

Revisionism and the Subversive Cowboy in the Classic Western: Challenging the
Definitions and Boundaries of the American Western Literary Genre of the 19th
and Early 20th Century

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Chapter One: Introduction and Reopening the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western

1.1.0 Introducing the Western: Revitalizing Studies and Challenging the Revisionist Western Divide

The Classic and Revisionist Western, as I will explore, are defined not only in terms of physical space and history, but also in the psychological and gendered space of socio-cultural America. While there may be a risk in attempting to emphasize only a particular focus of the Western as a defining feature in either fiction or film, I contest that the role of the Cowboy and the definition of the frontier as a defining setting for the Western have been pivotal in the definition of the genre and its thematic composition. This chapter and Chapter Two will put the Cowboy's origins into the context of Manifest Destiny,¹ American Exceptionalism,² and the frontier, exploring how the character—being an amalgamation of these ideologies—confronted in part the anxieties of a masculinity in crisis, though his use extended beyond this confrontation. The Cowboy's bringing together of American Western values is realized as he embodies American Exceptionalism while achieving the American Dream, expanding the nation so as to fulfill the belief in a uniquely manifest destiny for America's future. Yet the figure is believed to have also represented a form of conservative values regarding masculinity, race and power, and the valorization of conquest westward against Native Americans and other marginalized figures.

¹ See Sub-Chapter 1.2.0 for more on Manifest Destiny. Milner II writes in *The Oxford History of the American West* (1994) that “the reference to divine purpose and the claim of national superiority underlay an at time idealistic rhetoric that stressed the benefit to all humanity of American growth” (166), and Julius Pratt adds in “The Origin of Manifest Destiny” that the phrase proved to be “such a convenient summing up of the self-confident nationalist and expansionist sentiment of the time that it passed into the permanent national vocabulary” (798).

² Seymour Martin Lipset discusses the history and use of American Exceptionalism in his book *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword* (1996). In his book, he discusses how the term emphasizes three particular elements about the United States of America: 1) that the United State's history is unique with regard to other nations, and stands out throughout the expanse of history for that reason, 2) there is a unique mission tasked to the United States that it should in some way transform the world, and finally, 3) that the combination of these two points elevates the United States of America above all other nations in the world (1, 17-19). Lipset also states that “the nation's ideology can be described in five words: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire” (ch. 1, cited from *Washington Post*). Additionally, in *The First New Nation*, Lipset argues that a culture of democratic egalitarianism and individualist achievement, clearly identifiable as an outlier on a comparative international scale of values, permanently shaped American history. All five of these attributes are found in the Cowboy, tying him irreversibly to the ideology of American Exceptionalism. To this end, the rhetoric of American Exceptionalism was often used in the context of the frontier upon which the Cowboy was fictionally set. Richard W. Etulain writes in *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?* (1999) that the proponents of American Exceptionalism argue that the American frontier allowed individualism to flourish as pioneers adopted democracy and equality and shed centuries-old European institutions.

My study explores how, contrary to popular understanding of the Classic Western, the genre was aware of its own problematic Cowboy figure and the oppressive normative processes he defines. I argue that non-normative, marginalized authors took note of the symbolic positive representation that the Cowboy was capable of and used these ideas—or predated it altogether—to encourage the growth and future prosperity of other marginalized communities. I critique arbitrary periodization of the Western and the too narrow Western canon that has historically excluded the works of African Americans and Native Americans.³ Through selective readings whose blind spots obscured gender complications already present in the Classic Western, I expand the literature of the Western to more accurately reflect the progressive values the Western has and the authors who contributed to its definition.

Melania Arouh states that “It is often said that the Western film is dead,” and that “the genre has been meeting its maker since the 1950s.”⁴ John Kitses, writing in “Postmodernism” about both film and fiction, also proclaimed that “[i]f a marker had been erected every time the genre’s end had been proclaimed [...], the Western’s gravestones would now overflow even Tombstone’s cemetery, ‘the biggest graveyard West of the Rockies’” (15). There seems to be little to explore in the Classic Western,⁵ the traditional literary and filmic canon of works within the genre ranging from 1902 with Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*,⁶ to an often-contested date of

³ Throughout this dissertation, and predominantly in Chapter Five, I will be referring to Native Americans and Indians with the purpose of emphasizing different representations: in referring to ‘Indians’, I will be discussing stereotypical caricatures created as a part of Western narratives in both Classic and Revisionist Westerns as made by the dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural forces in American dating from the 18th Century to even present day. In referring to Native Americans, I will be discussing specific individuals, groups, tribes, and real-world parties.

⁴ Melenia Arouh, “Matthew Carter, Myth of the Western: New Perspectives on Hollywood’s Frontier Narrative Neil Campbell, Post-Westerns: Cinema, Region, West”. *European journal of American studies*.

⁵ The term ‘Classic’ is often used interchangeably with the term ‘Traditional’. From all that I have read, I had yet to see a distinguishing difference between the two and it seems to be used based on the preference of the author, or to add variety for naming the genre of the Western. For clarity’s sake I will be referring to Westerns between 1902 and approximately 1950 as ‘Classic Westerns’, and Westerns specifically from the 1960’s onward as ‘Revisionist Westerns’, though in both cases this is a division in definition that I do not wholly agree with, as I explain in further detail throughout this dissertation.

⁶ It should be noted that contentions concerning the exact origin of the genre exist within discourse about the Western: Cawelti’s claim in *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel* is that “[W]e can begin the history of the modern Western with Owen Wister’s novel *The Virginian*” (2), to which Norris Yates disagrees, stating that Mary Hallock Foote’s *The Led-Horse Claim* (1883) could “with some justice [...] be labeled the first formula Western.” (11). In any event, the two schools tend to divide themselves between Wister’s *The Virginian*, and James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Novels*, though as I have previously discussed there is more to confirm Wister’s. Naturally, there cannot be a clear origin or inventor of the Western, but for the sake of clarity I emphasize Wister’s works and stark changes to the formula as being most notable in a definition for where one would periodize the Classic Western’s recognized contribution.

approximately 1950,⁷ with *Broken Arrow*, the first recognizable and popular Revisionist Western film. If the Western were to survive, it seemed, then the genre must reincarnate into ‘something new’.

The Revisionist Western returned an interest in audiences to the genre around the 1950’s, and marked a distinct break for scholars and fans alike between the Classic and Revisionist Western. As Lee Broughton writes, “Conventional Revisionist Westerns, with their dark, brooding, and alienated heroes, sympathetic villains, and lack of moral resolution... are more cynical, less certain, about the true nature of the West and its inhabitants.... [I]n a sense [the Revisionist Western] revitalize[s] the genre” (38).⁸ For all intents and purposes, the Classic Western is seen as the sounding board upon which contemporary artists working in the Western genre reflect on, criticizing through their own work the socio-cultural heteronormativity of older narratives, the dehumanization and marginalization of non-whites via conquest, and the lack of representation for these marginalized figures. The Revisionist Western, it seemed, offered a new diversity of authors and criticisms to the genre that would give the Western life that the Classic Western could not.

However, the thread of a problem arises from the onset of defining the Revisionist Western: defining the Revisionist Western in any agreeable way which effectively distinguishes itself from the Classic Western has been an ongoing struggle for academics. Specifically, what defines the Revisionist Western continually finds examples in earlier Western works, ranging from works which are critical of the westward progression of the United States and the successes this promises, as seen in Stephen Crane’s 1899 short story *The Blue Hotel*, to the representation of marginalized figures writing about the West, as seen in Pauline Hopkins’ 1902 *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*. Yet the belief in a divide between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western persists.

My interest in the Western and in writing this dissertation lies in the shared elements and themes found between many canonical Classic Western films and novels and the later Revisionist

⁷ Specifically, I am referring to the film *Broken Arrow* by Delmer Daves, though others locate the origins to the 1940 *The OxBow Incident* by Walter Van Tilburg Clark, or the 1962 *The Man who Shot Liberty Valance* by John Ford. Confusion about the origins of the Revisionist Western pervade studies of the Western, and for reasons that I will explore in Chapters Two and Three. I also address the confusion over origins for the Revisionist Western further in Chapter Two. While I give the date of 1950 here, I later use the 1948 film of *Red River* as an example. The reason for this is that, while *Red River* was produced earlier, the film was not immediately interpreted as a Revisionist Western, much less understood for its criticism. *Broken Arrow*, on the other hand, was more immediately recognized for this.

⁸ Broughton, Lee. *Critical Perspectives on the Western: From A Fistful of Dollars to Django Unchained*.

Western genre, as well as in expanding how the Classic Western is defined. While many scholars allow for the existence of these trends within the Classic Western, there remains to be a critical study which examines the Classic Western as potentially anticipating and predating many of the elements which are used to define the Revisionist Western. In addition to this, I believe that arbitrary divisions between the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western lead scholars and readers alike to exclude the work of marginalized authors operating outside of these arbitrary definitions for both the Classic and Revisionist Western. I believe that when the narrow view of the Classic Western—a genre believed to be limited to white male authors emphasizing the success of white male Cowboys upon a frontier setting, beginning with *The Virginian*—is removed, authors and works which were marginalized will be recognized as a vital and often neglected part of the Classic Western genre. Additionally, I argue that the removal of these narrow definitions allows us to approach canonical Classic Westerns for the subversive and resistant elements that they contain. I expound on this by going further back in history to find examples of Westerns by non-whites which contain their own Cowboys and frontier settings. These concepts, when taken together, demonstrates how the Classic Western does not conflict with the Revisionist Western, but instead flows neatly together.

1.1.2 The Pre-Western, and the Classic and Revisionist Western: Origins of the Cowboy

Some of the earliest depictions of the West, that is, the ‘Pre-Western’, can be found in James Fenimore Cooper’s five novels which make up the *Leatherstocking Tales*. The American frontier, being a rather flexible concept then and now, was established along the Appalachian Mountains and all parts of the land that lay to the West.⁹ However, while Cooper certainly wrote

⁹ The concept of the frontier’s fluidity in use and definition is not a new perspective that I am offering up here, and the ambiguity of the frontier’s actual location and meaning has been explored before. Most notably by Patricia Limerick Nelson in “The Unleashing of the Western Public Intellectual”. Nelson writes that the frontier’s nature depends on context, stating that “The old concept of the frontier—that bipolar opening-and-closing operation—never looked sillier than it did when applied to New Mexico. When... would one say that the frontier opened in what would become New Mexico? When the Athapaskan Indians came into Pueblo territory? When Coronado made his failed exploration in the 1540s, or when Onate planted his precarious colony in 1598?”, asking as well “Or does the concept of the frontier require the presence of Anglo-Americans? Then did the frontier open with the Santa Fe Trade in 1821, and close with the conquest in 1848? Or did the frontier close with the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s, or with statehood in 1912, or with the attempt to establish comprehensive control of the Mexican border with the immigration law of 1986?” (76). Nelson’s point here rings true throughout my analysis: the frontier is a fluid construction that relies vaguely on context and perspective, and was most often used for defining Anglo-American movement westward. However, both the frontier and the Classic Western take on new definition when the term and the concepts surrounding it are appropriated and subverted by the ‘other’. Later in Chapters Four and Five I will revisit this idea of a fluid

about frontiersmen and the West in such a way as to inspire the Western genre, he did not write of the Western genre as we know and understand it today. Later ‘penny dreadfuls’ and ‘dime novels’ would continue this exploration, emphasizing various archetypes (mountain men, outlaws, settlers, and lawmen) who were taming the western frontier, though few if any left any real lasting impression. The Western genre was definitively outlined at the turn of the century by Owen Wister’s *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains*. Steven McVeigh traces a similar origin to the Western, writing:

Indeed, it is possible to trace the effects of Cooper’s narratives, produced between 1823 and 1841, on the mass-produced dime novels that had their heyday between 1860 and 1900 and led ultimately to the novel considered to represent the birth of the modern Western, Owen Wister’s *The Virginian: a Horseman of the Plains* (1902). (39)¹⁰

There is much contention about what qualities of the genre define a text as a Western, and stemming from that, a variety of concerns over exceptions to any rule that may be used in attempting a clear answer. Inevitably, as Toby Reed and R. J. Thompson discuss in “The Six-gun Simulacrum: New Metaphors for an Old Genre”, the exclusion becomes detrimental to understanding the broader genre, that “to select what constitutes a western requires a restrictive definition” (53).¹¹ In turn, a narrow definition of the Cowboy and the Classic Western can be problematic, for it leads to the potential of excluding works which contribute significantly to the genre and characters who may utterly transform the definitions of archetypes.

In *The Western. Parables of the American Dream*, Jeffrey Wallman notes a variety of narrative traditions foreshadowing the appearance of the Cowboy hero, like the soldier and his accounts (such as cavalry men), explorers in travel narratives likened to Lewis and Clarke, the

frontier and demonstrate how this ambiguous definition can be and was appropriated by African American and Native American authors to discuss their own perspectives over history and American mythology.

¹⁰ McVeigh, Steven. *The American Western*.

