this sense of incoherence and fragility inevitably echoes the fundamentally insecure cultural position held by the Western in mid-1970s America. Yet tempering this sense of fragility is a sense of the hero as still a force to be reckoned with, as a man who can still ride, tall and proud, into the setting sun, albeit though 'not necessarily "home"' (Gallafent 1994: 130).

From the dark anti-hero who seeks to destroy a community in *High Plains Drifter* to the gunfighter who unintentionally 'fathers' a community in *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, the characters played by Eastwood in these films once again register an image of masculinity that can be read on one level as symptomatic of the cultural era. If the Eastwood characters in the previous films find their masculinity damaged without recourse to obvious or indeed any compensation (the ending of *Two Mules for Sister Sara* and *The Beguiled* respectively), in the two films examined here the emphasis is on revenge for masculinities damaged either before the film begins or at the very start of the film. The violence imbuing the acts of revenge forms a response to a traumatic event located in the past. Both films register a clear expression of anger, which is respectively directed against the emblems of civilisation and the institution of the US army. Clearly, one could not forcefully argue that the focus of these attacks directly relate to Vietnam - if one was to read *Josey Wales* as forming an attack on the institution of the army for damaging American men in Vietnam, one would have to evade the fact that Wales' revenge is specifically targeted against a rogue, irregular outfit of one of the armies fighting America's Civil War, albeit an outfit attached to the 'national' army. However, it is perhaps significant that both films offer a hero who occupies a vaguely counter-cultural position in the narrative. The emphasis is less on the desire to respond to a previous wrong by creating anew (although a community is established in *Josey Wales*, it is done unintentionally, and Wales is not clearly seen to commit himself to it) than on the desire to destroy the object of the hero's animus. The Stranger leaves a wrecked, smouldering town at the end of *High Plains Drifter*, and Josey Wales not only kills the men responsible for killing his family, but also a large number of Union soldiers (because, reasons Wales, 'I've got nothing better to do'). Both men exist on the verges of society, for the principal reason that one is dead and the other a wanted man with the need to avoid recognition (Wales is once threatened with recapture in a bustling town when someone shouts his name in the presence of Union soldiers).

Yet a clear difference between the two films remains in their respective visions of the hero and his relation to a sense of community. Even if Wales has no lasting bond to the community he inadvertently helps to form, the film offers a positive image of it, emphasising the bonding rituals of communal work and dancing (which Wales partakes in), and expressing the resilience of the men and women in helping to fend off the ambush by 'Red Legs' Terrill and his men. In *High Plains Drifter*, the Stranger expresses utter contempt for the town community, raping one woman, cuckolding another's husband, and setting up the men of the town in an ambush which they are bound to lose. If *High Plains Drifter* is all about the hero's rage, *The Outlaw Josey*

Wales conjoins the raging hero with the hero who, however unintentionally, 'fathers' a community. The finally more progressive, even self-consciously 'warm' ending of the latter film (Eastwood's only Western to end with him riding directly into the setting sun) attests much more to the history of the 'traditional' Western than the former film's ending, confirming the fact that the hero is dead against the setting of the burnt-out, blood red-painted town.

It is unsurprising that a number of critics[6] have contextualised *Josey Wales* as a post-Vietnam film which attempts to mediate and ameliorate the trauma of that war, specifically its reverberations in America and the consequent social fragmentation which was conceived as a quasi-civil war. If this film mediates an attempted rehabilitation of the trauma of Vietnam, can one read *High Plains Drifter* as a mediation of the full horror of that war, with the ghost of the damaged man returning to wreak an almost satanically-inspired havoc on civilisation? Although the clearer immediate context of the film is the decline of the Western, that decline was in turn arguably precipitated by Vietnam and other problematic developments in American culture during the period. Clearly, *High Plains Drifter* evidences a development in the manner in which the Western was received, given that the hero's invulnerability is seen to be predicated on his already being dead, and his returning form is less of an angel of death than something suggestibly darker still. The fact that the film contains elements more typically found in the horror genre - centrally the vengeful ghost and the coding of the music score - is significant. The horror film became a very prominent genre in the 1970s, and, like the Western, it underwent changes of emphasis; in short, like the Western, it became more problematic. As Andrew Tudor notes, the 'horror' became more localised, an essentially internal rather than external phenomenon. Rather than a being derived from a laboratory, supernature, or space, the horrific being emanated from and impacted upon the familiar world of small towns and suburbia. The 'horror' was internal 'in the sense of belonging within our familiar physical and social world, not distanced from us as they are in the Gothic *elsewhere* of an imaginary Transylvania or among the exotic equipment of a fanciful laboratory' (2002: 109; emphasis in original). While the Stranger's ghostly status aligns him to the supernatural, he nevertheless comes to 'exist' in the wholly familiar setting of the Western town. If *High Plains Drifter* seems to 'reinvent' the Western hero as a figure of horror, it does so because the 'traditional' Western hero, as a representational figure, was increasingly unsustainable in the period concerned, and the genre was additionally destabilised to the extent that its 'centre' had been displaced by the emergence of the production 'free-for-all', in Edward Buscombe's phrase, which characterised the 1970s, and saw films

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[6] Coyne 1997, Frayling [1981] 1998, Gallafent 1994, Smith 1993.

diversely aimed at Blacks, radicals, conservatives, and, with parodies in full flow, those to whom the Western was an object of ridicule (1993*b*: 51). To make the hero of *High Plains Drifter* a figure of horror suggests a deliberately excessive response to the period's generic fragmentation; by making the Stranger a source of damnation rather than salvation, Eastwood destroys the image of the archetypal hero, and thus critically undermines the very foundations of the Western.

While *The Outlaw Josey Wales* does not problematise the Eastwood character to the same extent as *High Plains Drifter*, the film nevertheless refuses to close off the problematic avenues it sets up with regard to Eastwood's characterisation. The final image of masculinity offered in *The Outlaw Josey Wales* is of a man regenerated but wounded, exorcised of his trauma but perhaps unable to commit himself to the possibility of a new life with a new woman. In *High Plains Drifter*, the Stranger leaves the town, having accomplished his revenge, to return to the world of the (un)dead. A point of connection between these films and the earlier 'dollars' trilogy is to be found in the issue of identity and naming. In contrast to Eastwood's first American Westerns, the Eastwood character is unnamed in *High Plains Drifter* (although he effectively is at the end of the film, by which his deadness is more fully confirmed), and *Josey Wales* ends with Wales assuming the identity of a Mr Wilson and riding off to a future which remains uncertain. Both films ultimately render the Eastwood character's identity as ambiguous, as if they are expressing a sense of doubt as to the kind of American they can portray as Westerns, given the genre's determining 'Americanness', and the precedent established in Eastwood's films which associated a lack of an affirmed identity with the distinctly 'foreign' 'dollars' trilogy. In his introductory discussion on Eastwood, Gallafent considers the star's roles as largely expressive of a 'fantasy' of life as an American in the various contexts offered by his films (1994: 8). In these films, as in most of Eastwood's Westerns, the fantasy is not assured; the Stranger is dead, and Josey Wales' sense of place - his attachment to an apparent 'home' - is in doubt. We are left with images of respectively dead and war-worn men, who cannot commit to a social existence, because they are either unable or unwilling to do so. While a common trope of many Westerns prior to *The Outlaw Josey Wales* was the hero's ambiguous relationship to a social community, in this film the lack of commitment is informed by a reference to a war that may be over, but which left physical and 'spiritual' wounds in all those affected by it.

11) EASTWOOD - THE IMPOSSIBLE/PARADOXICAL HERO

In the last three Western films directed by and starring Eastwood, the actor's screen image underwent a degree of further development, with respective changes of emphasis marking these films as a development from the Eastwood Westerns preceding them. *Bronco Billy*, *Pale Rider* and *Unforgiven* evidence what could be termed the 'impossible' hero; that is to say they represent a hero who, through his being variously anachronistic, already dead, and a personification of a nihilistic myth, exists in an incoherent vacuum. The three films attest to the problem of conceiving the hero's place in a Western narrative, the generic foundations of which having been eroded to the point of total collapse. While earlier periods of Eastwood's Western film career evidenced characterisations which seemed to exist in a vacuum - such as The Man With No Name - the crucial point is that the determining vacuum marking this later period is particularly emphatic, representing the near-absence of Western film production (in contrast to the earlier period, which attested to a vacuum in the sense that its generic production occurred outside the expected space of production - i.e. Italy and Spain rather than America). The three films examined below concern a hero who has little or no sense of belonging to the time or place he finds himself in. This trait is found in a number of Eastwood's previous Westerns - notably *A Fistful of Dollars*, *Coogan's Bluff*, *The Beguiled* and *High Plains Drifter* - but it is intensified in *Bronco Billy*, *Pale Rider* and *Unforgiven*, both through the character representation in the narrative and the sociocultural background against which the films were played out, which positioned the Western in the realm of obscurity. In such a cultural void, to masquerade as a Western hero was a resonant option of character portrayal, and all three of the later films can be said to evidence such a portrayal, while *Bronco Billy* emphasises it in a particularly direct manner by having Eastwood play a shoe salesman turned six-shooter, operating not in 1880, but 1980.