¹¹ Reed and Thompson go on to state that “Basic to this inclusion/exclusion is the myth of the (excludable) copy which does not achieve the metaphysical ‘idea’ behind the surface of the object, out of reach of the viewer. The copy is inauthentic: all it does is look like something (else). Thus, a western like *The Oklahoma Kid* might be said to be inauthentic, as it is too much like a 1930’s Warner Brothers gangster film—its ‘western-ness’ is merely an imitation of ‘the real thing,’ the appearance of the genre rather than its essence. The ‘idea’ of the real western (in this case failed, for reasons of impurity) refers us to the need for an origin of the genre” (53). While their concern over the origin of the genre is worthy of exploration, what is most useful about their focus here is the idea that the Western operates on a system of exclusion. Through a redefinition of what can be considered a Western, and specifically emphasizing why they may have been excluded for arbitrary reasons, I will in later chapters expand the Classic Western genre to demonstrate how elements of subversion operate against the hegemonic normative writing of white masculinity and authors.

hunter or the lumberjack of epic poems. The pre-Cowboy represented qualities which would culminate in the archetype of the Classic Western Cowboy: a sense of rugged individualism, a willingness to explore and expand the nation, and the capacity for violence against those forces which would threaten social stability or the social stability to come. However, like with the Cowboy, the precursors in their own ways responded to a crisis of masculinity and were, as such, representations of ideal answers to those situations that threatened a standard for masculinity.

These pre-Cowboy characters share qualities which would later feed into the Cowboy's masculinity, such as boldness, strength, self-reliance, toughness and self-sufficiency. They were also the tenants which formed a part of American Exceptionalism's ethos, and in turn was tied to westward expansion. The combination of the dime novel with *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* produced a sum wherein the narrative characters and values came together,¹² amalgamating, perhaps evolving, into Wister's eponymous protagonist the Virginian, the first collective representation of the Cowboy.

As Jeffrey Wallman observes, the dime novel provided a simplified form of more complex narratives, epics, and myths, introducing a mixture of both drama and quick action. The dime novel's pivotal figure, the Cowboy, was thus the result of older male protagonists evolving to meet the needs and values of Americans at the turn of the century. In effect, this created a "more appealing, more civilized hero who is youthful, eligible, physically attractive and naturally noble" (78). But the audiences who found this 'more appealing' were white males looking for a symbolic icon upon whom they could turn to for answers concerning questions of ideal masculinity in the face of changing socio-cultural times. For all the disagreement over what does or does not constitute the Classic Western, the Cowboy has been consistently a core element to the genre's

¹² *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* was a traveling vaudeville performance show that introduced many western performers and personalities, and a romanticized version of the American frontier, to audiences. Notably, some of the more influential scenes of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* were "historical" scenes. According to Bowling Green State University's *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Exhibition*, "The exact scenes changed over time, but were either portrayed as a 'typical' event such as the early settlers defending a homestead, a wagon train crossing the plains, or a more specific event such as the Battle of the Little Bighorn... He was able to bring the danger of the West, in the form of the Native Americans, the rough riders, and the display of skills used for survival back to the east in a carnivalesque setting, thus mythologizing the dangers and the freedoms that symbolized the frontier of civilization" (Web). Buffalo Bill used his fictionalizing to glorify himself and other figures while emphasizing the "bad guys" (outlaws or Indians) and to embellish each situation of cultural conflict for theatrical enhancement. The standard fare of events included acts known as the 'Bison Hunt', 'Train Robbery', 'Indian War Battle Reenactment', and the usual grand finale of the show, 'Attack on the Burning Cabin', wherein 'Indians' attacked a settler's cabin and were vanquished by Buffalo Bill, Cowboys, and even Mexicans. Of note is that "Historically, this Exhibition became popular as Native Americans ceased to be a threat" (Web), emphasizing a desire for an 'othered' figure to confront white culture upon the frontier.

definition. As Steven McVeigh demonstrates, the genre's origins may be found with the first instance of the Cowboy in literature with Owen Wister's *The Virginian*.¹³

It is important to remember that the pre-Western's origins—that is, the fiction that existed prior to the introduction of the staple protagonist: The Cowboy—are, as an artistic genre, unclear and vague. The pre-Western comes out of a history of folklore and tall tales that reached an early pinnacle with the successful and popular works of James Fenimore Cooper.¹⁴ For all of Cooper's literary achievements, such as the extensive tradition of Western novels and travel diaries, the genre was most popular and artistically refined following the publication of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* and again with Zane Grey's 1912 *Riders of the Purple Sage*. These novels provided definition for the major characters, settings, and narratives that would later evolve into archetypes of the genre. Although not universal, it is often the case wherein for the Classic Westerns, the construction of the genre can be done with attention being paid to story-telling: where and when the story takes place (the frontier, typically before the nation's expansion westward), the archetypal characters contained therein (the Cowboy), what the conflict of the story is (confrontation upon the frontier), and how the story is resolved (the success and possible reinvention of the protagonist with his or her future prospects secured).

Classic Westerns are commonly set in the 19th century, during the formative years of the nation's westward expansion: between the antebellum period and the turn of the century. Coinciding with the sentiment of young Southern men seeking to reinvent themselves upon the frontier of the American West was Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 "The Significance of the Frontier in American History",¹⁵ which provided an arbitrary yet simple end to the narrative of America's expansion and the site upon which transformation and prosperity could begin, encouraging the Western fiction of and about the American West. The progress of American individualism and success upon the testing grounds of the expanding nation were fruitful for providing fictive examples of America's Manifest Destiny and the realization of the American

¹³ For many, Wister's character of the Virginian marked one of first examples for combining both Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show*. Richard White mentions the merging of these two constructs, stating that "As different as the two narratives were, they led to remarkably similar conclusions. Both declared the frontier over" (1).

¹⁴ Many of Cooper's literary frontiersmen established certain values for the Cowboy, particularly the laconic but cool nature he held while under pressure, his ability to take control of situations, people, and animals, his capability with firearms, and ultimately his love for the region.

¹⁵ See sub-chapter 1.2.0 for more on Frederick Jackson Turner and his 1893 article "The Significance of the Frontier in American History".

Dream, giving those with the physical and mental will an opportunity to reinvent themselves for the better upon this ‘Agrarian garden’.¹⁶

Following in the wake of Frederick Jackson Turner was Walter Prescott Webb, a fellow American Western historian whose works were published between 1931 and 1959. His first publication, *The Great Plains: A Study in Institutions and Environment* was published in 1931 and made clear his belief in the frontier thesis that Turner had by then made popular and institutionally accepted. Though Webb did not agree with Turner on all accounts, his critiques largely lay with the ambiguity of definition for the frontier as a concept. As such, Webb’s largest belief throughout all of his work was in the transformative impact that an environment would have on the individual, the institutions which are comprised of those individuals, and ultimately the culture that would arise because of this environment.

Webb articulates these thoughts later on, in his 1951 *The Great Frontier*, where he writes “The concept of a moving frontier is applicable where a civilized people are advancing into a wilderness, an unsettled area, or one sparsely populated by primitive people... Inherent in the American concept of a moving frontier is the idea of a body of free land which can be had for the taking” (2). The literary geography of the Classic Western follows in large degrees the ideas that both Turner and Webb espouse concerning the frontier and its riches to be had by those able and ‘American’ enough to take them. In turn, these narratives are often set in the arid American West,¹⁷ as well as southern Mexican territory. As Matthias Schutz states:

Western stories are most commonly set in the American West, and usually depicted in an idealized way. They are almost always set in the 19th century, generally between the antebellum period (pre-Civil War America) and the turn of the century. Many of the stories integrate the Civil War into the plot. Their time-setting may however extend back to the

¹⁶ Many of the stories integrate the Civil War into the plot, either as the reason for the protagonist’s restless wanderings or as a means to allow for historical revisionism. This is significant as it carries elements of Southern nobility westward in the form of the Cowboy, and as I will discuss in Chapter Four, the absence of African Americans in the minds of Americans when looking at the West provided an opportunity for America and the American South to reinvent themselves without having to confront a history of racism. The irony, of course, being the treatment of Native Americans in the West following a similar course to the treatment of African Americans.

¹⁷ Richard White, in “Trashing the Trails” from *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, states that “In the old history, Webb and Turner sharply bifurcated the physical West. They apportioned the West at any given moment before the magic date of 1890 between nature and culture; they called the dividing line the frontier” (28). He goes on to criticize their view further, adding that “There is no sharp line between culture and nature. Wilderness—that is, land unaffected by human use—is rarely to be found. There is no obvious frontier except in the sense that in some places you run out of white people” (29).

time of the American colonial period. The geographical setting includes not only American but also Mexican territory. Characters in Westerns are often drifters who roam from town to town in these territories, owning but a few possessions while seeking out their fortune and futures. (17)

Excluding some of the earliest protagonists, these Cowboy figures seemed to have little more than the clothes on their back, a pistol and a horse, and their mastery over the latter two was unmatched. Westerns typically took the opportunity of the frontier setting to embrace moral values that were different from those of the Eastern United States. The way in which the Western society is portrayed is of some significance to the Western, for it determines the moral of the narrative and the ideals by which the author seeks to define this developing region of the United States translating it in turn to the rest of America.

Ultimately, what is most telling of the Classic Western is its effort to establish a nostalgic romanticizing of the West's development and the role of the white hegemonic male in determining this. To do so, the figure of the Cowboy was created, and he and his actions figured heavily into the Western narrative. The narrative of Westerns often emphasized notions of nobility which could be traced back to Southern constructions of honor and chivalry, exported Westward following the Civil War. Owen Wister believed in taking the origins of the Cowboy further back, reaching to medieval knights: "in personal daring and in skill as to the horse, the knight and the cowboy are nothing but the same Saxon of different environments".¹⁸ Thus, the Classic Western is commonly understood as emphasizing life in an era with a distinguished pioneering spirit and a core belief in the natural superiority of white men—the Cowboy—above women and, broadly, minorities.

"Ironically," as Richard White states, "the cowboy became an American symbol in the very era that announced the end of the West and the closing of the frontier that had created him" (46).¹⁹ The popularity of the Classic Western stems from an already existing fascination with such shows as *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show*, and the success of the genre encouraged an influx in both fiction and films. Robert B. Pippin adds that, for the Western to reach the interest of academia however, it took much more convincing despite the genre's overwhelming popularity: "[i]t is generally agreed that while, from [1902] until the present, well over seven thousand Westerns have been

¹⁸ Wister, Owen. "The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher." 1895. Rpt. in Ben Merchant Vorpahl, *My Dear Wister—The Frederic Remington-Owen Wister Letters*, pp. 77-96.

¹⁹ White, Richard. "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," *The Frontier in American Culture*. pp. 7-66.

made it was not until three seminal articles in the nineteen fifties by André Bazin and Robert Warshow that the genre began to be taken seriously” (223).²⁰ Yet for academics the film genre remained at the forefront of research. After all, the Classic Western film was the medium that met the widest range of audiences in mainstream American popular culture and internationally.

Western film, in all of its subgenres, was the most enduringly popular genre in film between the early 1900’s and extending until the late 1960’s.²¹ More than any other genre of film, the Western seemed more resistant to change and the changing times than other genres,²² be it rising production costs or the recycling of customary plotlines. Even after the arrival of television diminished the commercial strength of “B” Westerns, major releases of Western films remained at the forefront of movie-goers choice for entertainment. This was the result of good directors and the use of scenic backdrops that played to the strengths of the developing visual medium to capture scenic locales. These settings were built up alongside characters who embodied or even idolized the cultural values and beliefs of most audiences.

But these are elements which cannot entirely explain away the Western’s overwhelming popularity, for there were plenty of movies that were successes regardless of poor filming and bad directing. Insight into the continual attention that Westerns enjoyed was succinctly summed up in a brief article from 1948 in *The New York Times*: “More than ever, they comfort us with the feeling that, whatever global and unpredictable changes are taking place, mythical life in the great open spaces is still epic — and good — and simple” (24).²³ Nostalgia defined for many the viewing

²⁰ Robert B. Pippin’s “What is a Western”.

²¹ The Western’s popularity is often mentioned in regards to its profound outreach and consumption of ideologies when discussing its influence on American culture. William Indick, for example, writes in *The Psychology of the Western: How the American Psyche Plays Out on Screen* (2008), that “[t]he first real feature film ever made, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), was a Western, and the genre has had many declines and revivals since then. Over 4,000 Westerns... were produced between 1926 and 1967, a quarter of all the films ever made.” He adds that by “1969, the Western was the most popular and broadly produced action film in Hollywood”, and that “the Western remains a respected genre and an integral part of film history as *the principal American film genre of the past century*” (1-2, my emphasis).

²² Ibid., page 2. Although many scholars contest the approximate shift in tone from the Classic Western to the Revisionist Western, periodizing it to sometime in the 1960’s, Indick places this change in the 1950’s, emphasizing the “characters and scenarios that were much more sophisticated and complex than the simplistic hero/villain morality tales that dominated the first half-century of Western films” (2). While Indick is correct in assuming the time span in which change was noticeable in the genre, he falsely assumes that these ‘more complex’ themes were absent from earlier Westerns. For example, one could see in the 1950 film *Broken Arrow* a perceived shift from the Classic Western to the Revisionist Western, humanizing the Native American and criticizing white conquest over the Other. As I argue however, the Classic Western contains within it many examples of these so-called shifts, and complicates such a division.

²³ “Hoss Opera Rides Again.” It’s worth noting that Tompkins sees the mass appeal of Westerns differently: “The West functions as a symbol of freedom, and of the opportunity for conquest. It seems to offer escape from the

experience of watching Western films, which enforced a belief in the mythological West as an expansive space through which cultural heroes defined the American character as pure and righteous.

Another way to phrase this is that Western films, and by that extension Classic Western texts, were popular because they appealed to the way that American audiences viewed their history and their beliefs in their own origins. Historian Wayne Sarf claimed in *God Bless You, Buffalo Bill* that the Western “provided what has been termed our national epic, a substitute for an Iliad or Aeneid that serves as a young nation’s heroic age and a reflection of that nation’s values” (10).²⁴ Sarf aptly draws the comparison inevitably to the mythic imaginings the nation had of itself, for the comparisons indicate the extent to which the Western, both as fiction and film, was clearly rooted in self-serving myth rather than literal history.

Westerns are often argued as essential elements in understanding what may be termed the American epic—what André Bazin states are narratives that embody what is idealistically considered the defining principles and dogma of the country by white male audiences.²⁵ These Westerns are done in such a way that these narratives inevitably take on mythic dimensions in socio-cultural America. Richard Slotkin, whose *Gunfighter Nation* is perhaps one of the most in-depth academic explorations of the Classic Western genre, explained that, “Myths are stories drawn from a society’s history that have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing that society’s ideology and of dramatizing its moral consciousness” (5).²⁶

The correlations between these dominant ideologies and the establishment of a socio-cultural myth finds expression in the Classic Western’s protagonist, the Cowboy. The course of these narratives found him confronting and purging non-normative, corrupt elements in the foundation of the developing nation. Regardless of the reality for either the Cowboy’s situation in history or the conquest of the West—even in direct contrast to it—the fiction and films of the Western corroborated Turner’s own views of the frontier with that of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*

conditions of life in modern industrial society: from a mechanized existence, economic dead ends, social entanglements, unhappy personal relations, political injustice. The desire to change places also signals a powerful need for self-transformation. The desert light and the desert space, the creak of saddle leather and the sun beating down, the horses’ energy and force - these things promise a translation of the self into something purer and more authentic, more intense, more real.” Tompkins, *West of Everything*, pg. 4.

²⁴ Sarf, Wayne Michael. *God Bless You, Buffalo Bill: a Layman’s Guide to History and the Western Film*. pg. 10.

²⁵ I am paraphrasing what Pippin also paraphrased in “What is a Western” from Bazin’s analysis in “The Western, or the American Film par excellence”, (141).

²⁶ Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: the Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*.

Show. The end result was a mythological narrative whose ideologies encouraged the normative view of Western history and American expansion westward.

1.2.0 Mythological Ideology in the Western

There are two formative origins for the mythological prestige of the Western in the history of the United States—first and foremost of them being Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” and, secondly, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. In 1893, Turner presented an essay titled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” to a conference of historians at the World’s Columbian Exposition. The central idea of the paper, which was to become both popular and influential, was that the frontier promoted the growth of individualism, democracy, national identity, and American political institutions, but that the frontier had also closed due to the successful spread of an American population to the West.²⁷

Manifest Destiny originally appeared in the July 1845 issue of the widely circulated *Democratic Review*, being a phrase that editor John L. O’Sullivan used in an argument against the foreign interference concerning the acquisition of Texas.²⁸ After its use both in the journal and in James K. Polk’s justification for American growth, the phrase found a prominent role for the expression of an aggressive, nationalistic zeal toward expansion westward. The term concisely posited the United States’ exceptionalism, and as such, its divine obligation to expand across the American continent, spreading democracy and freedom.

The idea of Manifest Destiny resonates particularly well with first the Western and, secondly, through the character of the Cowboy, with Turner’s beliefs suggesting the successful achievement of Manifest Destiny. Both Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism found cohesion in the Cowboy through the narratives of the Western, evolving over time to represent an American ideological myth concerning the origins of the nation and its trajectory over the course of history. As Slotkin states in *Gunfighter Nation*, the Western was:

²⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*. Much of this discussion is relevant and a broader overview can be found in the book between pages 31-60. I will only be summarizing the general spirit of the concept here, as it is sufficient enough for the purpose of this dissertation.

²⁸ In his editorial “Annexation,” O’Sullivan wrote that the interference against the American claim for land was “...limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (O’Sullivan).

...increasingly conventionalized and abstracted until it is reduced to a deeply encoded and resonant set of symbols, “icons,” “keywords,” or historical clichés.... Each of these mythic icons is in effect a poetic construction of tremendous economy and compression and a mnemonic device capable of evoking a complex system of historical associations by a single image or phrase. (6)

The concept of Manifest Destiny was (and still is) rooted in the ideology which overtly claims a readily apparent and irreversible expansion of the United States of America westward, pushing against and into the frontier through a process of settlement. Conflict with the wilderness that came to represent this frontier found form in the Native Americans and Mexican Americans of the Western genre.

As figures who were ‘othered’ to be villains, they came to represent the potential corruption of the American character, an evil whose conquest was seen as a necessary step toward the establishment of a stable and purified American West. Notions of American Exceptionalism were inevitably tied into the push westward, and the symbols Slotkin makes note of found expression through the Western for this process. Through the Cowboy, expression for the ideals of American Exceptionalism found justification for the growth of the nation. Taken together, the combination of the Cowboy within the Western became the mythic narrative of American Western history, a form of nationalism that found encouragement both within fiction and from scholars eager to repeat Turner’s simple narrative concerning American growth and the transformation of ‘the Great West’ as definitive of America’s character and future prospects.

This form of nationalism found immortalization in Emanuel Leutze’s 1861 painting that was at its core an ode to pioneers, titled *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, which showed a large group of white settlers trekking across the rough frontier landscape of the West while pointing heroically to the sunlit lands beyond the Rockies.²⁹ John Gast’s 1872 *American Progress* shows a similar retelling of pioneers pushing westward and establishing the developing

²⁹ Leutze painted *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* in 1861 as a study for a mural intended for the U.S. Capitol. It is currently located at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The museum’s website provides this exhibition label: “Leutze’s mural study for the Capitol Building in Washington celebrated the idea of Manifest Destiny just when the Civil War threatened the republic. The surging crowd of figures records the births, deaths, and battles fought as European Americans settled the continent to the edge of the Pacific. Like Moses and the Israelites who appear in the ornate borders of the painting, these pioneers stand at the threshold of the Promised Land, fulfilling what many nineteenth-century Americans believed was God’s plan for the nation.” <http://americanart.si.edu>.

United States further along a frontier line, driving out ‘savage natives’ and others.³⁰ Both paintings emphasize O’Sullivan’s ideologies concerning American expansion, later given definition by Turner.

Taken together, the Frontier Thesis and Manifest Destiny cemented the West as a region ripe for American ideals *and* taking, demanding the figure who would best represent that American Exceptionalism needed to do so: the Cowboy. The West was a site that not only represented the positive and unique characteristics of the fledgling nation, but also would provide for them the testing ground for these ideas. The end result produced a myth that found formation and expression in the literary and filmic genres of the Classic Western. Will Wright, whose *Six Guns and Society* was one of the earlier academic texts examining narrative structure in Classic Westerns, asserted that:

[T]he formal structure of a myth is embodied in a symbolic content that is socially specific. This content presents characters and events, telling a story that society’s members understand and enjoy. Both consciously and unconsciously the myth relates to the individual’s experience as a social and historical being. (11)³¹

As myths, the Classic Western served as a set of grand archetypal stories of heroic origins and events relevant to the establishment of the United States of America and its ideologies. At the heart of these stories was the Cowboy, whose representation of American Exceptionalism upon the frontier told the narrative of the successful conquest over both the wilderness and all of its ties to savagery. At the forefront to this taming of the frontier was the Cowboy’s conquest of the other: non-whites who represented as antagonists everything opposed to the Cowboy, and thus what he must conquer in order for civilization to expand and prosper.³²

³⁰ Gast painted *American Progress* in 1872, representing the historical *idea* of Manifest Destiny and its results in ways which resonate with American Exceptionalism to this day. As Martha A. Sandweiss writes, “John Gast, a Brooklyn based painter and lithographer, painted this picture in 1872 on commission for George Crofutt, the publisher of a popular series of western travel guides. Few Americans saw the actual painting, but many encountered it in reproduction. Crofutt included an engraving of it in his guidebooks and produced a large chromolithographic version for his subscribers. The painting is so rich in detail that my students—encountering it as a slide projected on a screen—usually imagine it to be a large canvas. But in fact it is tiny, just 12 3/4 x 16 3/4 inches in size.”

<http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/john-gast-american-progress-1872/>

³¹ Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society: a Structural Study of the Western*.

³² Edward Said discusses the role of ‘othering’ (that is, defining a group or individual as ‘the other’) in his 1979 *Orientalism*, placing it into the context of the Orient (the East) and the Occidental (the West). Said writes that the dominant culture, in this case the West, “conceive of the difference between cultures, first, as creating a battlefield that separates [the West and the Other], and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other” (48). Extending this to the experience of African

1.2.1 The Other – Marginalized Figures by the White Hegemonic Cowboy for the ‘Stability’ of Society

Configurations of white masculinity as the hegemon upon the American western frontier implied particular notions of the role white men had in the imperial expansion, and in turn the conquest of this frontier and all who would be native to it. This most often was represented in the Native American who, as a foil to the Cowboy’s representation of a colonizing force, came to represent a sort of savagery incompatible with what was seen as a civilized western world. ‘Indians’ were used as objects to represent specific constructs: noble savages or comical, almost embarrassing sidekicks that serve a white protagonist (often one who has lived with Native Americans and had mastered their ways better than the Natives themselves), or as enemies, the stereotypical ‘savage Indians,’ representing a romantic and simultaneously dangerous natural element of the frontier wilderness. As Will Wright states in *The Wild West: The Mythical Cowboy*, that:

Indians in the myth have always symbolized the market version of racial difference... the frontier myth portrays the market vision, including the vision of race... [and] what they symbolize is that whites can transcend the original State of Nature because they are ‘naturally’ rational. But non-whites (Indians) never can because they are ‘naturally’ savage. (160)³³

The spelling out of civilization’s clash with savagery is core to the depicted conflict between the white Cowboy male and the Native American warrior, and in other cases against the Mexican bandits and killers bleeding north into the frontier.³⁴ The desire to define white masculinity as the hegemon within the new world west of civilization is an expression of the desire to confront a

Americans and Native Americans contextualizes the West as white Euro-Americans (typically male as seen in the Cowboy) and the Oriental or Other as the African American and Native American.

³³ Wright, in this instance, is referring to the demand audiences of popular film and fiction felt. Because audiences and readers wanted to see these confrontations and in turn to see their hero overcome the Other, it became a trope within the Western. And, because it fed into the self-identification and understanding of the world that readers and audiences felt for it, these texts ensured the continuation and perpetuation of that cultural contesting favoring the white heterosexual male.

³⁴ It is incredibly rare in the Western for the Cowboy to be pitted against a woman of any race. Louis L’Amour’s 1963 *Catlow* is an example of such a confrontation, wherein a woman of Mexican heritage, despite her beauty, is proven to be a thief and would-be assassin, robbing both heroes of their treasure before fleeing into the wastes of the desert populated with dangerous, savage ‘Indians’. She later meets her end from a poisoned arrow-shaft from said Indians.

crisis of identity found in the aftermath of industrialization, and this conflict was played out against the other, for the other was the ultimate in defining what the Cowboy was not.

The Western, as an extremely broad field of literature and film, has numerous sub-genres, including but not limited to: revenge stories, cavalry-and-Indian movies, pioneer epics, and Civil War narratives. However, regardless of the diversity of the Western, these texts and films tend to be defined under the broader umbrella terms as being either Classic or Revisionist. The Classic Western is believed to support and adhere to the previously described mythology of the American West, encouraging the conservative hegemonic structures propped up by white male authors. Typically, this played out to the submission of women and the loss of Native Americans and other racial minorities.

This relation to social and historical beings inevitably found resonance in the success of the white male over that of the gendered and racialized other, interweaving the mythological narrative of the West with that of a white, heterosexual masculine hegemony. In the Classic Western, the formation of these ideas found life in their repetition, producing archetypes and narratives core to the genre. The rules in defining the Classic Western tended to be strongly codified, despite the variety of facets that would often distinguish one text or film from another. As film theorist Robert Warshow wrote, “It is an art form for connoisseurs, where the spectator derives his pleasure from the appreciation of minor variations within the working out of a pre-established order” (146).³⁵

In its most basic form, the Classic Western is understood as presenting a struggle between good and evil wherein the two forces were rigidly defined, racialized between the white civilizers and pioneers—typically the white male Cowboys, homesteaders, farmers, sheriffs, and legendary gunslingers whose narratives had them reaping the bounties of the agrarian garden of the West and its territories. These figures, led by the Cowboy, push the boundary between the uncivilized and dangerous frontier and the civilized United States of America. Evil, then, was represented by the racialized ‘other’, typically the ‘Indian savage’ but often enough the Mexican ‘bandito’.

The white figures of ‘good’ were shown in the Classic Western to have introduced law and order to a wilderness portrayed (at its worst) as incapable of establishing a semblance of civilization. The process of civilizing was created often through violent confrontation with these racialized others who epitomized savagery and barbarism. Whether they were ‘Indians’,

³⁵ Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre & Other Aspects of Popular Culture*.

malevolent outlaws, or the untamed wilderness, all were subordinated to the independent American Cowboy. When these Cowboy figures succeeded, the authors of these Westerns defined their narrative success as both a personal victory as well as the triumph of American mythology. As film historian Jacquelyn Kilpatrick claimed, “The West made a perfect crucible for the development of a mythology intrinsically American” (5).³⁶

This constant repetition of conflict gave form to a narrative in which the toughness and prowess with firearms of the mythic white male protagonist—the embodiment of the individualism and self-reliance of the American spirit, or more accurately, the hegemonic dominion by the social order’s upper echelons—overcome whatever forces were threatening honest, hard-working frontier families. Threatening, that is, the order of society which the Cowboy had defined, preventing as they would the disruption of normative processes. This is a narrative arc for which Wright’s description of the “classical plot” seems most apt:

[The story] revolves around a lone gunfighter hero who saves the town, or the farmers, from the gamblers, or the ranchers.... It is the story of the lone stranger who rides into a troubled town and cleans it up, winning the respect of the townsfolk and the love of the schoolmarm. (15, 32)³⁷

Naturally, this particular formula was not concrete in the writing of Classic Westerns or in the making of Western films, as can be seen in the variety of sub-genres that exist. It does, however, highlight that there were *ideas* of strict rules regarding this vision of the West, specifically the underlying messages it wished to convey.