Bronco Billy (Eastwood, 1980)

Following *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, Eastwood did not release a Western 'proper' for another nine years, an effective marking of the decline in the genre's commercial appeal during the late 1970s and the 1980s (a decline only ephemerally alleviated in the 1990s). During this intermediate period, Eastwood made *Bronco Billy*, essentially a road movie featuring strong Western elements. Although the film is more light-hearted than Eastwood's other Western and Western hybrid films, its representation of the Eastwood protagonist is none the less problematic. The film incorporates Western

elements in a contemporary setting, thereby in a sense negotiating the cultural positioning of the genre in 1980, inasmuch as the setting of the 'Old West' was not then a particularly bankable filmic milieu.[1] Eastwood's Bronco Billy is the head 'ramrod' of a Wild West show touring the American Midwest, performing to declining audiences. The myth of the West thus precariously lives on, but only as a performance, and a shaky performance at that (the first show of the film has the Indian snake dancer being bitten, and Billy's knife-throwing act results in his assistant getting a knife in her leg). Appropriately, Eastwood's own performance in the film ranks alongside his most performative roles, inasmuch as Eastwood plays a contemporary man who has adopted a Western persona. As a performed, fantasised version of the Westerner, Eastwood's dandy-like appearance - cowboy hat, rodeo shirt, and pearl-handled six-shooters - serve to parody his Western persona, as Shari Roberts has suggested (1997: 57). His appearance, and his name, also refer back to one of the earliest Western heroes, 'Broncho Billy' Anderson, making the sense of Eastwood's character's nostalgic retreat from modernity more emphatic. The allusion to an earlier tradition of heroism also positions Billy within the context of a more essentially benevolent tradition, in relative terms to the type of hero associated with Eastwood's Westerns. The song played over the credits, 'Cowboys and Clowns', reinforces the idea of Westerners as figures of entertainment, as family-friendly signifiers (like clowns, Billy and his fellow 'cowboys' perform in a tent). Such is the incongruity of Billy's own performance, as a Western 'hero' located in modernity, that he only ends up achieving 'a mock-heroic stance' (Roberts 1997: 57). The film often makes him the subject of overt ridicule. Billy asks some children loitering near his tent why they are not at school. When they remind him that it is Saturday, he responds, 'I've been riding late last night. A man's brain gets kinda fuzzy when he's been on the range.' (When Billy first encounters the children, he is filmed from a low-angle, with heavy back-lighting, ironically suggesting iconic authority.) Even in acting out the myth, Billy's delusions themselves betray frailties.

A further, pivotal moment of humiliation occurs when Billy has to confront a local sheriff to work out an arrangement after Billy and his troupe became involved in a bar-room brawl. The sheriff demands a bribe, and then proceeds to humiliate Billy by forcing him to admit that his draw is slower than the sheriff's, thereby 'unmask(ing) him as a "fake" cowboy' (Knapp 1996: 100). That Billy is no more than a '"fake" cowboy' is confirmed in a later episode in which Billy elects to rob a train after the troupe's tent is burned down. The attempt inevitably fails, and in the process a young boy on the train

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[1] The three Westerns 'proper' released in 1980 - *Heaven's Gate, The Long Riders,* and *Tom Horn* - all failed at the box-office (Coyne 1997: 185). Notably, Warner's publicity campaign for *Bronco Billy* dropped its initial emphasis on the generic heritage, replacing the artwork of Eastwood in full costume riding a bucking horse with a dominating mug shot (McGilligan 2000: 321).

spots the unlikely sight of Billy and his cohorts desperately trying to keep pace with the train, wearing masks and firing ignored arrows at the carriages. The boy implores his dozing mother to look at the 'cowboys and Indians' outside, but she only responds with a perfunctory affirmation as she continues to doze off. As the mythical nature of the West in the contemporary world is emphasised here, in an almost pathetic fashion, the film as a whole registers Billy's sense of identity as an anachronistic performance. As if symptomatic of Billy's fears of a less than wholly authoritative performance, he is seen to have a 'hysterical' need to assert his authority excessively at the slightest opportunity, although as his confrontation with the sheriff showed, Billy's sense of authority is somewhat hollow. Tellingly, his greatest moment of anger comes when he is challenged by a woman. Miss Antoinette Lily (Sondra Locke) is a wealthy Eastern heiress who is forced to join Billy's troupe after she is left stranded and penniless by the roadside. Unsurprisingly, she finds Billy's existence to be quite ridiculous, and at one point while on the road in Billy's truck insults him by describing him as an illiterate cowboy. Billy slams on the brake, and deposits Miss Lily by the roadside. When he eventually relents and picks her back up, his admonishment ('No one says that about a cowboy') ultimately attests to his insecurity, given the film's problematisation of his 'cowboy' identity. Billy's self-importance is further underlined in an earlier scene which has him hysterically objecting to Miss Lily's slight alteration of her lines as his assistant immediately after the show's performance. Billy feels threatened by the idea of an independent-minded woman who might thereby challenge his masculine authority, and again his excessive reaction can be contextualised by the film's problematic negotiation of his authority. Billy does, however, become involved with her; even an Eastern sophisticate can ultimately 'disrupt' his desire for a state of quasi-narcissistic independence.

The climax of the film can (arguably) be read as oppressively masculinist, marking the submission of Miss Lily to Billy's patriarchal authority. Following her leaving of Billy and a return to New York, she makes her reappearance in the tent as a surprise gesture of reconciliation. She enacts her performance as Billy's assistant with perfection, without changing a word of her dialogue. Robin Wood reads the scene as an endorsement of patriarchal values symptomatic of the film's invocation of Western elements (1986: 206), but such a reading arguably fails to register the great sense of irony pervading the film, specifically centred on the superficially authoritative figure of Bronco Billy. For the climax to assert patriarchal values unequivocally, one would expect the figure of the submissive woman to be countered by the ideal of the authoritative man. *Bronco Billy*, however, pointedly refuses to regard the apparent authority of Billy without a note of irony or parody. Billy's 'authority' is (almost

poignantly) only valid as a pipe-dream, as a fantasy which he can live out *to a certain extent* in the tent, but which is cruelly exposed in the 'real world' outside. Moreover, any sense of patriarchal restoration is further problematised by the scene's very literal ironic 'cover', being the tent covering. Destroyed in an earlier fire, it is refashioned out of American flags by the inmates of a mental institution, the director of which is an old friend of Billy's. While on the surface level the image of the tent cover during the climax marks a traditional note of patriotism, it nevertheless reinforces the sense of the bizarre fantasy that is Bronco Billy's existence. While the film ends with Billy making a speech direct to camera, in which he promotes traditional values to the children in the tent's audience, the positioning of Billy as a modern Western 'hero' can finally only occur, as Gallafent notes, 'in this space, an America contained inside a bizarre iconography of patriotism' (1994: 192). Interestingly, the film's sole reference to *specific* American history is framed around the Vietnam war, the reference being made in the context of Billy's discovery that one of his fellow performers is a deserter from the period. To the deserting performer, as to Billy, the tent is an escapist fantasy, a comforting mythical existence in defiance of the troubled 'real world'. The refuge offered by the tent is safe, but incongruous; it exists, like the Western itself in 1980, in a vacuum. In *Bronco Billy*, Eastwood portrays a man who lives out his heroic identity, and his masculinity, as a myth at odds with the modern world, a fabricated persona marked by a sense of anachronism and parody.

***Pale Rider* (Eastwood, 1985)**

After his parodic performance as a contemporary rodeo cowboy, Eastwood returned to the format of the traditional Western in *Pale Rider*, and with it rendered an apparently more traditional, or 'authentic' performance of the Western hero. On its release, *Pale Rider* was received as something of a revivalist Western, given that it was the first major studio Western since the disastrous *Heaven's Gate*, and it was released almost concurrently with *Silverado*, another large-scale Western which was similarly perceived to mark a return to the traditional format following the ambiguities besetting the genre in the previous two decades. The revival, of course, never materialised; in this sense, and perhaps with the advantage of hindsight, it is unsurprising to find that Eastwood's film is not quite as unequivocally 'traditional' as it might initially seem; ironically, the film bears traces of Eastwood's earlier, definitively problematic Westerns. Eastwood plays a nomadic preacher who drifts into mining territory and allies himself with a community of small-claimers suffering harassment at the hands of the local capitalist whose mining expansion plans involve using their land.

The film acknowledges Eastwood's previous roles by refusing to give his character a name, and the only given reference to his past revolves around a fatal confrontation, which forms the central enigma posed by the film. Utilising the determining trope of *High Plains Drifter*, Eastwood's character is represented as a ghost from the past, and his eventual 'settling of scores' with his old assailant, marshal Stockburn (John Russell), seems determined by fate, inasmuch as Stockburn is called in by the mining boss LaHood (Richard Dysart) as a final measure after sustained intimidation, and some time after the Preacher's arrival in town. The Preacher's first appearance in town suggests a mysterious slant to his character. A confrontation occurs on the town's main street involving LaHood's thugs and a small claimer, Hull Barret (Michael Moriarty). Barret is beaten with axe handles, and is rescued by the timely but uncanny intervention of the Preacher. One of the thugs first notices the Preacher sitting astride his horse at the far end of the street, his appearance edited to give the feeling of suddenness, which takes the thug temporarily aback. The slightly disquieting nature of his appearance is confirmed on the soundtrack by ominous music and an eerie gust of wind. He manages to get behind the thugs without making a sound, and after defeating them he leaves the scene quite suddenly. The more concrete suggestion that the Preacher might be a ghost occurs in Barret's dwellings, and centres on the Preacher's damaged body. Entering the Preacher's room to tell him that supper is ready, Barret notices that the Preacher's back shows six exit bullet wounds, injuries which logic would suggest should be fatal. Barret's expression suggests his unease, and after he leaves the room the Preacher turns to regard himself in the mirror, an appropriate gesture for a film which incessantly enquires as to the 'real' identity of the Preacher. His ghostly status is all but confirmed in the climax, when Stockburn 'recognises' him with the disturbed cry of 'You!' before he is felled, the reverse shot underlining the positional match of Stockburn's wounds to the Preacher's as previously revealed. *Pale Rider* also frames its interest in the Eastwood character in terms of the type of hero he represents, and in so doing evidences both continuations of and departures from the characterisations of earlier films.