Moral absolutism was a consistent part of the narrative—the mythic hero—almost always a white, heterosexual male—must righteously vanquish the evil outlaws or savages—almost always Native Americans or some other miscegenated figure—for the continued stability of society. The binary logic behind this sense of moral absolutism favored idealistic characteristics

³⁶ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film*.

³⁷ Wright, *Six Guns and Society*. In an essay titled “The Professional Western: South of the Border,” Noel Carroll provided a similar analysis of the classical plot, one doubtlessly influenced by Wright. He wrote, “[The gunfighter] comes upon a situation where positive social forces are in conflict with a group of antagonists, noteworthy for their superior talent for violence. Initially, the hero avoids involvement in the conflict, but eventually enters it on the side of society, defeating assorted villains, to the advantage of whatever the [text] regards as positive social forces. The hero is marked by special abilities, especially martial ones. And, persuaded by reasons of justice, he comes to pit his virtually mythic prowess against the forces of oppression.” Noel Carroll, “The Professional Western: South of the Border” in *Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western*. pg. 47.

associated to Christian values, such as belief in God, monogamy, pacifism (unless required), and loyalty to the community. Additionally, this moral absolutism took cues from American Exceptionalism, emphasizing individuality, self-reliance, and liberty. These values were placed onto a spectrum where whites, most typically the Cowboy, were on the side of ‘good,’ and non-whites (Indians, Mexicans, etc.) were placed on the side of ‘evil’, for in this fiction they represented everything that the settlers and the Cowboy were not.

These narratives often demanded that the hero be honorable and passive, but quick and deadly with a gun or even his own bare hands should the need arise. Film scholar John Lenihan writes that “The Western translated a relatively brief segment of American history into an idealization of socially responsible individualism, of a transitional social order both needing and permitting personal freedom and the exercise of individual power” (15).³⁸ As such, the mythic white, heterosexual male protagonist gave a vicarious fantasy for viewers in which he enforced justice against ‘evil’ others in a simplistic moral universe with the intrinsic authority of his status in society and the weaponry he uses to ensure that this authority is recognized. This was a world where “a man could do what he had to do with an instinctive natural awareness of right and wrong” (15).³⁹ The narrative of these idols always took place in the latter half of the 19th century, between the 1830’s and the 1860’s, so that the moral absolutism of the conflicts that appeared on screen would not be tainted by the uncertainties and problems of the contemporary world, though they clearly offered resolution for just such uncertainties and problems, and often in the context of racialized or marginalized conflict.

The deliberate manufacturing of these heroes as white heterosexual males was intended to appeal to the racial and cultural hegemony in the United States. African Americans almost never appeared in Classic Western fiction and films.⁴⁰ What little appearances African Americans did make in the Western was often as a representation of stereotypes, such as the steamboat pilot in *Bend of the River*.⁴¹ Other ethnicities, such as Mexicans, occupied positions that ranged from

³⁸ John H. Lenihan, *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film*.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Four for more on this. The most notable example of African Americans appearing in Western films come from Oscar Micheaux and his work, of which the dissertation will expand on in Chapter Four. Beyond his work however, Classic Western films generally did not emphasize or even attempt to represent African Americans. In literature, they were equally absent, though there are more exceptions here to examine, such as the work of Pauline Hopkins, again to be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

⁴¹ *Bend of the River*, directed by Anthony Mann. The steamboat pilot is played by Stephen Fetchit.

amusing sidekick to menacing bandit, but they rarely played heroic leads.⁴² Women were similarly excluded from important roles, and were usually present and sometimes functioned as elements in the story, but rarely with any capacity to change the course of events beyond serving as a love interest for the Cowboy.⁴³

Jane Tompkins writes that “precious though [women] presumably are since so much blood is shed to save them, their lives are devalued by the narrative, which focuses exclusively on what men do. Westerns pay practically no attention to women’s experience” (41).⁴⁴ Almost all canonical Classic Westerns are believed to ignore females and African Americans, or acknowledged them only peripherally as subjects to the dominion of Cowboy hegemony. That does not mean they did not appear in Westerns, but rather that they were seen only as rigidly defined characters often caught up helplessly in the flow of the narrative, believed to be serving as they did to the white male protagonists who were the focal points of all action in the Western. As Michael Coyne asserts, “What the genre actually reinforced was not white *supremacy* but white *centrality*” (4).⁴⁵

Native Americans, who formed such an integral part of the Classic West in the popular imagination of both Americans and those abroad, were stereotyped characters with predestined places in the archetypal Classic Western plot, portrayed as ‘Indians’ rather than Natives. The roots of the Classic Western’s depiction of Native Americans lie in 19th century books like James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* and Robert Montgomery Bird’s *Nick of the Woods*. These were followed by a plethora of dime novels that created the frontier for readers in the Eastern United States and abroad, painting a picture of a land filled with adventure, danger, and plenty of hostile, ‘savage natives’ whose eradication was necessary for the success of an advancing civilization.

The popularity of Wild West shows, along with the fiction and film produced, encouraged through entertainment a belief system in the characteristics and traits—even in the very humanity—of the ‘Indian’ as the villain of the West. These long, popular entertainment shows

⁴² An exception to this is Zorro from the 1957 *Zorro* television series, but this is but a single exception in a genre otherwise filled with Mexican villains and damsels to be rescued. Notably though, he is a recurring favorite in both television and film, with the most recent edition having been made in 1998 called *The Mask of Zorro*.

⁴³ The most obvious exception to this rule would be in the 1935 film *Annie Oakley* by George Stevens, and in many adaptations following. The fact that Oakley was an actual historical figure whose fame in literature, film, and theater were based on her prowess and success is just another example of how audiences would prefer a fictional successful male to a non-fictional successful woman in their viewing experience of Westerns.

⁴⁴ Tompkins, Jane P. *West of Everything: the Inner Life of Westerns*.

⁴⁵ Coyne, Michael. *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western*.

codified a view of Native Americans that would forge for many a lasting stereotype, often fixated around the common dichotomy between brutal killers and peaceful, but uncivilized barbarians.⁴⁶ Such typecasting within the Classic Western developed into two predominant stereotypes, the first of which is the “ignoble savage”, and the second being the “noble savage.” The former was cunning, brutal, and unrelentingly murderous—all face paint, headdresses, and war whoops. The ‘ignoble savage’ was the clever and dangerous Geronimo in John Ford’s *Stagecoach* blended with the monstrous Magua in Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*: naturally inclined toward violence, finding pleasure in the torturing and murder of others, most often whites.

The “noble savage” was a simplistic and peaceful ‘creature’ who was one with the natural world yet ultimately powerless before the superior white hegemonic civilizations. The ‘noble savage’s’ overt subservience to the protagonist was the presentation of a Native American stereotype ‘recognizing’ in a variety of Classic Western texts and films the inherent superiority of white men.⁴⁷ Regarding the Native American in Classic Westerns, Philip French writes in *Westerns*:

At best he was the noble savage of Fenimore Cooper, sharing the same qualities of primitive grandeur which resided in the challenge of the wild terrain and harsh climate. At worst he followed a tradition established by early Victorian melodrama: he was treacherous, bloodthirsty, uncompromising, threatening rape, mutilation and death. (78)⁴⁸

Here, the ‘Indian’ in Classic Westerns functioned as the ultimate symbol of evil, providing an unrepentant antagonist for the heroic white male to justify his colonizing efforts westward and the brutality needed in establishing himself as hegemon.

In the consideration of film, few movies were more representative of the Classic Western than John Ford’s *My Darling Clementine* (1946), and the film’s protagonist, Wyatt Earp, is similarly engaged in both the establishment of the white male as hegemon and in the purging of the West of the other. The film is a retelling of the Wyatt Earp’s gunfight at the O.K. Corral,

⁴⁶ Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, pp. 7-15. The phrase “Noble Savage” is of key interest here, for even at their best the eradication or disappearance of the Native American thus implied a success for the United States.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 7-12; Michael Hilger, *The American Indian in Film*. pp. 1-4; *Stagecoach*, directed by John Ford; *The Last of the Mohicans*, directed by Michael Mann. In the latter film, the villain Magua infamously killed a white man by cutting out his heart and eating it.

⁴⁸ Philip French. *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre*.

focusing on one of the central myths of the American West.⁴⁹ Earp dutifully sets about with purging the town of those elements which threaten the stability of society and his own ability to govern the town, most notably a drunkard of an ‘Indian’ and a sleazy mixed-race mestizo woman. “What kind of a town is this, anyway? Selling liquor to Indians. Indian, get out of town and stay out” he says after stopping and then exiling the drunken Charlie from shooting up a saloon.⁵⁰ Their removal is seen as key to the establishment of a strong and respectable town, for the ‘Indian’ and the other non-whites do not belong in the West. Or so the Classic Western might have us believe.

Ultimately, the movie celebrated the victory of law over anarchy and racial others. What follows in the film is the gradual development of a civilized town in the West—an idea which is symbolized in the famous scene of the community dance. Here, Earp gracefully moves across the screen with the eponymous Clementine, the town’s schoolteacher fresh from the East. According to Coyne, “*Clementine* celebrates the West and America as a perfectible society, but true citizenship therein is morally and racially exclusionist” (40).⁵¹ The reason for their celebration is also clear: the Cowboy has removed the other, and the white American West is free to prosper in racial exclusion.

1.3.0 Contemporary Scholarly Studies: Expanding Upon and Filling in the Gaps of Current Research into the Western

Current studies into the following chapters of the dissertation are scattered, with most focusing on the Revisionist Western in terms of film. Few scholars actually emphasize the role of literature when looking at the Western, a point I seek to change by incorporating a study into only a few films and a greater range of literature. Although contemporary scholars call the Revisionist Western many things—New Western, Post-Western, Neo Western—they are referring to the same collection of texts based on the same perceived qualities. Some authors, like Matthew Carter in his 2014 *Myth of the Westerner: New Perspectives on Hollywood’s Frontier Narrative*, do question the divide between the Classic (or as he refers to it, ‘Classical’) and Revisionist Western:

⁴⁹ In the story, ‘noble’ Earp, played by Henry Fonda, is pitted against the villainous Clanton family. *My Darling Clementine* belongs to a sub-genre that might be called the “town Western,” wherein the movie features a reluctant hero who agrees to clean up Tombstone only after the Clantons murder one of his younger brothers.

⁵⁰ *My Darling Clementine*, directed by John Ford.

⁵¹ Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*, pg. 40.

I look to offer a series of alternative arguments towards such popular interpretations of the Western...to question the professed aesthetic and ideological-mythological functions of the introspective categories: “‘classical’, ‘revisionist’, and ‘post’...[These] do not speak for the whole genre, and are inadequate terms for establishing a generic blueprint by which one can place films chronologically. (4)

However, Carter’s emphasis lies solely in film. Carter does point out that scholars divide the Western between “classical” Westerns, which he believes are ideologically conservative and perpetuate the myth of the frontier, and Revisionist Westerns, which he argues began in the 1960’s and suggests that they are a critique of American Western myth. Carter does not, however, question the divide between Classic and Revisionist Westerns in such a way that suggests the division is arbitrary, choosing instead to maintain these distinctions while ignoring elements in the Classic Western which are Revisionist in nature.

Similarly, Neil Campbell’s 2013 *Post-Westerns: Cinema, Region, West* and Lee Broughton’s 2016 *Critical Perspectives on the Western: From A Fistful of Dollars to Django Unchained* examine the Revisionist Western. Both Campbell and Broughton focus their research on the Revisionist Western without any attempt to locate connections which might challenge divisions between the Classic Western and Revisionist Western. They argue that the Classic Western focuses on themes of community, national identity, and resolution whereas the ‘post-Westerns’, or Revisionist Western’s, are thoroughly criticized without romanticization or mythologizing. However, again, my study examines canonical Classic Westerns which contain these same criticizing elements, something that they do not do.

Authorship on African Americans in the Classic Western are far rarer in terms of scholarly research, but there has been a notable uptick in the research of a ‘black West’ in approximately the past decade. Blake Allmendinger’s 2005 *Imagining the African American West* presents what might be some of the most insightful analysis into studies of race and ethnicity in the American Western. Although Allmendinger does look at Oscar Micheaux and the significance of the American frontier to African Americans, he does not locate the author or the frontier to the Classic Western as I do. Instead, he locates these authors to a niche genre of the Western, titled ‘the Black West’. Excluding these authors from the Classic Western creates—however unintentionally—a hierarchy between the works of white authors and African American authors, as if one produced a ‘more traditional’ Western. Michael K. Johnson’s 2014 *Hoo-Doo Cowboys and Bronze*

Buckaroos: Conceptions of the African American West also provides an in-depth look into neglected African American authors and historical figures who operated within the Western, exploring as well the works of Oscar Micheaux and many others. Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway's 2001 *African Americans on the Western Frontier* provides a collection of essays which address African Americans in the West, though much of their work focuses on the historical presence of African Americans on the frontier rather than on their literary or filmic accomplishments. However, as with Allmendinger, these scholars also make a distinction between the works of these African American authors and the Classic Western, perpetuating a limited view of the Classic Western and the authors associated with it despite, as I argue, their contributions to the genre and use of its themes and elements.