As I suggested above, the clearest ancestor to *Pale Rider* among Eastwood's body of work is *High Plains Drifter*, although the film also makes several nods towards *Shane* in its basic narrative structure. *Pale Rider*'s supernatural evocations differ from Eastwood's earlier film in that the figure of the Preacher has strong religious overtones that are not present in *High Plains Drifter*, which marked the Stranger with vaguely satanic associations. The Preacher arrives in town after Barret's adopted daughter, Megan (Sydney Penny) recites a prayer calling for 'a miracle', a sequence in which her praying is intercut with images of the Preacher riding through a snowy mountain

passage. Eastwood's first appearance is significantly brighter, both by virtue of the snow and Bruce Surtees' cinematography, than the preceding moments of the film, notably the low-key, dimly-lit camp attack sequence. By contrast, following the confrontation with LaHood's men, the Preacher's arrival at the miner's camp and his first sighting by Megan and her mother Sarah (Carrie Snodgress) is much darker in tone, shot under an overcast, grey sky, and scored by ominous music. As the Preacher rides in, Megan reads a passage from the book of Revelations, in which the rider of a pale horse is identified as 'Death, and Hell followed with him.' The film thus initially characterises the Preacher in slightly disturbing tones, although he does indeed come to be the 'saviour' of the mining community in that he practically single-handedly defeats all of LaHood's and Stockburn's men in a final shoot-out. Although the Preacher is as such represented for most of the film as an 'authentic' hero, he problematically remains a ghost, and thus emblematic of a failure in the past, as in *High Plains Drifter*. In contrast to the earlier film, the Preacher's body displays the damage inflicted on it in the past, evidencing a body repeatedly penetrated by bullets. While *Pale Rider* is not a violent film by Eastwood's standards, it nevertheless contains an emphasis on the excessively-shot body, as if suggesting the manner of the Preacher's death, perhaps, unlike *High Plains Drifter*, a moment too 'painful' to render in flashback. Stockburn and his men come close to eviscerating an unfortunate miner who crosses their path, and in the film's final confrontation the Preacher replicates his own wounds in Stockburn's body before shooting him in the head. For all its apparent triumph, the film thus ends on a reminder of both the Preacher's damaged body, and more fundamentally a reminder that this particular hero is in fact already dead.

In representing a figure who is both dead and powerfully 'alive', *Pale Rider* evidences a conscious negotiation of the Preacher's (incoherent) identity. During their meeting, LaHood reveals that he expected 'a pale, scrawny, bible-thumping Easterner with a linen handkerchief and bad lungs.' Other characters remark on the Preacher's unseemliness, as they witness his rock-breaking and thug-tackling prowess. The film does not in fact establish the identity of the Preacher until he enters the Barret household, whereupon he dons the identifying cloth. By the time of the final duel with Stockburn, after which the Preacher has returned to town with his gun, his spiritual clothes are gone, replaced by the standard clothes of a gunfighter (black shirt, black hat, long coat). The film thus offers the possibility that the 'Preacher' is really a gunfighter, and his assumed identity is a form of disguise to assimilate into the community more inconspicuously, awaiting the destined arrival of Stockburn. While as the Preacher he rallies the miners and improves their spirits, the ultimate reason for his presence seems to be the avenging impulse. The Preacher is the sole opposition to

Stockburn, his 'deputies', and LaHood's men during the climax, underlining the personal nature of his actions. Like several of Eastwood's Westerns, *Pale Rider* thus raises the issue of authenticity, and its applicability to identity. That the anonymous Preacher is both an avenging angel and a gunfighter wraith is underlined in Lennie Niehaus' score, which on the Preacher's introduction conflates elegiac strings with a dark horn motif, marking a presence which the film can only define in terms of ambiguity.

The ambiguous nature of Eastwood' character is further evidenced by his positioning as a figure of erotic interest for both Megan and Sarah, and simultaneously a potential father-figure to Megan, both possibilities suggested by the characterisation of Barret as an implicitly weaker model of masculinity in comparison to the Preacher.[2] As both a lover and a father-figure, however, the Preacher's role is unsustainable, since his ghostly status renders him aberrant and fundamentally distant, on a corporeal level. Other than the fact that his usurpation of the authority figure role positions him as an alternative paternal figure, the film emphasises the Preacher's erotic role more than it does his paternal role, which is initially compromised by Megan's offer to have sexual intercourse with him, the daughter regarding him less as a 'father' and more as a potential lover. While he (understandably) rebuffs Megan, the Preacher does seem to succumb to the inviting kiss of Sarah, by virtue of the offered sign - a long shot of the cabin lights going off. According to Paul Smith, the film's representation of Megan and Sarah's desire 'extensively implicates the ideal masculinity of the protagonist', by emphasising the Preacher's desirability, and his 'ideal' paternalism, since Megan's acceptance of the Preacher's violence differentiates her from the typical Western woman, making her serve as a surrogate son figure akin to the character of Joey in *Shane* (1993: 50). Putting aside the point that Megan, as a sexualised adolescent, is surely definitively female, thereby negating the possibility of an Oedipal trajectory, Smith's account neglects to mention the fact that the Preacher is a ghost, thereby problematising his 'ideal' status. Sarah and the Preacher have an extended conversation before their implied intercourse, during which the cinematography again cues one's reading of the Eastwood character. Throughout their exchange, the Preacher is always lit in darker shades than Sarah, and for most of the scene he is characteristically filmed with very minimal light, in which his eye sockets are filled with darkness, suggestively rendering his face as skull-like. Significantly, this is most marked by a closer shot of the Preacher's visage when, following a distant ghostly voice calling for him is heard,

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[2] Barret is notably the helpless recipient of violence at the hands of LaHood's men (and the narrative underlines the fact that he has received such treatment before), but his domestic scenes also suggest that Sarah is perhaps the stronger of the two. Barret's relative failure in acting the role of the father is expressed during the opening raid on the camp by LaHood's men, in which Barret fails to prevent the killing of Megan's dog.

Sarah asks the Preacher who he 'really' is. The Preacher's reply - 'It really doesn't matter, does it?' - confirms his ambiguous position in the narrative, and serves to mask from Sarah the reality of the Preacher's earthly status. In this sense one cannot really regard the scene as confirming 'the ideal masculinity' of the Eastwood character, since while it 'eroticises' his character on the surface level, it continues to insist on the fact that the Preacher already represents a dead man. At the end of the film, after he has killed Stockburn, the Preacher rides out of town and returns to the mountains from which he came at the film's beginning. As in *Shane*, he is called for by a young admirer, in this case the less ambiguously admiring Megan, but unlike the earlier film the Preacher can have no sentimental exchange with the girl. 'Long walk...' marks the only exchange he has, with Barret, whose reply is simply 'Yeah'. The Preacher's laconicism is notably familiar coming from Eastwood, but his affirmative reply points to the substantial metaphysical distance between the two 'worlds' the Preacher inhabits, marking the unsustainable nature of the Preacher's existence among the living.

<u>*Unforgiven* (Eastwood, 1992)</u>

Unforgiven was released at a particularly significant juncture in Western film history. Two years after *Dances with Wolves* had become the first Western since *Cimarron* to win the Best Film Oscar (and the first ever to win for Best Director)[3], Eastwood's film repeated the same feat. Both films enjoyed considerable commercial success, the strength of which, in addition to their excellent critical reception, was unknown to any Western since 1969's two big successes, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *True Grit*. Like Costner's film, Eastwood's was received as a 'revisionist' Western, with an apparently feminist subtext and a critical reappraisal of the genre's 'fascination' with violence. *Unforgiven* also presents an implicit awareness of the history of the genre, prominently centred on Eastwood as the star of the film and the Western's only surviving star, with a rich and complex heritage behind him. Indeed, the film probably represents the most intense and self-conscious interrogation of Eastwood's Western persona among all his Western films, as meriting its greater temporal distance from the main body of the actor's Western performances from 1964 to 1976. Although *Unforgiven* is ostensibly a revenge fable with a feminist slant - a group of prostitutes put a price on the head of two cowboys who assaulted one of their own - it is ultimately 'about' the (masculine) identity of the Eastwood character, William Munny. At the start of the film, we see Munny in a silhouetted long-shot burying his wife, as a title scroll informs us that Munny was formerly a notorious gunfighter who settled

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[3] Notwithstanding George Stevens' 1956 win for his direction of the melodrama *Giant*, which contained vaguely Western elements.

down and got married, invoking a definitive Western topos. That his wife has now died (of smallpox) raises the question of how the Eastwood character will develop. In *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, the death of Wales' wife changed the domesticated farmer to a skilled gunfighter; although the earlier film motivated Wales' transition in terms of necessary revenge, *Unforgiven*'s prologue offers a similar expectation of transition, in that Eastwood is seen to become a man alone again. (Unlike Josey Wales, Munny has two surviving children, but he leaves them behind at the homestead before he sets off on the bounty-hunt. Their absence for the rest of the film is symptomatic of the unsustainability of Eastwood's rarely-inscribed paternal identities.) In the context of Eastwood's other Westerns, and with the knowledge that Munny *used to be* a gunfighter, the expectation of a character revelation is set in motion. However, the film delays Munny's next appearance for over ten minutes, as it details the central crime of the narrative and the decision by the prostitutes to call in the bounty-hunters. As Eastwood (or his stand-in) is only filmed in long shot at the start of the film, we cannot identify the character as he, so a definite sense of anticipation is built up for the first identifiable sight of Eastwood as the Western hero, extra-textually informed by the fact that this is the actor's first Western for seven years and his first since reaching the age of sixty.

The first full appearance of Eastwood/Munny is as unflattering an image of the hero as could be conceived. After a few long and medium shots of an ageing farmer struggling to shepherd his hogs around their pen, the first close-up of Eastwood/Munny is offered. Munny's face is muddy and dishevelled-looking. Immediately after this close-up, we hear an off-screen voice which expresses a resonant confirmation of the image offered of Eastwood: 'You don't look like no rootin' tootin' cold-blooded son-of-a-bitch killer.' The voice emanates from the cocky Schofield Kid (Jaimz Woolvett), who goes on to offer Munny the chance to partner up with him in pursuit of the pair of transgressive cowboys. The fact that the Kid is a young man emphasises in his eyes, and ours, Munny's advanced years, and this informs the focus of the scene on Munny's general physical ineptitude (he falls over in the mud while rounding up his pigs, and has great difficulty in mounting his horse - on two occasions he is grounded in the attempt). At first, Munny is reluctant to join the Kid, explaining that his killing instinct was 'cured' by his wife. In a contemplative refrain which is repeated more than once in the film, Munny claims, 'I aint' like that no more.' As established at this point, Munny has also given up drinking at the behest of his departed wife, and the film later establishes Munny's de-sexualised existence in his admission that he neither goes into town to seek pleasure nor masturbates ('I don't miss it that much'). Munny is thus very much a changed man, and the changes he embodies represent an extensive diversion

from the construction of the ultimate Western hero as portrayed by Eastwood over the decades, particularly in terms of his declaimer denying his status as a man of violence. Although this denial could be said to be against a previously malevolent use of violence rather than violence *per se*, the film more firmly points to a wholesale rejection of violence on Munny's part, in that his societal role now is fully domesticated. Like the eponymous farmer of *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, Munny's situation renders violence as an irrelevance, and the plain fact of his ageing, painfully evidenced in his clumsiness as described above, calls into question his very ability to employ violence successfully. This point is duly emphasised by his having to relearn his shooting skills, after he eventually elects to join the Kid, reasoning that he could do with the reward money and the targetted cowboys deserve punishment for what they did. When Munny decides on this course of action, the film sets up the expectation that the Eastwood of old will 'reveal' himself. As Christine Gledhill notes of related moments in Eastwood's films which begin with a 'defeated' image of the actor, 'The audience waits for the frisson of the character *becoming* Clint Eastwood' (1991: 212; emphasis mine). *Unforgiven*, however, does not allow for such an unproblematic assertion of the Eastwood persona. Rather, it offers a continuous struggle over the masculine identity of William Munny, which is ultimately revealed as far from coherent.

Munny's bounty-hunting narrative quest clearly instils a degree of fear in him, based on the concern that he might become again what he has for so long repudiated. This fear represents itself in Munny's repeated assertions of his transformed character to both the Kid and, more pertinently, the third man in the party, Ned (Morgan Freeman), who as Munny's old friend and partner shares a similarly dubious past. Yet the continual nature of these assertions suggest that Munny is principally trying to convince himself more than anyone else that he has changed (Grist 1996: 298). Munny's conviction is thus not without its doubts, a point resonantly enforced by his final comment after an extended conversation with Ned concerning their respective pasts. Munny's reiteration of 'I aint' like that no more' is marked by a long contemplative pause separating the two clauses, as Munny stares into the campfire. Another point of ambiguity is suggested by Munny's remarking that 'I'm just a fella now...no different than anyone else...no more.' Munny's habitual repetition of 'no more' thus betrays his barely-concealed desire to 'no more' be 'just a fella'. As Grist notes, Munny here 'speaks with a wistfulness that implies a nostalgic regret at his lost potency' (ibid). The line also functions as a reference to the problematised Eastwood persona enacted thus far by the film - we are not used to seeing Eastwood as merely an indistinguishable 'fella' in his films. Munny's implicit buried longing for his past life is inscribed elsewhere in the film, in terms which hark back to the romantic image of the traditional Western hero, here rendered problematic

by the film's admission of Munny's past as decidedly unheroic. After the Kid leaves Munny's homestead following his initial discussion with the farmer, Munny gazes at the image of the Kid riding off into the horizon, a moment which evokes an 'inadmissible desire to return to his past life' (Grist 1996: 298), especially given the fact that this occurs while Munny is stumbling around the pigpen.

Munny's apparent nostalgia for the past is very much tied up with the fact that he is getting old, as previously noted. The 'ageing' issue is brought to the fore in *Unforgiven*, the film being Eastwood's first direct admission of his advancing years. In addition to Eastwood's presence, the roles played by Gene Hackman and Richard Harris, who were both sixty at the time of filming, also forces the issue into the narrative. One of the 'revisionist' ironies of the film rests in its questioning of the genre's traditional veneration of age, which 'traditionally' brought maturity and level-headedness. Instead, the 'mature' characters in *Unforgiven* are prone to bitterness and acts of violence as unedifying compensation for their ageing. As I detail below, Eastwood's climactic revenge is brutally excessive, while Hackman's sheriff thrives on sadism and Harris' bounty-hunter deliberately invites trouble. *Unforgiven*'s principal focus of demythologisation, however, rests in its negotiation of violence, and its meaning in terms of the film's characters, and the character of William Munny in particular.

Violence in *Unforgiven*'s narrative present is spontaneous, brutal, and unedifying. As a recollected event, violence is by turns glamorised and recalled with an emphasis on its horror. While the Schofield Kid looks upon Munny as something of a legend, Munny's own recollections of his past focus on the grotesque injuries effected by violence (such as teeth being shot through the back of a head). As the title scroll at the start of the film establishes, Munny's reputation precedes him. Yet it is a reputation from which Munny wishes to dissociate himself, and which, as the film firmly suggests up to this point, he can no longer live up to in any case, given his age. This point is enforced in Munny's confrontation with sheriff Little Bill (Hackman) in Greely's Bar in Big Whiskey, the setting of the original assault on the prostitute. While the Kid and Ned entertain themselves with the prostitutes upstairs in 'advances' of the bounty, Munny remains downstairs, denying his own potency by remaining faithful to his departed wife. Ravaged by the flu and feverish, Munny cuts a pitiful figure. He sits alone, shaking, sweating profusely, his coat wrapped around him and his hat drawn down his forehead; he is wholly unidentifiable as either Munny or Eastwood. Indeed, Little Bill fails to identify him as Munny, despite his knowledge of both Munny's reputation (and presumably an idea of his appearance gained from 'wanted' posters and the like - the

narrative makes clear Little Bill's long involvement with the law) and the anticipation of the arrival of bounty-hunters into the town (gained from news of the prostitutes' offer being leaked to him). Interestingly, when asked his identity, Munny tells the sheriff that he is William Hendershot, the name of one of Munny's victims of old. That he is identifying himself here with a dead man - and moreover a man who received horrific wounds from Munny's rifle - suggests a sense of atonement for his murderous past; immediately after hearing Munny's answer, Little Bill subjects him to a vicious assault. (Munny fails to surrender his firearms on arrival in the town, as an ordinance notice requires, and he denies possessing a firearm until the sheriff discovers it on his person.) Munny's beating is an ultimate act of humiliation, and ranks alongside the prolonged assaults received by the Eastwood characters in *A Fistful of Dollars* and *High Plains Drifter*. Its masochistic tone, initially suggested by Munny's identification with his victim, is underlined by Munny's wholly defenceless position; he is reduced to crawling along the floor, and collapses in the mud after being ejected from the saloon (Munny seems to be linked here with his similarly feverish pigs). As Dennis Bingham suggests, Eastwood's filming of violence in *Unforgiven* is stylistically masochistic: 'When a body falls from a horse, the camera is there to meet it. When Munny is kicked by Little Bill, the camera cowers with him' (1994: 238). As Eastwood's previous films posited a 'resurrection' of sorts following the attacks, one has a degree of expectation after the beating Munny receives in *Unforgiven* that some character development will ensue. This sense of expectation is perhaps tempered by the recognition of Munny's age, but it is informed by the emphasis the film has placed on Munny's repressed longing for a more potent existence. In the climax of the film, Munny does indeed make a 'comeback', but its dramatic qualities are problematised by the ambiguous negotiation of Munny's apparently 'heroic' act.

The climax of *Unforgiven* marks the film's final comment on one of its main discourses, the disparity between Western myth and Western reality. Overall the film centres this discussion on Eastwood's character, although one finds its emphasis throughout the narrative.[4] Munny returns to Greely's saloon in Big Whiskey, after settling affairs with the prostitutes. Explicitly, he is seeking revenge for the killing of Ned, who after being captured was whipped to death by Little Bill (as the final insult

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[4] The savagery of the attack on the prostitute is exaggerated by Munny and his partners to the extent that the fact of the prostitute's face being sliced is mythically extended to the actual removal of her breasts and eyes. It is as if Eastwood and his partners have to obsessively justify their pursuit of what is ultimately blood money (as Grist points out, the name Munny can be read as a homophone; 1996: 297). Mythopoeia is additionally rendered in the figure of Beauchamp (Saul Rubinek), a penny-dreadful writer. Beauchamp's glamorised accounts of incidents are powerfully rebuked by Little Bill, who actually witnessed the incidents concerned, and who forcibly corrects the writer's accounts with the much cruder and unpleasant reality (pistols misfiring and exploding, and cold-blooded executions of wounded men). Interestingly, *Unforgiven*'s climax is marked by these very occurrences.

his body is propped in a coffin outside the bar). Despite being totally outmanned and outgunned, Munny succeeds in killing the sheriff and a number of other men, and walks away from the carnage unscathed. At first sight, the climax seems to depict, as Paul Smith argues, 'the fiction returning in overpowering form to literally blow away the demythologising truthfulness of the sheriff' (1993: 268). From this perspective, the climax negates the film's problematisation of Eastwood's traditional persona by apparently reasserting the kind of omnipotent hero personified in the actor's old 'Man With No Name' character. However, the image of 'heroism' offered here is as problematic an image as has ever been represented in Eastwood's Westerns, to the extent that, by the film's end, 'It is no longer clear...what a hero is' (Thumim [1993] 1998: 347). The saloon's owner is shot down despite being unarmed, and one of Little Bill's deputies is shot in the back. When Little Bill realises Munny's identity, Munny responds in the affirmative, with the stark admission that he really was a killer of women and children. A slow zoom into Munny's face underlines his admission, the cruelty of which essentially undermines any sense of heroism which a slow zoom might dramatically solidify. Significantly, given the typical Eastwood Westerner's lack of personal historical references, Munny's reference to his brutal past puts a darkly problematic gloss over the deliberate ambiguities marking the histories of Eastwood's previous characters. Furthering the scene's intense demythologisation, Munny's revelation is revealingly intercut with reaction shots of the biographer Beauchamp, who presumably realises just what stuff 'legends' can be made of, and the prostitutes gathered upstairs, who realise that Munny in reality has no special regard for the sanctity of women. Munny's final admission that he 'killed just about anything that walked or crawled at one time or another' suggests the indiscriminate nature of his killings, and imparts the idea that he executed wounded men in cold blood. He proceeds, in fact, to do the very same when confronted with the gut-shot Little Bill, thus ironically confirming Little Bill's demythologising admonishment of Beauchamp earlier (Munny's rifle misfires at the start of the firefight). Although the sheriff has just attempted to take a shot at Munny, Munny's execution of him is uncomfortably prolonged, and the dialogue and detail further problematise any reading of the scene as 'heroic'. Little Bill implores Munny, 'I don't deserve this. To die like this...'. Although he would seem to 'deserve' his death according to the tenets of the genre, he would not seem to deserve evisceration; in any case, Eastwood suggests no thought of such motivation ('Deserve's got nothing to do with it.').