While there is a plethora of works which explore the role of Native Americans in Westerns, emphasizing their marginalized status and the dehumanizing consequences these representations had on real life Native Americans, none locate these authors to the Western genre as contributors in the way that I do. These studies emphasize the later works of Revisionist Western authors and the Native American Renaissance, though recently there has been a renewed interest in the field of Native Americans and Western Literature of the 19th Century. For recent literature which looks at the colonial aspects of cultural confrontation between Native Americans and Euro-Americans, Sean P. Harvey's 2015 *Native Tongues: Colonialism and Race from Encounter to the Reservation* is a cultural history that recounts the impact of 18th and 19th Century linguistic theories of Native American languages on the development of Euro-American ideas of race, emphasizing the construction of an ideology concerning racial hierarchy and Native Americans. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower's 2017 "'Do We Reverse the Medal?': Settler Guilt, the Indian Speech, and the Untold Side of the Story", along with Alex Trimble Young and Lorenzo Veracini's 2017 "'If I am native to anything': Settler Colonial Studies and Western American Literature" both approach the construction of Native American representation in the context of the Western. Weaver-Hightower's focus on the construction of the Native American as the 'Indian' in colonial literature and the voice Native Americans gave to critique that construction highlights a self-awareness for the racist depiction on the part of the settlers. Similarly, Young and Veracini's focus on Frederick Jackson Turner's construction of a settler-colonial study in the context of regionalism examines the settler mindset as wishful thinking for embodying the same position of the Native American. However, none of these authors locate the works of 19th Century Native Americans to the Western,

and those that do attempt an association almost exclusively on the role of white authors depicting Native Americans rather than on the actual works of Native American authors, politicians, and activists. To the contrary, my research explores this potential and expands the frontier to incorporate the works of Native Americans beyond the periodization that has been arbitrarily given to the Classic Western.

To reiterate, these authors emphasize film rather than literature, and when they do extend their studies into the literary they do not address the Classic Western's anticipation and use of elements in the Revisionist Western, nor do they connect marginalized African American and Native American authors to the Classic Western. I draw a line between the Classic Western to the Revisionist Western to highlight subversive elements in the Classic Western, marginalized authors, and the malleability of the frontier when non-whites employ it in their own writing. My study is on how our definition of the Classic Western and the Western expands when arbitrary barriers of exclusion are removed. This breathes new life into the study of the Western and allows for a reexamination of how we understand and define the canonical Classic Western.

1.4.0 My Dissertation in Overview: Defining a New Approach to the Western

I will begin my research into the Classic and Revisionist Western with an overview of both genres. Chapter Two covers how the Classic Western is interpreted and understood most commonly in both film and fiction. I discuss the origins of the Western as a genre, and explore the definition and symbolic use of the Cowboy, the genre's protagonist. These symbolic uses include, but are not limited to, concepts of freedom, liberty, independence, mobility, and skill, either for violence or the mastery of both work and animals.⁵² I discuss his believed role as a representative of heteronormative, white masculine hegemony and how he figures into many readings of his character as a champion of conservative values. From here, I examine Walter Van Tilburg Clark's novel *The Ox-Bow Incident* and two films starring John Wayne, *Red River* and *The Searchers*, looking at Wayne as arguably the most iconic Cowboy figure of the Western genre. I will at this point discuss the Revisionist Western as a genre and the parameters that have become accepted for the ways in which it distinguishes itself from the Classic Western.

⁵² For more concerning violence and its use in the Western, as well as how it has been used toward redefining boundaries, see Schniedermann, Wibke. "'South' is not 'down' any more than 'North' is not 'up'": Jumping Scales in *True Grit*," pp. 61-76.

Chapter Three addresses the problematic relationship between the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western, asserting a direct correlation between elements within both genres. As I demonstrate in this chapter, qualities of resistance and criticism toward normative socio-cultural values—ranging from masculine identity, hegemonic socio-cultural institutions, providing women with agency, non-normative relationships, and the use of violence—are clearly present in the Classic Western despite being themes associated with the Revisionist Western. As I contest, the presence of these elements is but the first example that I will provide concerning the false division between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western. I assert that the definition of the Revisionist Western lies neither in the content produced within the Western nor in the authors who produced this content, but rather in the readership and what they found to be acceptable for each genre, as a diversity of authors and clearly revisionist elements have always been a part of the Western.

My analysis for Chapter Three focuses on the works of Owen Wister's 1902 *The Virginian*, Zane Grey's 1919 *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and Jack Schaefer's 1949 *Shane*. These novels are considered to be some of the most influential canonical Classic Westerns, and as such establish the archetype of the Cowboy and the symbolic function he would serve within the Western. However, as I argue in this chapter, the protagonists each in their own way reflect the authors' resistance to normative socio-cultural expectations, espousing favor in non-normative masculine identities and values over their own supposed hegemonic superiority and the expectations of the socio-cultural West. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate how these texts openly defy the normative socio-cultural West to encourage the freedom, independence, and equality of marginalized figures. Ultimately, I discuss how these authors focus their attention on future generation's progressive values to produce a more open-minded and egalitarian West, resistant to normative hegemonic figures.

But these texts are limited in their true accomplishments for subverting the white, heteronormative and hegemonic narratives of Classic Westerns and in demonstrating the true diversity of the Western in the 19th and early 20th century. In order for this analysis to cover the breadth of the Western in the early 20th century, I go beyond the attempts of authors such as Zane Grey and Owen Wister and look at the truly niche, marginalized fiction of the Classic Western. As this study demonstrates, Classic Westerns which contain within their narratives critiques on socio-cultural systems of oppression, such as *The Virginian* or *Riders of the Purple Sage*, provide this

criticism backhandedly, sometimes even in contrast to the overt narrative conclusions of their stories.⁵³

Chapter Four thus expands my reading of Classic Western works to include the fiction of African American men and women. I further my assessment of the Classic Western sharing Revisionist Western elements by including the works of Oscar Micheaux and Pauline Hopkins. I argue that both authors employed the same symbolic effects that Owen Wister and other Western authors did to present a positive representation of African American identity toward the goal of racial uplift ideology. I begin the chapter by exploring how the Classic Western does include the works of marginalized figures, and the implications for our reading of the genre based on this inclusion.

By looking at Oscar Micheaux's 1917 *The Homesteader*, I show how the African American Jean Baptiste represents a positive Cowboy figure to counteract racist stereotypes of African American men in fiction and film. I contest that Micheaux successfully subverts the belief of the Classic Western's limited canon to employ ideas of freedom, independence, liberty, growth, and opportunity for African Americans. My emphasis here is in the comparison that Micheaux makes between dichotomies of values between the East and West, as well as in positive and negative representations of African American identity. Additionally, I explore how the introduction of mixed-race relations and their children produces a message in *The Homesteader* that encourages positive coexistence and potential egalitarianism between racial groups.

From here I explore the powerful work of Pauline Hopkin's 1902 *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*, published the same year as Owen Wister's *The Virginian* but often neglected in considerations of Westerns published at the time. I argue that as an African American woman, Hopkin's *Winona* diversifies the Classic Western in ways which were believed to have only occurred in the Revisionist Western, encouraging equality for all racial, gender, and class based groups. These authors positively represent African American identity, interracial relationships, egalitarianism, and a future for marginalized figures while simultaneously critiquing the United States and the impact of Manifest Destiny.

⁵³ For example, the Virginian's bemoaning of the socio-cultural West's expectations of him to confront Trampas and, in turn, fulfill his marital obligations with the establishment of an enterprising and successful family are entirely contrasted by his complete and utter acquiescence to these demands.

The final chapter of my dissertation considers Native Americans within the context of the Classic Western. I discuss their use as stereotypes and ‘Indians’ throughout the genre, examining how they were dehumanized through the conquest of westward expansion by colonialism in America, and how that was portrayed through the images of the ‘noble savage’ and the ‘ignoble savage’. I present stereotypes such as these, as well as the elements that the Native American Renaissance operated against, focusing on the use of resilience literature and Gerald Vizenor’s theory of ‘survivance’ as a defining characteristic for the genre. My study concludes with an expansion of the Classic Western to incorporate Native American authors writing in the 19th Century through a redefinition of the frontier that emphasizes the idea of a confrontation between two cultures and a construction of ideals which mirror the Cowboy of the Classic Western. I expand the Classic Western away from arbitrary periodization and emphasize a synchronic link between the works of earlier Native American writers and activists of the 19th Century who desire similar thematic ideas associated to the Cowboy and the Classic Western: freedom, liberty, individualism from governmental forces, and a future for their people, focusing my research on the works of George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess.

Chapter Two: Examining the Classic and Revisionist Western, and the Cowboy Within

2.1.0 Introduction

This chapter will define the Classic and Revisionist Westerns, look at how they are constructed in literature and in film, and examine how they relate to one another. The study here places emphasis on the role of the protagonist within these narratives, the Cowboy. Almost always a white, heterosexual male in Classic Westerns, the Cowboy's significance as an archetypal character in the Western genre lies in his pivotal role relative to the formation of an American mythology concerning the Westward expansion of the nation in American fiction and film.⁵⁴ The project here will continue the examination from Chapter One on how the romanticizing of Westward expansion through this character establishes normative values which justified and encouraged the socio-cultural subordination of women and minorities to white male figures.

The reality of the Cowboy, however, contradicts his construction as a literary and filmic figure. This contradiction aided in the creation of the Revisionist Western as it reexamines the role of the 'Other' and uses a critical lens on the values and processes which maintained the Cowboy as a cultural force in literature and film. The chapter will conclude with a reading of literary and film examples of Revisionist Westerns that illustrate this shift in criticism toward older, authoritarian, racist, and hegemonic positions.⁵⁵ Special attention will be given to the portrayal of a younger generation's response to these normative values, with progressive beliefs replacing older conservative ideologies.

In associating hegemony to cultural analysis, specifically through the lens of the Western genre's Cowboy character, I will define how his construction served as a means for normative beliefs and behaviors in the socio-cultural fabric of America. The Cowboy's depiction of white heteronormative masculinity as a ruling class in a gendered, racialized, and class-based hierarchy finds relevance today given the influence the character had on audiences. This influence ranges

⁵⁴ For more on the use of the Cowboy in the creation of an American mythology, see Richard Slotkin's 1973 *Regeneration through Violence* and John G. Cawelti's 1970/1 *The Six-Gun Mystique*.

⁵⁵ The concept of hegemony is first explored by Antonio Gramsci, written throughout his *Prison Notebooks* between the years of 1926, when he was arrested, and his death in 1935. Gramsci's original usage of the term was a lynchpin for his political discourse concerning his experience with Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime. The principle of hegemony in its broadest definition is that people are not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas. Thomas R. Bates writes in "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony" that "The concept of hegemony is really a very simple one, though grand in its impact. It means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class" (352).

from the turn of the 20th century, starting with Owen Wister's 1902 *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* to today. This oppressive form of normative establishment in the cultural production of the Classic Western is supported by the writing of Alan Bullock and Stephen Trombley in their 1999 *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*. Here, they write that cultural hegemony is "the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class who manipulate the culture of that society so that their imposed, ruling-class worldview becomes the accepted cultural norm" (387-8). This translates through the Cowboy that the ideas which he espouses, such as his beliefs, explanations, perceptions, and values are both natural and inevitable. Though the Cowboy and his authors may suggest that these views on gender, class, and race and their roles in society are for the betterment of all, it is an artificial social construct that truly only benefits the Cowboy and those he represents: white, heteronormative masculine figures.

The Westerns this chapter looks at include the brilliant 1940 *The Ox-bow Incident* by Walter Van Tilburg Clark, and two films featuring John Wayne, the most iconic representation of the Cowboy in film history whose image signifies the Classic Western. These films, Howard Hawks' *Red River* and John Ford's *The Searchers*, both transform John Wayne's archetypal Cowboy character into one that is critical of the oppressive and violent ideologies the Cowboy is believed to encourage. Along with the novel, both films are renowned for their roles in developing and defining the Revisionist Western genre.

The Classic Western's assertion of a storied American history upon the western-most frontier of the expanding United States of America is, on the surface, a straight-forward fable. The genre's narrative romanticizes conquest while positioning social and racial classes beneath a singular white, male entity. Broadly, the Classic Western encourages the belief that this process was both purgative of negative elements and characters, but that it was also a confirmation of the American figure's success via the trials and tribulations one faced on the frontier. Specifically, the Classic Western became the de-facto politicized narrative concerning the rise and vindication of the white American male as hegemon. As Steven McVeigh states in *The American Western*, "Whether popular or serious, romantic or mature, [Classic Westerns] have an element of political purpose, of conveying values and institutions" (39).

In contrast, the Revisionist Western is understood as a social evolution of the Classic Western, confronting these older values and institutions with "the strength, conviction and directness [to] challenge established ideas" (McVeigh 143). In addition to this, the Revisionist

Western shifted focus toward traditionally absent or marginalized characters, including women and African Americans, and marked westward expansion as a Myth of Conquest rather than a romanticized narrative of national growth and development.⁵⁶ The Revisionist Western also brought new perspectives to the experiences of Native Americans and other minorities. In short, the genre was argued to have reexamined the Western as a narrative that obscured its ethnic, cultural, and environmental conquest as romantic, heroic, and most of all, unavoidable, presenting non-normative narratives and beliefs into the socio-cultural mainstream of America.