Just prior to his head being blown off, the sheriff tells Munny that he will see him in hell. Eastwood cuts to a darkly lit low close-up of Munny, emphasising his scarred features but also suggestively casting half of his face in shadow, underlining his

fragmented identity. Munny slowly and deliberately aims his rifle and cocks it, and eerily replies to Little Bill's assertion in the affirmative, as thunder crashes in the distance. Like the Stranger of *High Plains Drifter*, Munny is thus explicitly associated with hell. Indeed, the *mise en scène* strongly underlines this point as Munny rides out of the town. The rain pours down, the thunder continues, small torch fires light up Ned's propped-up body, and Lennie Niehaus scores the scene with very low register strings. These elements destroy any sense of satisfaction to be derived from the apparent 'victory' of Munny. Although, on leaving Big Whiskey, he shouts that Ned should be buried and the prostitutes treated decently, thus bringing us back to a point of motivation (and reminding us of the original crime of the narrative), he then shouts, 'Or I'll come back and kill every one of you sons of bitches!', a proclamation which more pointedly suggests Munny's new-found malevolence and hints at the potentially indiscriminate slaughter he might inflict on returning to the town, rather than underlining, as Susan Jeffords fancifully suggests, Munny's invocation of 'a democratic ideal the town must uphold' (1994: 188). Significantly, the prostitutes observing his leaving of the town react with appropriate ambiguity - only Delilah (Anna Thomson), the original assault victim, offers a vague, halting smile. They surely understand that Munny has not committed his actions on their behalf, out of a sense of benevolence befitting the spirit of the traditional Western. Pointedly, Munny does what he does in an attempt to expend the phallic energy he has repressed for so long.

The amorality defining Eastwood's character during the climax refers back to a form of demythologised hero reminiscent of the Vietnam-era Western (perhaps significantly, the screenplay originally dates from the 'seventies (Grist 1996: 294)). In fact, the character of William Munny is arguably more problematic than many of the demythologised 'heroes' of late 1960s and early 1970s Westerns, in the sense that his unrepentant confirmation of his killing of women and children severely disturbs one's perspective of his character and his sense of motivation during the climactic shoot-out. That Munny at least lives to see another day, against odds as apparently insurmountable as any previously experienced by Eastwood's Westerners, initially suggests the industrial pressures regarding audience reactions (who presumably never liked to see Eastwood 'die', as witnessed in the commercial failure of *The Beguiled*). Yet the script was not written for Eastwood, and the period of its writing coincided with the increasing fragmentation of the Western, which quite regularly killed off its heroes when faced by obviously greater odds. As the rest of the film is replete with it, one must read this aspect of the climax with a strong sense of irony. The apparent 'return of the myth' signalled in Munny's actions is precisely marked with the demythologising aspects detailed above, which form 'an ideologically potent

deconstruction' of the Eastwood persona, inasmuch as the climax 'raises then disturbs the expectations associated with the persona' (Grist 1996: 301).

Unforgiven ends on an incongruous note. It returns to the setting of the prologue, identical in composition but for the detail of Munny tending his wife's grave. The titles tell of Munny moving to San Francisco, 'where it was rumoured he prospered in dry goods.' A strange sense of redemption is suggested by the apparent 'civilisation' of Munny, in moving to the city and making an honest living. Yet the film has just so devastatingly established that Munny's professions of his reformed character were in reality a sham. It is difficult to place the same self-admitted killer of women and children, the same voice of rage which threatened to 'kill every one of you sons of bitches!', as a 'civilised' man of business. Like Eastwood the farmer, we can hardly more 'believe' in Eastwood the dry goods salesman; nor can we 'believe' in Eastwood the heroic gunfighter. That Munny 'vanishes' prior to the end credits over the image of his Kansas homestead serves as both an elegiac conclusion to the film, however incongruous, and a final note of irony in that it cements Munny's 'legendary' status. Ending on an ultimately incoherent amalgamation of reality and myth, *Unforgiven* interrogates both the Western and the Eastwood persona, and arguably lays waste to both.

The insecure cultural position of the Western through the 1980s and early 1990s provides the contextual backdrop to the films discussed above. Eastwood's previous Westerns reflect, with varying degrees of complexity, the state of the genre at the time of their making, from the coherently 'Americanised' but damaged heroes of the earlier films to the dead hero of *High Plains Drifter*, made at a time when the genre was slowing down and offering increasingly bleak representations. *Bronco Billy*, *Pale Rider* and *Unforgiven* testify to the genre's weakness during the period addressed, 1980-1992, by the longer time differential between the production of each film, and the more extensive inscription of the hero's ambiguous, dislocated identity. These films respectively offer a cowboy who seeks to live in the past, a ghost who may either be a preacher or a gunfighter, and an ageing ex-gunfighter who repudiates his malevolent past only ultimately to replicate it. The clearest narrative allusions to an identity defined by ambiguity occur in *Unforgiven*, where Munny is told from the outset that he does not look like a gunfighter, and he repeatedly offers forced protestations that he 'aint' like that no more'. What arguably distinguishes these films from Eastwood's earlier Westerns is the essential falsity of the identity adopted by the heroes. Bronco Billy is revealed to be a 'fake' cowboy in such episodes as his humiliating confrontation with the sheriff and his failed attempt at a train hold-up, *Pale Rider* never denies the

possibility that the Preacher might be using the identity of a man of the cloth as a mask of disguise, and William Munny's pretence that his violence is pacified is brutally exposed as a sham in the climax. An additional development seems to be the emphasis on the hero's lack of competence, as evidenced in Bronco Billy's self-acknowledged 'fuzzy' mind when he asks children why they are not at school (on a Saturday), and William Munny's struggles with his pigs and horse, which betray his ageing. The general 'solidity' of these Eastwood characters is thus made to appear quite precarious to some extent, their hold on the ideals expected of a Western hero made insecure. The representation of character in these films arguably reflects a sense of the Western's own insecurity during this period.

Unlike the symptomatic traces of the feminist movement and Vietnam in the 60s and 70s films, there is no major cultural development that informs the films examined here, other than an acknowledgement of feminist ideology in *Unforgiven*'s delineation of the prostitutes' situation. *Bronco Billy*'s reference to Vietnam, however, relates to America's troubled past as a point of demarcation, an external horror that the security of the tent provides an internalised means of escape from. Through their consistent performances alluding to a vanished period of American history, Billy and the troupe can exist outside of the 'reality' of troubled modernity. Yet their performances of frontier *derring-do* attest to the cultural insecurity of the Western during the period, in the precise sense that they are self-conscious *performances* of Western-type activity, rather than the purported 'reality' portrayed in other films. That the film is not a Western as such underlines the fact that the genre was not a rich resource in 1980. Ultimately, all three films are informed by the major decline in the fortunes of the Western, which had lost its formerly prominent position in popular culture by the mid-70s, and which by the 80s was effectively defunct. In a sense, all of the heroes from *Bronco Billy* onwards testify to not only a weak genre, but a dead genre; even *Unforgiven*, which on the surface appears to represent an emphatic resurrection of the myth, is finally about a myth that is unedifyingly nihilistic.

Unsurprisingly, given the state of the genre during this period and the fact that it had been a recurring generic issue since the 60s, a sense of nostalgia pervades *Bronco Billy*, *Pale Rider* and *Unforgiven*. Yet, as discussed above, the nostalgic evocations of these films is acutely problematised. Bronco Billy's rodeo costume, his clichéd speech, and his actions (the attempted train robbery) all evidence a sense of nostalgia, but at the same time express a sense of the ridiculous, and in the latter case clearly emphasise a sense of the myth as being impossible to maintain on a coherent basis. The narrative of *Pale Rider* alludes to *Shane* in its general plot and its delineation of the relationship

between the Eastwood character and the mother and daughter accommodating him, as Paul Smith argues (1993: 49-50). If we are to consider *Shane* as a traditional Western, as Smith does, then the film can be conceived as a self-conscious allusion to the genre in better days, as Smith suggests, also referring to the traditionally-minded *Silverado*, released almost concurrently with Eastwood's film, as an example of the same nostalgic development. However, the fact that the Preacher is dead problematises this sense of nostalgia, a point which Smith significantly fails to consider in his reading of the film, as he failed to do with *High Plains Drifter*. *Unforgiven* represents the most extensive problematisation of nostalgia, notwithstanding the various journalistic plaudits received by the film which remarked on its 'classical' nature. In *Unforgiven*'s narrative, recollections of the past are frequent, but the recollections deny nostalgia by expressing the horrific details of violence, emphasising incompetence, fear, and the damaging effect of bullets on the body. The climax of the film, in which Munny achieves a 'victory' in successfully killing the sheriff and a number of other men, brings nostalgia to breaking point, by which the competently violent Eastwood hero returns, but one's sense of pleasure in recognition is problematised by the revelations of Munny's brutal past ('I killed women and children. Killed just about anything that walked or crawled at one time or another') and the brutality of his present acts, which are less about avenging Ned's death than they are about cruelly renewing a phallic sense of potency ('Deserve's got nothing to do with it'). In all three films, I would argue, 'revivalist' tendencies are given a revisionist check, and the evocations of nostalgia offered are often rendered in incoherent terms. Ultimately, the films testify to a genre that is no longer secure, but fundamentally decentred, and Eastwood's characters, informed by a persona predicated on the Western, symptomatically betray this sense of incoherence.

12) CONCLUSION

As this thesis has established, the star images of Wayne and Eastwood are as complex as they are distinctive, encompassing some thirty character portrayals in films spanning from 1948 to 1992. In this conclusion, I intend to underline the significant defining characteristics of Wayne and Eastwood, and how in turn those aspects of character - principally their social and corporeal identities - can be conceived against the backdrop of the socio-political milieu of post-war America. In so doing, I shall discuss how Wayne and Eastwood's screen identities can be differentiated according to their personification of respectively social and asocial, paternal and non-paternal, and corporeally solid and fragmented identities. Subsequent to this analysis, I will discuss the social and political significance of the stars' identities, alongside a wider consideration of the interaction between genre and ideology, with a particular view to enquiring why Wayne more comfortably embodied a paternal identity, as against Eastwood's ostensible rejection of such an identity.

A clear point emanating from the preceding analyses of Wayne and Eastwood is that of image development. While Eastwood's films suggest a transparently linear and chronological development of his screen image, Wayne's post-war films attest to a more complex combination of primary stability and secondary oscillation, inasmuch as Wayne's characterisations are consistently imbued with paternal qualities, while the 'moral' determination of those paternal characterisations consistently oscillates. The alternately 'stable' and developing personas of Wayne and Eastwood were determined, at least in part, by the historical circumstances of their respective periods of stardom. The post-war period marked by the arrival of Wayne as an 'A' list star, and the ensuing period which saw the actor's greatest box-office popularity, lasting into the early 1960s (Albert 1981: 9), was not, relatively speaking, a period marked by excessively traumatic upheaval in American culture, whereas the period characterised by the cementation of Eastwood's stardom certainly was. Moreover, this latter period was one marked by a more significant degree of transformation in the Western genre, which therefore provided the ideal context for a developing star persona. If Eastwood's characterisations embodied the ideological destabilisation of the period, Wayne's *responded* to the destabilisation. In consistently playing a paternal-like character predominantly marked as benevolent, Wayne's post-1969 roles reinforced the stability of his persona, insofar as they cast aside the oscillation which defined his 'good' and 'bad' paternal roles of the 1940s and 1950s.

Significantly, Eastwood's career as a Western star began in Westerns that represented a substantial sense of development themselves - as foreign appropriations of the genre whose representational frameworks were also 'foreign'. Similarly, Wayne's first Western as an 'A' list star, *Red River*, heralded the development of the more psychologically complex post-war genre. Both the Leone films and *Red River* characterise Eastwood and Wayne as asocial, but the films express a clear difference in the characterisation of the asocial identity. The Man With No Name's narcissism is solidified by his minimal speech and lack of a 'moral' motivation, while Dunson lacks both of these qualities; although his behaviour is aberrant, he does nonetheless have a cause - the delivery of cattle to Abilene - which is far from pure self-interest. The Leone films end with The Man leaving any vestige of social commitment behind him (as he variously leaves San Miguel and Agua Caliente, and the graveyard where Tuco is perched on the cross), while *Red River* ends with Dunson ultimately embracing social commitment, by reaffirming his affection and respect for Matt, the 'son' with the group-centred vision. In their subsequent films, Wayne and Eastwood would adopt, in the main, respectively social and narcissistic identities. While Eastwood would generally work outside professional social structures - very rarely is he a soldier or a lawman - Wayne would generally work inside such structures, and lead an authoritative role within the social groups concerned (whether as a high-ranking soldier or sheriff). Such was the asocial determinant of Eastwood's persona that on the few occasions he possessed a social and, significantly, a more traditionally authoritative role, he would often be damaged, symbolically castrated, and/or dead (as in *Hang 'Em High*, *The Beguiled*, *High Plains Drifter*, and *Pale Rider*). A coherent attainment of a traditional sense of authority was an impossibility for Eastwood's characters, while Wayne carried such an identity with comparative ease.

Wayne's incessantly paternal identity provided an additional, fundamental assurance of authority, and underlined his social identity, in giving him 'sons' to feel a surrogate kinship with. Whether as a biological father, an authoritative 'father', or a mythical 'father', Wayne's paternalism was a given, a source of stability throughout his Westerns, however unproblematically or problematically depicted. For Eastwood, by contrast, paternalism is an impossibility. In the two films in which he plays a biological father, *The Outlaw Josey Wales* and *Unforgiven*, his paternal status is problematised to the extent that, in the former film, his wife and son are killed within minutes of the opening, and his surrogate son dies not long thereafter, while in the latter film his paternalism is almost forgotten after, near the start of the film, he leaves his young children behind at the homestead alone to pursue his bounty-hunting. If this seems somewhat irresponsible (even for the 1880s), the subsequent portrayal of Eastwood's

character suggests that this father is far from being exemplary. In the other films in which Eastwood carves out, however briefly, a paternal identity, it is considerably problematised. When, in *A Fistful of Dollars*, he spots the young boy being assaulted, his reaction is not one of empathy but indifference (after staring relatively expressionlessly at the assault, he gazes at the boy's mother in a failed attempt to get acquainted). In *High Plains Drifter* and *Pale Rider*, the Stranger and the Preacher can (arguably) be said to adopt a paternal identity in their relationship with the dwarf and the daughter, but the fact that they are ghosts ensures that their presence in the 'known' world is only temporary. In any case, such is the aberrance of the Stranger that he cannot be readily conceived as a 'father' in any sense but one that is intensely problematic.

The paternal characterisations of Wayne attested to a 'naturalised' sense of authority, as determined by the logic of the wider patriarchal culture. Given the impossibility of Eastwood's attempts to carve out a coherent - and sustained - paternal characterisation, it is worth enquiring as to why Wayne 'naturally' embodied paternalism, while Eastwood did not. Returning to their respective 'star' career firsts, *Red River* and Leone's 'dollars' trilogy, it is clear that in *Red River*, Dunson is a 'father' not only in the surrogate sense as far as Matt is concerned, but also in the metaphorical, mythical sense of being a benevolent 'father' to America, inasmuch as he intends to 'feed the whole country' with enough beef to 'make 'em strong, make 'em grow'. While Dunson is ultimately characterised as a very problematic father-figure, he is nevertheless a 'father' who, for all his faults, is interested in the well-being of America. In the 'dollars' trilogy, Eastwood's character is a 'foreign' presence; although the spectator 'knows' that he is American, his beard and poncho serve to mask his identity as a definably American hero, as does his mercenary behaviour. The Man is also a 'foreign body' by virtue of his lacking coherence in the shape of his definably 'absent' presence - his lack of a name and a discernible past points to a fundamental lack of identity, while Eastwood's presence is further problematised by the use of such alienating techniques as the use of estranged music, the delaying of Eastwood's appearance, and Leone's direction of Eastwood's body as a point of fragmentation. In Eastwood's subsequent films, his corporeal solidity is problematised to the extent that his body is consistently damaged to the point of severity (whether he is beaten unconscious, forcibly dehydrated and sunburnt, lynched, 'castrated' and/or killed). By contrast, Wayne's films point to a more substantial sense of corporeal assurance, with a much-reduced emphasis on damage. Although he is killed in three films (and dies a 'natural' death in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*), the violent deaths in *The Alamo*, *The Cowboys* and *The Shootist* are arguably not as problematic, as a whole, as

the violent deaths of Eastwood in *The Beguiled* and *High Plains Drifter*, which respectively have his character 'castrated' and poisoned, and beaten to death in the open street. Apart from his being knocked out by a rifle butt wielded by Dude/Dean Martin at the start of *Rio Bravo*, there is not a single Wayne Western in my sample in which he is beaten unconscious, let alone corporeally damaged to the same, varied extent as Eastwood's characters. The point is that Wayne, as a more 'natural', or coherent, representative of American masculinity, and as an embodiment of an ostensibly less damaged version of masculinity, fitted the role of a father-figure far more readily than could Eastwood. Such is the cultural determination of 'the father' that he should be a figure defined by coherence, by corporeal solidity, and by a sense of 'normalised' authority. Simply stated, Wayne's screen image suited the paternal role in a way that Eastwood did not, and could not.

Wayne was characterised by seniority at the very beginning of his career as an 'A' star of the Western; such films as *Red River* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* aged the actor before his time, thus cementing an authoritative paternal identity as being at the heart of Wayne's star image from the outset. Eastwood, by contrast, began his 'A' career as a 'foreign' presence whose sense of authority was both a source of incoherence and parody, and in his subsequent films created a star image that was incompatible with paternalism. Seeking to account for this further necessitates exploring issues beyond those pertaining to performance and the embodiment of masculine identity on the cinema screen. Although the sociocultural context informing the period addressed in this thesis, 1948 to 1992, has been referenced in connection with the characterisations of Wayne and Eastwood during certain periods in their career, I have sought to avoid utilising a sociocultural analysis as a 'catch-all' theoretical framework to explain, in a definitive sense, Wayne and Eastwood's embodiment of identity. Having reached the end of this thesis, however, and in so doing addressing the issue from the perspective of having analysed the characterisations of Wayne and Eastwood in detail, it is worth looking at the actors from the viewpoint of the sociocultural context.