2.2.0 The Classic Western

For all its popularity, the Classic Western has at times reached surprising audiences. As an example, film critic Philip French presents an anecdote about Joseph Stalin. According to French, Stalin, the then Soviet dictator, was known for watching Westerns with his subordinates while spouting out his ideological criticism, often in direct response to the values these Westerns espoused. Regardless of Stalin's sincere dislike for what these films represented, he continued to order print after print of the new releases.⁵⁷ Whether this particular anecdote is simply fiction or not, the idea behind it highlights two features of the Western that are worth exploring: the potency of the Western to serve as a political flashpoint, and its power to act as a symbol of American culture.⁵⁸ The story of Stalin's obsession with the genre places it only around mid-20th century, when the Western was starting its nascent exploration into abstract social issues. At the time, the majority of readers and viewers still considered the Western to be likened with "horse operas,"⁵⁹

⁵⁶ For more on the Myth of Conquest, refer to Chapter One of the dissertation, as well as the following quote from Armando José Prats in his 2002 book *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*: "The Myth of Conquest is no less *appropriative* than is Conquest itself. What is Conquest if not omnivorously acquisitive—"just robbery with violence," as Joseph Conrad might have put it, "aggravated murder on a great scale"? And so Conquest's *mythology* presupposes the methodology of historical and cultural appropriation. I am referring to the notion, virtually enjoying the status of a first axiom, that the mythological alterations of historical events—*regardless, and often because, of the resulting distortions*—influence the national character, and that the selfsame alterations, taken as system, structure, and pattern, become not only the major constituents of American culture but also the presumed methodology that articulates it" (3, italics his).

⁵⁷ Philip French, *Westerns*, pg. 37.

⁵⁸ At least, insofar as this dissertation's focus is concerned, reinforced values that supported white, heterosexual males as hegemonic forces in socio-cultural America.

⁵⁹ The term "horse opera" was common up until the 1950's as a synonym for a Western. It was originally coined by silent-era Western star William S. Hart. Though its usage has faded considerably in recent decades, it still appeared occasionally until the 1980's. The term is unfamiliar, however, to most modern readers. Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl Marx to Sergio Leone*. pg. 197.

pleasant and digestible texts and films that were on the surface ultimately inconsequential for the complicated issues plaguing society.

The typical view of the Western in the early to mid-20th century was, as Jane Tompkins writes, “vastly lower than what it deserves”, adding that “[p]eople think of Westerns as light entertainment, adolescent and escapist” (10).⁶⁰ The idea that the Western was and is only a fun diversion, distracting enough as the dime-novel or the generic picture show, exists to this day, as Michael Agresta states when he writes that “Westerns provide many timeless pleasures—tough guy heroes, action set pieces on horseback, adventures in magnificent landscapes, good triumphing over evil.”⁶¹

However, Agresta misses the point of the genre and fails to comprehend the subtext of these narratives. Being more than simply a form of popular entertainment with easy to understand ‘good versus evil’ conflicts set in the arid American West, the Western concerns itself with the social and political events of the era it is produced in. Tompkins supports this claim, arguing that “there is nothing trivial about the needs they answer, the desires they arouse, or the vision of life they portray. One of the hallmarks of the genre is an almost desperate earnestness” (10-11). This desperate earnestness in the Western is not a quality that is unique to either the mid-20th Century, or the Revisionist Western which finds its origins in the 1950’s. Rather, even in the Western’s humble beginnings as both literature and film, the genre has reflected an awareness of its own imperialism, either in support of normative practices or criticizing it in subtle ways. Because of this large role within American popular culture, I argue that Westerns have existed as a mirror of the national consciousness, reflecting the various subjects of contemporary events and public dialogue.⁶²

The exportation of these values brought with them the toleration of a fading for the boundaries of moral and law. This translated into the individual taking matters of justice and conflict into their own hands. These figures, typified by the figure of the Cowboy, stood above all

⁶⁰ Tompkins, *West of Everything*. The truth to Tompkins’ assertion became increasingly apparent as the years passed after World War II and Westerns took themselves ever more seriously as important cultural documents.

⁶¹ Agresta, Michael. “How the Western was Lost (and why it Matters).”

⁶² For current examples, look at the spate of books and movies about imperialism that have been released in recent years, such as Noam Chomsky’s 2001 *9-11*, Greg Grandin’s 2007 *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*, and Derek Rubin and Jaap Verheul’s 2009 *American Multiculturalism after 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives*. These texts respond to the contemporary concern about United States imperialist foreign policy, particularly after larger events such as 9/11 and the US’ war on terror.

others in Western literature as independent and indomitable, operating under the belief that their actions were for both the betterment and safe-guarding of society.

Society in Classic Westerns was often under rule of a different kind of law, a ‘frontier justice’ which typically stems from the individual’s masculine codes of chivalry and honor, developed as they were upon a primal setting where they can be named as ‘good’ in a test against the untamed wilderness and its ‘savages’. The frontier not yet being a part of American civilization, ‘frontier justice’ thus became the law of the land. This form of law emphasized different sorts of principles predominantly defined by men concerning the allowance of non-whites and women, a form of hegemonic masculinity which could, and often did, contain the potential for violence.

The popularity of the Western was ultimately found in the Cowboy’s representation of American Exceptionalism and the nation’s westward expansion. As a figure, he embodied a form of heroism that put the Western genre into mythic proportions. The Classic Western emphasized the heroism of the Cowboy, with their abundance of vigorous action in colorful settings, and the genre’s attention to such values as courage, independence, self-reliance, and the stoical indifference to pain became irreversibly tied to the Cowboy as an icon. The Cowboy, in turn, confronted the dangerous elements and characters of the West, often depicted as the ‘other’. This construction of the Cowboy as a character is, without question, the textual reifications of fantasies for idealistic representations of masculine hegemons, symbolic of the power and authority seen as necessary in laying claim to and in shaping the West.⁶³

2.1.2 The Cowboy: His Origins as Both Imagined and Real

Few figures within American literature and film are as monumental as that of the Cowboy, resonating a set of values and beliefs intended to relate both the history of the nation’s founding and development, as well as the direction it would take. Extending Sieglinde Lemke’s poignant analysis on the evolving socio-cultural relevance of physical American monuments in “Liberty: A Transnational Icon” to literary and psychological constructions, we see a similar impact on the use of characters like the Cowboy. Lemke states that “National monuments are by definition landmarks that at once construct and celebrate a nation’s collective memory. In the United States

⁶³ See J. Wickersham’s *Hegemony and the Greek Historians* for more on hegemony and the origins of the concept and how it was later developed by Antonio Gramsci.

they almost unanimously presuppose and support the notion of American exceptionalism” (193).⁶⁴ Though her focus lies on the Statue of Liberty, the Cowboy similarly resonates values of American exceptionalism, celebrating as an embodiment of success an imagined collective memory of the nation’s progress over time.

Introduced as a secondary character, the Cowboy soon became the star of dime novels thanks to the success of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show*,⁶⁵ quickly rising to the starring role in the reenactments of Western conquest. Through the eyes of Buffalo Bill Cody, the Cowboy and his revolver were how and why the West was ever won at all. In fact, dime novels and the Wild West Show influenced one another and helped the other to grow: the dime Western had created an audience ready to receive the Wild West Show; the Wild West Show produced the drama of the Wild West that the dime novel would recreate and further build on. Through this process and inherent in the meaning of his very figure, the narrative of the white hegemonic masculinity rising through the social strata finds its origins in the characters which would inspire the Cowboy. With the culmination of his character, he would find realization of his beliefs in the Cowboy striding into the frontier.

The popularity of the Cowboy in the Western genre was matched by the diminished presence and role of the Cowboy in reality, who was in truth a poor shell of his fictionalized self. The existence of the real Cowboy was surprisingly short in the American West, running from approximately the end of the Civil War to the early 1880’s, coinciding with the end of far running cattle drives in the northern United States of America. Unforgiving working conditions made cattle-herding an unfavorable means of making a living, a fact which tended to be reflected in the character of the men seeking such labor. As noted by Stephen McVeigh in *The American Western*, “the real cowboys of the West were delinquents, at worst, criminals capable of any amount of excess violence” (33). Their life was more often than not tied to that of the cattle baron who owned the herd and who needed the Cowboy in order to conduct business. In the case of falling prices and market collapse, the cattle baron would leave and with him so too did the Cowboy.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Lemke, Sieglinde. “Liberty: A Transnational Icon.” pp. 193-218.

⁶⁵ See Richard Etulain’s *Telling Western Stories* for more information concerning the first dime novel cowboys, p. 22-25. Additionally, Jeffrey Wallmann’s *The Western. Parables of the American Dream* has an excellent section concerning the earlier incarnations of the Cowboy before his definition in Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*, p. 55-92.

⁶⁶ Lewis Atherton *The Cattle Kings* pp. 241-271; Richard W. Slatta *Cowboys* pp. 22, 23. The cattle baron was, for all intents and purposes, the most influential figure in the West sitting atop the social strata therein. He dictated not only the direction that the region would take concerning its agrarian development, but also which political leaders would best suit his needs, and whom he would hire. While the Cowboy fulfilled the fantasy elements of establishing white

Contrasting with the appealing figure of the narrative Cowboy, as exemplified in *The Virginian*, the real ‘cowpuncher’ had a repugnant lifestyle that revolved around indulgence and hard, tedious work with little pay and less security.⁶⁷ As Wallace Stegner puts it, quoted in Robert Rebein’s *Hicks, Tribes, and Dirty Realists*:

The cowboy in practice was and is an overworked, underpaid hireling, almost as homeless and dispossessed as a modern crop worker, and his fabled independence was and is chiefly the privilege of quitting his job in order to go looking for another just as bad. (114)

The Cowboy’s heavy workload naturally tended to wind down to almost nothing during the winter months of the year when there was little for him to do, and so too would his contracts end. The resulting idleness produced a need for the Cowboy to look for work, and so the famed ‘mobile’ nature of the Cowboys—the iconic symbol of the wandering and ‘fiddle-footed’ (to quote Shane) mysterious Cowboy—was caused by nothing more than poor seasonal working conditions. He was, in reality, the very sort of person that the fictionalized Cowboy would have detested: the real American Cowboy was often and in many ways uncommitted to the tasks that were given to him, and perhaps most damningly, loyal only so long as it benefitted him.

The difference in the qualities between the fictive and real Cowboy extend to their position within the hierarchy of the socio-cultural West.⁶⁸ The reality of Cowboys (or Vaqueros, depending on where they were and where they came from) was that they were viewed as workers on the bottom of social ladders, marginalized as a necessary but unreliable part of running the West. To the contrary, the fictive Cowboy was lionized into the paragon of the advancing national values of the United States, reconfigured to be the hero of the American Western frontier and the champion of settlers, the weak, and the fledgling nation. A wide range of Cowboys in the new world, from

masculine hegemony in the West through the film and literature of the Western, it was ultimately the cattle baron in reality who would benefit the most from the Cowboy’s narrative. Atherton, *The Cattle Kings*. (241-271).

⁶⁷ ‘Cowpuncher’ is an earlier name for the Cowboy, referring to his focus on cattle and the management of them. Wister prefers the term for the Virginian, but the title ‘Cowboy’ was quickly adopted following the novel, shifting focus from the work to the individual.

⁶⁸ Wister’s novel effectively goes to great lengths in order to glamorize this lifestyle, despite all evidence to the contrary.

Mexico to South and North America,⁶⁹ occupied a low step in the social ladder, yet amazingly they were made into icons in novels, popular literature and even nationalistic epic poems.⁷⁰

Contrary to popular and widespread—even international—opinion, the Anglo Cowboy was not a purely American character. In fact, his creation was highly indebted to the Mexican vaqueros who had first developed the tradition of driving cattle along trails when moving Texan herds to the Spanish controlled Louisiana territory during the 18th century. These vaqueros also taught him how to handle wild cattle in arid and unyielding land.⁷¹ While the fictive American Western Cowboy's independence, strength, and mobility were seen as symbolic of the developing and expanding nationalism, tied as it was to Manifest Destiny, for the Vaquero these same traits developed out of a simple necessity to do their work well.

The fictive Cowboy's passion for these qualities became inevitably tied in with his representation of a racially-based form of masculinity appealing to white audiences. This union created a process of naturalization within American popular culture that equates the image of the American Cowboy to the quintessential American masculinity, extending his representation as such an icon both internally within the United States and abroad. How this naturalization came about and ultimately defined the ideal white masculinity as a hegemonic Cowboy figure would determine its potency then and now, marking him as one of the longest standing archetypal American heroes to date. But this is not to say that the figure of the Classic Western hegemon went wholly unchallenged, left as he was upon his perch. Rather, it is argued that amidst the social upheaval of the 1960's, authors and film makers of the Western took notice of their surroundings and began to criticize their archetypal protagonist. It is this introduction of a self-awareness for the positioning of the Cowboy as a hegemonic figure, and what that entails for women and minorities, that are argued to lie at the core of the Revisionist Western.

2.1.3 The Function of the Cowboy in the Classic Western

One of the key elements of the Classic Western revolves around the actions and adventures of a single Cowboy or drifter, culminating into a violent confrontation with either some racialized

⁶⁹ These often included, but were not limited to: Argentinean gauchos, Mexican vaqueros, Chilean Huasos and Anglo Cowboys in both Canada and the United States. See Slatta's other works: *Comparing Cowboys* 82-98; and *Cowboys* 9-25)

⁷⁰ Slatta, Richard W. *Guachos*, pp. 10-16.

⁷¹ Slatta, Richard W. *Cowboys*, pg. 19.

other, morally corrupt land barons or the economic elite seeking to ruin settlers and farmers. Villains almost always represent an element of corruption in society that is related to greed and an eagerness to engage in violent abuse against rural settlers—whether they are racialized or corrupt because of their upper-class ties, moral corruption stems from their characters and threatens the purity of the developing nation, and so must be confronted and purged. The purgative element of the Classic Western ties into another popular theme: the conquest of the wilderness in the name of civilization as seen in the westward movement. The villains of these Westerns alluded to the challenge of overcoming savagery and corruption in the developing nation while also providing vindication of the protagonist's values, extensions of beliefs for what was understood as positive for the nation's growth.

Glorification of characters who ventured into the wilderness and espoused what Brian W. Dippie and Turner call “frontier spirit” is a staple of the Classic Western,⁷² which provided the Cowboy “circumstances [that] promoted individualism, self-reliance, practicality, optimism, and a democratic spirit that rejected external constraints” (114). The Cowboy in the Classic Western in turn embodied values of American Exceptionalism: individuality, liberty, laissez-faire, populism, and perhaps most importantly, egalitarianism—but believed to be reserved, typically for whites and most often for heterosexual males.

The Cowboy was quick with a gun, almost always dangerous but also restrained, acting only when necessary. The Cowboy also exhibited a talent for every task he put his mind to, a ‘Mary Sue’ (or Marty Stu in his case) in his own right.⁷³ An unbreaking work ethic defined him, and he carried with him an unwritten code of honor which finds its roots in Southern aristocracy. He was also master of the land and of animals, taking to heart God's command that man hold dominion over all animals,⁷⁴ in particular horses as they defined his mobile nature and restlessness. Finally, his presence meant change to the socio-cultural fabric of the literary and filmic West, bringing a transformative power along with him through his often-violent confrontations. The Cowboy was,

⁷² Brian W. Dippie's “American Wests” in *Trails: Toward a New Western History*.

⁷³ Kat Feete describes the concept of both the Mary Sue and the Marty Stu figures in film and fiction, writing that the character “is an idealized and seemingly perfect fictional character. Often this character is recognized as an author insert or wish fulfillment” (‘Who is Mary Sue?’, 2005). The ‘Mary Sue’ name can often be applied to characters of either gender, interestingly enough, though as stated, there is a male equivalent given.

⁷⁴ The English Standard version of the Christian Bible states in Genesis 1:26 “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”.

at least in literature and film, truly his own master, aligning himself only with those who represented the best in moral values.

Immigrants and pioneers into the West would follow what we would now deem ‘the American dream’ toward the frontier, looking for what Dippie calls “a greater measure of human happiness in a land of unrivaled wealth and opportunity” (130). Prior to Turner’s thesis and the creation of the Western genre, movement westward was understood as a means toward improvement in the financial situation and opportunities afforded to most Americans. The journey and the settlement of the frontier was demanding, both physically and psychologically, and it was often at great loss to those who made the attempt. But because of their settlement and the expanse of the nation, following the ethos of Manifest Destiny, the process took on a formative role in the self-perception of the United States of America. All aspects of the West and of the movement *to* the West had achieved a mythological status thanks in large to Turner’s interpretation of history based on the myths that had given the American people an imagined right to expand, and ultimately to the romanticizing narratives that the Classic Western as a genre had made of this interpretation. The American character had renewed itself through both the fiction and films of the Classic Western, and its lens into the creation of this mythological American figure was that of the Cowboy.

2.1.4 Hegemonic Masculinity in the Cowboy, the Hegemonic Cowboy in the Western

In the context of gender politics within the Classic Western,⁷⁵ hegemony brings together imperial dominance to representations of a racialized, class-based masculinity. In establishing white masculinity as the hegemon within the Classic Western, vis-à-vis the archetypal Cowboy character, subordinate identities such as women, non-white men, and men who do not live up to the ideal image of the Cowboy (as Richard Howson states in *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*, ‘subordinate masculinities’) are left in positions beneath the Cowboy’s standing, subject to the order white males lay out for them and their status in society. As Heidi Gottfried argues in “Beyond

⁷⁵ The point of talking about politics here is clarified with a reference to Antonio Gramsci’s argument in his *Prison Notebooks* about politics referring to ‘the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules’, as well as a natural potential to ‘discovery’, to reach some ‘transcendent’ reality that can ‘develop life to a higher level’ (Gramsci 1971: 244). The reference to gender politics also implies a process through which this nature can be opened up and strategies for a new existence of a plurality of masculinities and gender identities developed and implemented, as I will discuss in Chapter Three concerning non-normative masculinities.

patriarchy? Theorising gender and class”, the importance of hegemony is as a “conceptual tool through which certain configurations of practice can be explored in ways that allow for the dissolution of the static opposition between agency and structure” (5-6). The created constructions of power are both reliant on and comprised of the Cowboy’s mobility and the belief in a natural process that has created his character. This comes from the resulting sum of the Cowboy’s cultural and ideological meanings coming together, and it is within the Cowboy that socio-cultural expectations of masculinity of the late 19th and early 20th century in the West find form.

As a performative figure whose dress and mannerisms define the type of masculinity and the ideology inherent in that masculinity, the Cowboy is a part of a hegemonic system. The Cowboy performs his hegemonic positioning through a series of repetitive actions and situations, positioning a racialized and gendered identity within popular American culture as a dominant figure. The performance of the Cowboy’s masculinity is intended to be demonstrative of a position within society that is in control and entirely unrestricted, producing a relationship based on power that favored the white male Cowboy over subordinate identities.

Be it either through the laconic mannerisms in the face of danger or his imposition of a self-made creed over others, or even through the use of tools like that of the gun, the Cowboy’s actions and the dress he wears contribute to his influencing cultural and ideological conceptions of white masculinity. Judith Butler’s essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” discusses the role of gender and its performative nature in culture.⁷⁶ In it, Butler writes that:

...if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (520)

Butler argues that the actions appropriate for men and women have been transmitted to produce a social atmosphere that both maintains and legitimizes a seemingly natural gender binary and creates demands on the individual to fulfill gendered socio-cultural expectations. This binary, however, is anything but egalitarian and has through the popular film and fiction of the Western,

⁷⁶ While this particular essay concerns the nature of theatrical or performative genders in culture, Butler’s later works also touch on this theme and have, in many, contributed to our understanding of how gender functions in society to date. Of further interest is “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*.

produced a white male identity and masculinity that serves as the medium through which the ideal norms and values that men should adhere to, and in turn, that women should submit to.⁷⁷

So then, it must be asked, what are the traits of this hegemonic masculinity as shown in the Western, and just as importantly, how did they come to overwhelm other manifestations of masculinity? One reason for the Cowboy's popularity in the Western is, according to Tompkins, that the character functions as a symbol for freedom, an escapist's avenue from conditions forced upon white males within a modern, industrial society.⁷⁸ The Cowboy is a direct rejection of those anxieties, the crisis of masculinity in the face of women in the work place and the expansion of industrialism to non-men and non-whites.

The Cowboy represents the desires white male readers hold for romanticized notions of socio-cultural norms. The genre, through the lens of the Cowboy, allows for an alternative to an industrial way of life, to social entanglements, the economical struggles men were commonly faced with, and complications concerning political injustice. The Cowboy in the Classic Western is an ideological reference. With this line of thought, the West is both real and imagined; it is a physical region which represents a psychological and spiritual place, and as a physical and psychological region the West in fiction and film is the property of the white heteronormative masculine hegemon, the Cowboy.⁷⁹

Brian Taylor, commenting on the crisis of masculinity, writes in *Responding to Men in Crisis* that "A second pervasive discourse claims that men and masculinity are 'in crisis', not least because of advances made by women and the challenge of feminism" (9). That is to say, it was through the industrialization of the United States in the mid to late 19th century that allowed for women and minorities to compete with white men for jobs that had previously been reserved for them. This had the result of throwing into question the dividing lines between occupations meant for men and women, and in turn their position within socio-cultural America.

Far from being unique, however, the concern over the feminization of labor and the loss of a privileged position for white males is nothing new, and has, as Michael S. Kimmel states that it has "been shown to be a recurrent theme over the last two hundred years" (121).⁸⁰ As such, his authority was always questioned and his place in society seen to be under threat from forces

⁷⁷ Butler argues this performative nature being a means by which subversion can take place.

⁷⁸ *West of Everything*, pg. 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Kimmel, Michael S. "The 'Crisis' of Masculinity in Historical Perspective."

previously understood to be subordinate to his position. Hence, the popularity of the Classic Western in fiction and in film as a means for reestablishing in popular culture a nostalgic vision of what roles white, heterosexual men ought to have in society finds roots beyond the turn of the 19th Century. Michael Kimmel argues in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* that by the end of the 19th Century, white middle-class men were finding the experience of separate spheres increasingly painful yet feared the emasculation that the home seemed to threaten: “Men were excluded from domestic life, unable to experience the love, nurture, and repose that the home supposedly represented. How could a man return to the home without feeling like a wimp?” (158-159).

The gendered social order, as confirmed and perpetuated in popular fiction and film, influences social patterns as well as perception of others and self-perception. This applies not only to the dominant group or individual—in Classic Westerns the white, male, heterosexual Cowboy—but also to those subordinate to the hegemon. The response to the crisis of white hegemonic masculinity’s claims (about the feminization of labor etc.) have been rebutted by reference to men’s continuing social and material privilege, the persistence of traditional forms of masculinity, and the diversity, fluidity and political nature of masculinities.⁸¹ However, the reality of the situation and the cultural impact this had on society did little to assuage the perceived crisis and response to said crisis. The popular Classic Western literature and film featuring the Cowboy continued to feed into the structuring of a hegemonic system that would place white heterosexual males as the hegemon, and all other genders as subordinate.

The post-industrial hegemony of white heterosexual male identity can no longer be seen to emerge from the foundation of economics and politics but, crucially, from the discursive space in which all socio-cultural factors are arisen and mass produced, creating in their repetition signs that become iconic and are in turn invested with meaning.⁸² This discursive space found formulation in the popular fiction and, later, film of the United States, staged upon a frontier whereupon white masculinity could be redefined and tested, valorized and romanticized into an idealized representation of white masculinity: a gendered, racialized hegemon above both women, and, of note, all non-white and non-normative masculinities.

⁸¹ Whitehead and Barrett’s *The Masculinity Reader*. pp. 16, 21, 8–10.

⁸² See Laclau E. and Mouffe C.’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* for more information.

2.1.5 The 'Ideal' Masculinity in the Classic Cowboy Hegemon

In "The big picture: masculinities in recent world history", Raewyn Connell rejects the conceptual singularity of masculinity, such as the hegemonic Cowboy.⁸³ In positing that there are a variety of masculinities, her research opened up new possibilities for understanding masculinity as a socially constructed multiplicity. Richard Howson, writing on Connell, adds that "by viewing masculinity as 'masculinities', Connell contends that there exists within the multiplicity of types, a largely symbolic, though legitimate, ideal type of masculinity" and that this ideal type of masculinity "imposes upon all other masculinities (and femininities) coherence and meaning about what their own identities and positions within the gender order should be" (2).⁸⁴

This assertion reinforces the reductive nature of the Classic Western's definition of masculinity into the singular hegemonic figure of the Cowboy. In conjunction with Connell's argument concerning the belief in an ideal type of masculinity and the crisis of identity faced by white men following their position in society becoming shared amidst perceived 'lesser' masculinities and women, the construction of the Cowboy served as a means by which to funnel the ideal into a singular, ideal character. This character would respond to this crisis with his own traits and ideologies, espousing an indomitable spirit and individualism while establishing himself as the pinnacle of productive laborers.

Crucial to understanding the impact of this individualism is the clarification for the process of conceptually reducing masculinity to a singular representation and the aftermath of that reductivism. Within the purview of the hegemonic Cowboy, all other masculinities would be tried and tested against him, doomed to either fall before his indomitable spirit and capacity for violence or to be banished from the known world entirely: as Ethan tells the Reverend Clayton after he shoots out the eyes of a dead Comanche, "But what that Comanche believes, ain't got no eyes, he can't enter the spirit-land. Has to wander forever between the winds. You get it, Reverend".⁸⁵ Ethan, as patriarchal hegemon, demonstrates a complete and total authority over the Comanche's position and destiny in the world, and it is enacted through wrathful, unnecessary violence.

⁸³ Connell, Raewyn. "The big picture: masculinities in recent world history."

⁸⁴ *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*.

⁸⁵ Ford, John. *The Searchers*.

In the Classic Western, because the ideal conception of masculinity has already been established as the white male Cowboy, all other forms of masculinity and gender are doomed to failure. Howson adds that “while this ideal emerges and develops from within the socio-cultural milieu, it becomes essentialized and ultimately, reified as the benchmark against which all men must gauge their success in the gender order. This ideal is hegemonic masculinity” (3).⁸⁶ The result of this placement of white Cowboy masculinity as the benchmark for all other masculinities leads to the devaluing of non-normative identities. This occurs both from the perspective of the hegemon as well as from within, demoralizing and defining for these non-normative identities their place within the hegemony that has been created based on the socio-cultural ideas and representations found in the popular fiction of the time and even to today.

2.1.6 The Cowboy as the Ideal Father: Signification and the Construction of a Mythic Figure

Interestingly, the perception this places on masculinity inevitably ties the self-identification of white masculinity in these texts not only to ideologies espoused by the hegemon, but also to the topics which give the hegemon concern. Of note here is the Cowboy’s role as a provider for family values, either in establishing and safe-guarding the family structure as can be seen in Shane’s defense of the Starretts,⁸⁷ or, more notably, in the Cowboy’s settling down, marrying, and subsequent fathering, as is seen in Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*. He does, in this act, assert himself as the pater-familias of the West, and his virility is both confirmed and established in the act, most typically following the death of those non-normative identities that previously challenged his position upon the frontier.