Generationally, Wayne and Eastwood were further apart than the twenty-three years separating them suggested. Wayne's persona, and his Westerns, aligned him with an older, 'parent' culture, predicated on a 'traditional' and 'natural' sense of rigid authority. Even if his characterisation was often problematised, Wayne's 'father' offered a 'natural' expression of such authority. Eastwood's persona, and his Westerns, aligned him to some extent with the more 'youthful' counter-culture which made its mark in the 1960s. His consistently estranged presence in a 'new breed' of Westerns, which overturned many of the established conventions of the genre, ensured that Eastwood's

persona could be conceived in such a light. As I have discussed above, Eastwood's roles either deny him a paternal identity or, rarely, grant him one that is problematised to excess. They attest to a conception of paternalism, and the connotations of 'natural' authority carried by it, as being something of an impossibility. The sociocultural context of the period witnessing Eastwood's rise to stardom as a Western icon was characterised by the denigration of authority in its various manifestations, including, as Robin Wood has asserted, the symbolic role of 'the father' himself (1986: 50). By the late 1960s in particular, an affirmative conception of 'natural' authority was, arguably, a more remote concept than it had been a generation ago. The kind of heavy-handed, iconic authority personified by such figures as Wayne came to be increasingly viewed as dangerous, irrational, or even camp, as exemplified in Wayne's appearances on US television's *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*. The source for this reconception of authority as problematic was, in general terms, the fragmentation of the dominant ideology, with the traumatic issue of Vietnam at the forefront, representing in stark terms the loss of national authority.

Seen against this context, Wayne and Eastwood represented different ends of the ideological spectrum; even if Eastwood's identification with the counter-culture was not as equivocal as Wayne's identification with the dominant culture, given the rightist connotations of his *Dirty Harry* persona, the anti-establishment stance of his screen persona, among other facets, created an overall impression of counter-cultural association. If Eastwood's alienated and incessantly damaged characters on one level seemed to 'absorb' the sociocultural fragmentation evidenced in the Vietnam era, Wayne, by contrast, seemed to 'deflect' the problematic sociocultural context, by adopting a protective mantle of characterisation. In contrast to the oscillation which defined his portrayals of the father-figure in the 1940s and 1950s, Wayne's later films evidence a more stable series of representations of paternalism. His characterisation of a still authoritative but benevolent 'father' ensured that his sense of authority was ostensibly made to 'fit with the times'; Wayne's ameliorated authoritative persona became less problematic as a result, inasmuch as it could not be so easily aligned with the oppressive and, more importantly, failing use of authority in Vietnam, the war Wayne was so publicly supportive of. (The Vietnam-set *The Green Berets* emphasised Wayne's benevolence in his 'adoption' of the orphaned boy at the end of the film, a benevolence which was carried through to the representation of the American soldiers in the film as, in Wayne's own words, 'diplomats in dungarees' (quoted in Wills 1998: 232).) Wayne's characterisations in his last Westerns formed an ideological refuge from the problematic sociocultural context of the period, at a point by which his persona had

become saturated with nostalgia, the ageing star becoming an identifiable 'father' of the Western itself, given his long-term iconic attachment to the genre.

In Wayne's last film, however, the 'father' was doomed to die, resonantly expressing the unsustainable juncture reached by the 1970s Western. *The Shootist* marks the end of the metaphorical road, by which Wayne's corporeal assuredness reached its limit, and his model of paternal authority ceased to be a desirable ideal, inasmuch as it is rejected by the 'son' in favour of the world of maternal authority represented by his overtly 'civilised' mother. While the film is replete with nostalgia for the type of Western hero portrayed by Wayne, it forms a point of departure from Wayne's previous 1970s films in its sense of finality. Although Wayne had died in *The Cowboys*, his 'memory' was actively preserved by the adolescent cowhands; in *The Shootist*, Wayne's pedigree is rejected by the surrogate son, with the film implying the 'feminisation' of the future West at the expense of Wayne. If Wayne's previous 1970s films had underlined Wayne's ability to 'keep going on', in the lyrics of the theme song of *Chisum*, *The Shootist* underlined Wayne's mortality from the outset. The paternally-inscribed hero became an unsustainable figure, as in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, and as in Eastwood's last Western, *Unforgiven*, where the heroic ideal itself was unsustainable.

The varying contextual histories of these films are all underlined by one central issue - the sense of generic decline. While Ford's film was his penultimate (and the last Ford/Wayne) Western, *The Shootist* and *Unforgiven* are the last Westerns made by Wayne and Eastwood, and both emanate from historical periods marked by the Western's fundamental demise. This sense of generic finality surely accounted in part for the characterisations of the actors in the two films - and it is significant to note in this respect that the screenplay for *Unforgiven* was in fact written in the 1970s (Grist 1996: 294). Despite their being quite different icons of the Western, Wayne and Eastwood's last roles attest to the same problematic context. As a marker for the 'state' of the Western in the 1990s, *Unforgiven* forms a logical corollary of *The Shootist*. If Wayne's film asserted the impossible existence of the paternal hero, Eastwood's film made a more final statement still, asserting the impossibility of the hero's existence (whose paternalism had already been largely negated). The hero is both inconceivable as a nostalgic figure and as a more problematic, but still 'authentic', brutalised figure of violence. The latter identity, as represented in the film, has its lineage in Eastwood's earlier characterisations, but is problematised to the extreme by the intensely sadistic and nihilistic streak to Eastwood's character ('Deserve's got nothing to do with it'). The coda which ends the film has a superficial sense of nostalgia, with the prominence of

the setting sun thematically linking the film with the representational strategies of the traditional Western. Here, however, the nostalgia is nullified firstly by the incoherence of William Munny being repositioned as a conventional, domestic figure, immediately after the excessively nihilistic climax, and secondly by the fact that Munny is seen to discard the heroic identity in his relocation to the 'civilised' city of San Francisco, where, as the scrolling note asserts, 'it was rumoured he prospered in dry goods'. Becoming not only a businessman in 'civilised' obscurity, Munny's lost potency is suggestively emphasised by his dealing in 'dry goods', evoking a sense of sterility that is ever-present in his desexualised characterisation ('I don't miss it that much'). Given that the Eastwood character is seen to be tending a grave (his wife's) in this sequence, one can speculate that the grave is symbolically representative of the Western, and specifically the Western hero, since *Unforgiven*, in its climax and the film as a whole, emphasises the finality of the heroic role, initially rejected by Munny, then adopted as a wholly aberrant persona, then, finally, incoherently rejected. As Jim Hoberman argues, 'There were no new heroic cowboys after Eastwood' ([1991] 1998: 91). While Hoberman is here referring to the problematic star roles of the 1970s, such as Warren Beatty's in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, his remark is even more resonant now, after the wholly ephemeral revival of the early 1990s, of which *Unforgiven* was so centrally a part, exposed the moribund nature of the Western's cultural position. If Hoberman speaks of the impossibility of new star roles being created around the Western hero persona, *Unforgiven* underlines the invalidity of the heroic persona itself, revealing it as an empty signifier, at least at the level of coherence. In contrast to Wayne's last film, *Unforgiven* ends with the hero forcing himself into a state of generic obscurity ('it was rumoured'), rather than, as in *The Shootist*, the hero being seen, however problematically, to at least 'go out in style', which Books expresses as his desire at an early point in the film. With the hero entering into obscurity, *Unforgiven* can be linked further back to *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, which feels like a 'last' Western to a greater degree than it literally was (as the last Ford/Wayne Western). Eastwood's film, following the problematic 'logic' of Wayne's 'last' films, concludes Eastwood's generic role by asserting the *final* impossibility of heroism, to a degree made more emphatic by the fact that Eastwood's characterisations always, to some extent, asserted the impossibility of heroism.

That the last Westerns of both Wayne and Eastwood attest to the unsustainability of the heroic figure suggests a sense of pressure being exerted upon the genre, impacting upon its ability to continually represent the hero in an affirmative, or sustainable, light. These latter generic representations can be usefully viewed as 'symptoms' of the Western's fragmented position in American culture, and films which (significantly)

bring Wayne and Eastwood closer together; the problematic characterisations in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *The Shootist*, and *Unforgiven* are prominently determined by the sense of generic decline and finality expressed by the films. The relative convergence of Wayne and Eastwood's screen identities marks a new degree of complexity at the point of considering their screen personas as fundamentally different, and yet a closer examination of generic issues provides a transparent account of why Wayne and Eastwood appear to reach a point of relative alignment. Inasmuch as the genre itself was defined by a sense of fragmentation and unsustainability, one would expect the characterisations of the actors to bear traces of this. Since a similar generic and socio-political context informs the last films of both actors (recalling again the fact that *Unforgiven*'s roots lie in the 1970s), the genre itself provides a clear illumination of why Wayne and Eastwood should cease to be sustainable models of heroism, paternal or otherwise. Given the ability of genre to illuminate the determination of characterisations marked with a degree of complexity, more light might profitably be shed on the early characterisations of Wayne, which, while being consistently paternal, are also consistently problematic. If the authority-denigrating era marking Eastwood's rise to filmic stardom can be contrasted with the more ostensibly 'secure' post-war period which saw the cementation of Wayne's star persona, how can one nonetheless reconcile this less problematic era with Wayne's problematic characterisations of the father-figure?

In contrast to the unsustainable genre of the 1970s, the post-war Western genre was defined by sustainability, the period from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s being one of the most productive in the genre's history. If the Western itself does not offer the most immediate form of evidence for adjudging the determining influences behind Wayne's problematic father-figure of the post-war era, then it may prove useful at first to examine the significance of other popular genres of the era, as measured 'expressions' of that era. Before doing so, it is worth addressing, in brief, the socio-political circumstances specific to the period, which attest to an era marked by problematic undercurrents, which served to undermine the sense of security of American men. The problem of reintegrating servicemen into the 'feminised' economy remains an obvious point, but other period factors made for a potentially troubling environment as far as American men in general were concerned. The 'feminised' economy affected all men in terms of their sense of their social role, while the popularisation of Freud and the publication of the Kinsey report in 1948 placed a new emphasis on sexuality in marriage, challenging the assumption of 'natural' sexual compatability and emphasising the prominence of homosexuality as a sexual preference (Wexman 1993: 168).

If such cultural developments opened up a space for more problematic representations of domestic life, the generic vehicle that offered such representations was the melodrama, which flourished in the 1950s. In its recurring offering of fathers who represented 'an empty centre where the authority of the law fails' (Rodowick [1982] 1987: 278), the 1950s melodrama distanced men from the expectedly automatic ideal of paternal authority, which was found wanting in the domestic familial settings prominent in the genre. Like the melodrama, the Western was a genre of substantial renewal in the immediate post-war era, and shared an obsession with gender, producing similarly 'troubled' representations of men with increasing frequency. While their respective generic traditions are quite different in other respects, both genres would appear to be inescapably influenced by the same tensions defining the wider cultural context of the post-war period, tensions surrounding the ability of the American male to be unproblematically accommodated in 'normal' social roles. If the weakened father-figures populating the melodrama are symptomatic of the concerns besetting the period with regard to gender roles, then what is to be made of Wayne's embodiment of an authoritative and yet often simultaneously problematic paternal role? Pointedly, Wayne's father-figures find themselves in a historical and 'rugged' milieu far removed from the contemporary domestic settings of the melodrama, and in this milieu Wayne rules over an all-male family, namely a family that is far removed from conventional domesticity. Where Wayne's paternal role involves a 'real' family, the fact that the family in question is either in a state of strife or confined to memory because of premature death suggests that the familial ideal is either unattainable or unsustainable. In his 1950s films, Wayne's 'father' variously rejects the ideal of family and domesticity, or is rejected by it. In *Rio Grande*, the father 'fits' the milieu he resides in, but the compatibility of the family in the milieu remains doubtful; in *Hondo*, the ideal is rendered incoherent and implausible, with Wayne's 'father' characterised as 'Other' by virtue of his compromised Whiteness. Otherness also defines his characterisation in *The Searchers*, resulting in his being rejected by the family he serves. In these key 1950s films, Wayne's father-figure is noticeably alienated from the 'normal' family unit.

By ostensibly taking 'the father' outside a normalised familial unit, Wayne can be said to retain a paternal role, which is removed from the potentially problematic milieu of the family as registered in the undercurrents of post-war culture. In distancing 'the father' from the family, Wayne achieves a more outwardly 'competent' performance of paternalism, but one that bears the traces of a discomforting sense of how far the authority of 'the father' *necessitates* distance from a familial unit. By the era of Eastwood's arrival as a star, the actor's screen identity is not only distanced, for the most part, from the idea of family, but also from the very figure of 'the father' himself,

an identity which had itself become problematic in an era characterised by the youth culture's denigration of 'parent culture', and a more general denigration of traditional emblems of authority. An identity that was often problematic, but possible, for Wayne, becomes a wholly problematic impossibility for Eastwood. The variant cultural circumstances of the post-war and Vietnam era strongly suggest that the types of masculinity performed by Wayne and Eastwood were determined to some extent by the cultural circumstances marking these periods. Their respective characterisations of 'fathers' who are nonetheless alienated from domesticity, and men who are excessively narcissistic, are characterisations at once not uncommon for the Western, yet the particular and dramatic emphasis placed on these characterisations by the most prominent and last stars of the Western underlines the significance of their gendered portrayals, not only as part of one of America's great genres, but as iconic signifiers of American culture as a whole.

Together, Wayne and Eastwood embodied problematic representations of gender in the Western, and this thesis has sought to demonstrate the validity of addressing their personas in a conjoined manner. As far as Wayne is concerned, I have attempted to fill something of a critical void, inasmuch as there is (currently) a lack of sustained analyses of Wayne's Westerns, particularly with regard to the issue of gender. As far as Eastwood is concerned, I have sought to expand upon the substantial critical accounts on offer, and have found his characterisations, to varying degrees, more problematic than previous writers have allowed for. While Wayne and Eastwood do not provide the 'whole picture' with regard to representation in the Western, there can be no disputing their centrality as microcosmic icons of the Western over a lengthy (and briefly overlapping) period, and the consequential resonance of their problematic representations. Even if Wayne's characterisations do not betray the same degree of incoherence as Eastwood's, the fundamental point remains that Wayne's characterisations are, for the most part, as incoherent as they are coherent. As such, Wayne's image is far more complex and problematic than his apparently 'monolithic' image suggests. If Wayne - the generic icon *par excellence* - is to be regarded as problematic, then one must conclude that a coherent image of masculinity is a problematic concept for the Western genre as a whole, despite its cultural positioning as the American genre *par excellence*, and, in many respects, the 'masculine' genre *par excellence*. Ultimately, Wayne and Eastwood's Western characterisations underline the fact that masculinity is seldom an assured aspect of identity, or a guarantee of coherence, even as it is embodied in two representative icons of a genre concerned with representing the men who 'made' the modern state of America.

13) FILMOGRAPHY

The Alamo (John Wayne, 1960)
Any Which Way You Can (Buddy Van Horn, 1980)
Apache (Robert Aldrich, 1954)
The Ballad of Little Jo (Maggie Greenwald, 1993)
Bandolero! (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1968)
The Beguiled (Don Siegel, 1971)
Bend of the River (Anthony Mann, 1951)
Big Jake (George Sherman, 1971)
Big Jim McLain (Edward Ludwig, 1952)
Blazing Saddles (Mel Brooks, 1974)
Blood Alley (William Wellman, 1955)
The Bridges of Madison County (Clint Eastwood, 1995)
Broken Arrow (Mann, 1950)
Broken Lance (Edward Dmytryk, 1954)
Bronco Billy (Eastwood, 1980)
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (George Roy Hill, 1969)
Cahill: US Marshal (McLaglen, 1973)
Chisum (McLaglen, 1970)
Cimarron (Wesley Ruggles, 1931)
The Comancheros (Michael Curtiz, 1961)
Coogan's Bluff (Siegel, 1968)
The Cowboys (Mark Rydell, 1972)
Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990)
Death of a Gunfighter ('Allen Smithee', 1969)
Devil's Doorway (Mann, 1950)
Dirty Harry (Siegel, 1971)
Donovan's Reef (John Ford, 1963)
El Dorado (Howard Hawks, 1966)
Every Which Way But Loose (James Fargo, 1978)
The Far Country (Mann, 1954)
Firecreek (Vincent McEveety, 1968)
A Fistful of Dollars (Sergio Leone, 1964)
For a Few Dollars More (Leone, 1965)
Fort Apache (Ford, 1948)
Giant (George Stevens, 1956)
The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly (Leone, 1966)

The Good Guys and the Bad Guys (Burt Kennedy, 1969)
The Green Berets (Wayne, 1968)
The Gunfighter (Henry King, 1950)
Hang 'Em High (Ted Post, 1968)
Heaven's Gate (Michael Cimino, 1980)
High Noon (Fred Zinnemann, 1952)
High Plains Drifter (Eastwood, 1972)
Hombre (Martin Ritt, 1966)
Hondo (John Farrow, 1953)
Honkytonk Man (Eastwood, 1982)
The Horse Soldiers (Ford, 1959)
Joe Kidd (John Sturges, 1972)
Kelly's Heroes (Brian G. Hutton, 1970)
Little Big Man (Arthur Hill, 1970)
The Long Riders (Walter Hill, 1980)
The Magnificent Seven (Sturges, 1960)
The Man From Laramie (Mann, 1955)
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (Ford, 1962)
Marked Men (Ford, 1920)
McCabe & Mrs. Miller (Robert Altman, 1971)
McLintock! (McLaglen, 1963)
The Naked Spur (Mann, 1952)
North to Alaska (Henry Hathaway, 1959)
The Outlaw Josey Wales (Eastwood, 1976)
Paint Your Wagon! (Joshua Logan, 1969)
Pale Rider (Eastwood, 1985)
Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid (Sam Peckinpah, 1973)
Play Misty For Me (Eastwood, 1971)
Posse (Mario Van Peebles, 1993)
Red River (Hawks, 1948)
Rio Bravo (Hawks, 1959)
Rio Grande (Ford, 1950)
Rio Lobo (Hawks, 1970)
Rooster Cogburn (Stuart Millar, 1975)
The Searchers (Ford, 1956)
Shane (George Stevens, 1952)
She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (Ford, 1949)
The Shootist (Siegel, 1976)

Silverado (Lawrence Kasdan, 1985)
Singin' in the Rain (Stanley Donen/Gene Kelly, 1952)
Soldier Blue (Ralph Nelson, 1970)
The Sons of Katie Elder (Hathaway, 1965)
Stagecoach (Ford, 1939)
Support Your Local Gunfighter (Kennedy, 1971)
Support Your Local Sheriff! (Kennedy, 1968)
Tell Them Willie Boy is Here (Abraham Polonsky, 1969)
3 Godfathers (Ford, 1948)
Tom Horn (William Wiard, 1980)
The Train Robbers (Kennedy, 1973)
True Grit (Hathaway, 1969)
Two Mules for Sister Sara (Siegel, 1969)
Two Rode Together (Ford, 1961)
Ulzana's Raid (Robert Aldrich, 1972)
The Undefeated (McLaglen, 1969)
Unforgiven (Eastwood, 1992)
The War Wagon (Kennedy, 1967)
White Feather (Robert D. Webb, 1955)
The Wild Bunch (Peckinpah, 1969)
Wild Rovers (Blake Edwards, 1971)
Winchester '73 (Mann, 1950)
The Wings of Eagles (Ford, 1957)

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