Jeff Hearn’s analysis on the presentation of masculinity in *Men in the Public Eye* within the Western suggests, within the context of white hegemonic masculinity, that the Western “displays men and men’s sexualities, reinforces men’s power, simultaneously fragments men and men’s power, [and] makes them contentious and contested” (140). The display of his sexuality is made clear in his triumphant conquest and courting of the female love interest, in almost all cases

⁸⁶ William Loren Katz shows in his work *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* that while the myth of the Cowboy flourished for white easterners; the reality of the cowboy as wage worker of the range was the life for an increasing number of black men.

⁸⁷ Schaeffer, Jack. *Shane*.

a white eastern woman who forsakes her eastern culture and ties so as to follow in his interests of establishing both family and empire.⁸⁸

The Cowboy is proven virile in his successful fathering of a family, one that most often promises to become a legacy within the West. His sexual potency and power are tied not only to his having courted the female love interest, but it is also seen in his use of the six-shooter, a phallic representation of his own masculinity, making him both dangerous and indomitable to other men who threaten his position as hegemon. The gun is, thusly, tied to his virile masculinity as the other side of the coin, marking a violent means for representing his power and the means by which he purges the West of those who would contest his power and his position as the hegemon.

The emphasis of this hegemonic masculinity on the structuring of individual and national identity has been a topic of interest for many researchers in the past few decades. The Cowboy, with his connotations of imperialist expansion and assertion of white male values, became through popular demand the icon for fictionalizing this structuring, finalized as it is in the successful creation of a family who will be of his race and follow in his footsteps. Among them, Mike Donaldson has written that “hegemonic masculinity... involves as specific strategy for the subordination of women... It is a lived experience, and an economic and cultural force, and dependent on social arrangements” (645-646).⁸⁹ While Donaldson’s emphasis on the position of hegemonic masculinity focuses its relations to the subordination of women, Howson’s own analysis expands this concept to the multiplicities of masculinity that exist, and thus posits within a cultural context the subordination of all identities which do not conform to the ideal hegemonic masculinity, such as those which would endanger the family and similar institutions of society.

Donaldson’s work suggests that hegemonic masculinity is not imposed upon gender (either female or other) exogenously, but rather emerges from and through the socio-cultural milieu itself. As such, the fiction of Westerns serves as an informative product mass-produced, tailored toward bolstering the white heteronormative Cowboy and all that he fights for as ideal, patriarchal and dominant over all else; the end goal within a hegemonic system being the continuation of his

⁸⁸ Examples of this include Louis L’Amour’s *Shalako*, Zane Grey’s *Light of Western Stars*, John Ford’s *Stagecoach*, and Sergio Leone’s *Once Upon a Time in the West*. It should be noted, however, that each of these authors and directors repeated this theme in their works again and again, and so can be found in more than the samples listed here.

⁸⁹ Donaldson goes on to say that it is “A culturally idealised form, it is both personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich and socially sustained” (645-646). Donaldson, Mike. “What is Hegemonic Masculinity?”

authority in a new male generation that he sires. Because the Cowboy himself is also a constructed figure, the performative nature of this construction then feeds into the mass-produced socio-cultural milieu that has had such emphatic sway over masculine identity in the American West.

By the time Owen Wister's *The Virginian* was published, the basic reality about the Cowboy's condition as a wage-paid worker at the beck and call of the expansionist cattle baron had been replaced. In its stead was a dramatic story where the myth of the Cowboy's constant wandering was a direct consequence of his untameable and manly character, wherein he would only settle down after the West had been 'won'. As Neal Lambert comments on Wister's creation, "Wister shifted more and more from a Cowboy who was 'one of thousands' to a Cowboy who was 'one in a thousand'" (99).⁹⁰ The Cowboy, then, is uniquely tasked with bringing stability through violence and hard work, and in fiction it is only the exceptional who are capable of doing this, the 'one in a thousand'. In the case of the *Virginian*, his reward is Molly and the creation of his own dynasty in the West through 'various enterprises'.

Thus, the qualities of the Cowboy's virility, strength, independence and his untamable nature are attached to him via the ideal expectations held for American Western masculinity. As a figure embodying patriarchal hegemony, the Cowboy's traits are most recognizable by his ties to the expected roles for genders: men as dominant and women as submissive. In this case, they are signs tied to masculinity and, in the image of the Cowboy, to the ideal masculine, or, hegemon who ultimately becomes the husband and later the father. The Cowboy's masculinity was inevitably tied to such constructs, and he became emblematic for his potential in either life-giving via his virility or his life-taking via his skill with weapons and dangerous presence.

After this happens, Roland Barthes states that history disappears and the meaning begins to take on form. When coming to this second order—the qualities which define the first order, the Cowboy—this lesser but more realistic history of the Cowboy loses value. His multiracial, multicultural origins, his poor working-class status, and his general irrelevance in the violent conquest of the West become secondary to what he signifies in popular culture. The fictive story of the Cowboy as an epitome of the idealized white American male wins out.⁹¹

The result then is the production of a mythic construction of his character: history becomes meaningless before the concept, which is, in this case, hegemonic masculinity, naturalized, turned

⁹⁰ Lambert, Neal. "Owen Wister's *Virginian*: The Genesis Of A Cultural Hero." pp. 99–107.

⁹¹ Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*.

into something natural. Because “the winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinities which are quite specifically fantasy figures” (Connell 184),⁹² these iconic narrative creations such as the Virginian or that of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood are seen as the hegemonic brave and untamable American males whose final conquest is the establishment of the family upon the frontier.

Steve Neale argues that white male audiences, particularly in the United States, found within the Cowboy a figure who could feed a narcissistic longing for reasserting male authority. Neale states that this identification translates into “fantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control” (13).⁹³ In *West of Everything*, Jane Tompkins considers the archetypes and tropes which gave shape to the Western genre, ranging in her analysis from the early 20th Century works of Wister and others to the modern Western as we know it today.

Tompkins argues that iconic images such as the gunfight at noon or the duel or the mounted horseman outlined against the sky all inherently carry “worlds of meaning and value, codes of conduct, standards of judgment, and habits of perception that shape our sense of the world and govern our behavior without our having the slightest awareness of it” (6). It is this shaping that has gone on to influence the behavior of white hegemonic masculinity and the subordinate groups it depicts as such. Through his conflict upon the frontier, carrying his symbolic signification, the Cowboy establishes himself as conqueror and hegemon of the American West before marrying and fathering a new generation of American Cowboys, perpetuating his authority and position. Thus, Revisionist Westerns took this Cowboy and deconstructed him, criticizing his ‘taming of the frontier’ as violent conquest, contrasting their portrayal of the Cowboy with non-normative constructions of masculinity and protagonists.

2.3.0 Revisionist Westerns

As a concept, Revisionism is most commonly understood to refer to such scholarly discourses as historiography, as can be seen in the New Western Historicism school led by Patricia Limerick Nelson. Generally speaking, the term refers to how an established school’s beliefs are being challenged, revised, and potentially replaced with the views of a new school of thinking. In the case of the New Western Historicists, their challenge was to the Turnerian interpretation of

⁹² Connell, Raewyn. *Gender & Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*.

⁹³ Neale, Steve. “Masculinity as Spectacle”.

westward expansion and the romanticizing of Manifest Destiny, incorporating in their view of history the role of women, Native Americans, and the malleable nature of the frontier. Expanding this to studies of literature and film, however, becomes contested and vague on a critical level: very rarely are the novels and films which comprise a critical field's primary texts informed by this critical reexamination, much less aware of its existence. In addition to this, the shifting nature of genres over time, given as the texts which define that genre change as well, make it difficult to establish a clear outline for what is distinguishably Revisionist and thus not a Classic Western. However, in turn, the opposite is also true: it becomes difficult to separate the Classic Western from the Revisionist.⁹⁴

The hallmarks of Revisionism can be boiled down to concepts of representation for marginalized figures, either depicting them as fully-fledged characters or from authors who themselves are marginalized, to a presence of criticism within the text directed at normative socio-cultural structures believed to be espoused in older texts, as well as within the period these texts are written. Revisionism can, according to David Lusted, be measured based on an element of criticism within the text which determines whether the Western qualifies as Revisionist or not: "Though some Westerns are inevitably more reflexive than others, more reflective and self-conscious about manipulating generic form and meaning, it is criticism that detects significant generic changes that make any western 'revisionist'" (231).⁹⁵ Lusted is aware that these elements of reflection and self-consciousness are apparent in older Classic Westerns, his classification of a Revisionist Western being defined by a text's criticism is problematic because it is entirely dependent on a reading of the text which finds that criticism. As an example, my analysis of three Classic Western novels in Chapter Three that have canonically shaped the genre each contain strong criticisms against the social norms of the times they were written in, containing elements of revisionism which are undeniable.

⁹⁴ This can be equated to the idea of an evolutionary model for defining genre, wherein each new entry into the Classic Western potentially shifts an audience's understanding of what defines that genre. What is fascinating about this model is that it suggests no clear division between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western, but rather a developing growth as the Western shifted focus onto new, more relevant issues, adapted as it were to the socio-cultural times. To complicate matters though, if this is the case, then the Western is constantly revising itself and, at all times, can be considered a Revisionist Western. Thus, hard breaks which falsely attempt to constrain the Classic Western as the product of white conservative males is limiting, just as it is limiting to say that the Revisionist Westerns of the 1950's onward is where marginalized voices began to criticize elements of the Western from within the genre.

⁹⁵ Lusted, David. *The Western*.

Jim Kitses, writing in “Postmodernism and The Western”, states that Revisionist Westerns are “films that in whole or part interrogate aspects of the genre such as its traditional representations of history and myth, heroism and violence, masculinity and minorities” (19). Following this definition and applying it to literature as well, Revisionist Westerns can be seen as engaging with ideological frameworks of Classic Western texts and film, negotiating through questioning and criticism culturally dominant forms. According to Kitses, then, the Revisionist Western attempts to transform the genre they operate within, writing against older themes, ideologies, and archetypes. From this perspective, it is commonly understood that the Revisionist Western attempts to question and lay open established patterns and societal convictions. However, as I argue in Chapter Three, the definitive element of the Revisionist Western here then is a core element to the strength of canonical Classic Westerns, problematizing distinctions between the Classic and Revisionist Western.

Following the post-world war II era, and coinciding with the rise of the civil rights movements within the United States, there spread the belief that authors and directors of Westerns were only then beginning to question elements of the Western mythology. Specifically, these focused on the role of the male protagonist and his relationship to both women and minorities. The presence of this self-aware criticism found materialization in the shift in tone of Classic Westerns toward a literature and film library that found a need to revise itself in accordance to the social needs of the time.

Simply put, Revisionist Westerns were texts and movies that deconstructed or subverted any of the essential ideological themes and motifs of the Classic Western, though most often this was located to the characters themselves. What began with several texts and films that subtly modified some of the rules of the genre was believed to have become a trend that grew increasingly powerful in the 1960’s, rewriting previous conventions so as to resonate with audiences’ growing perception of social injustices. Notably, it is within some of the texts and films of the late 1940’s and 50’s which made audiences aware of a self-awareness in the Classic Western. Westerns as films had by then found a larger audience than readers, and as such their presentation and manifestation of these texts articulated to a wider range of people the changes formulating in the Western.

From *Red River* in 1948 to the brief downturn in the Western’s commercial viability during the 1970’s, the genre found itself being influenced by numerous contemporary events.

McCarthyism, the Cold War, the Civil Rights movement, Native American empowerment, the countercultures of various anti-establishment groups, and the Vietnam War all had a profound impact on the Westerns. This resulted in a difference regarding the portrayal of issues concerning race, gender, military conflict, and politics. These texts and films claimed to have revealed more complex characters and plot development, a re-examining of traditional ethical codes, an overwhelming tone of moral ambiguity, and for introducing a darker, more cynical tone with a focus on the lawlessness of the time period while favoring realism over romanticism.

The Revisionist Western's criticism over depictions of power and authority, be it either in the American government or in the representation of masculinity and male figures, stands out as one of its defining features. In Matthew Carter's *Myth of the Westerner*, Carter points out that film scholars traditionally draw a line between Classic Westerns as ideologically conservative, perpetuating the myth of the frontier and the ideals of the hegemonic Cowboy, and Revisionist (or as he refers to them, "Post") Westerns, which begin in the 1960's and are considered a critique or even exposé of these narratives.⁹⁶ Carter places the origins of the Revisionist Western with the 1962 film *The Man who Shot Liberty Vance*, emphasizing an element of self-conscious reflection on American culture.⁹⁷

Specifically, as Carter writes, "Turner in many ways established the West as the crucible where America's exceptionalist mission... was played out, placing Anglo-Americans at the centre of the most essential narrative of the nation whilst ignoring the reality of the racial 'melting pot' of the time" (11-12). It was Turner's thesis that Theodore Roosevelt would use to talk to the

⁹⁶ General consensus places the origins of the Revisionist western genre at the beginning of the 1960's, though elements of it can be seen in most westerns produced since then, with no exception given to some of the more recent films and literatures being written. Additionally, as per the origins of the Revisionist Western, the exact moment thematic elements began to shift toward notions of self-aware criticism concerning traditional themes, tropes, and archetypes is also obfuscated by the gradual nature of this change, making periodizing the process ineffective. That said, the 1960's dominant placement here as the beginning of the genre lends itself credit to the relationship of political and cultural events going on within the United States of America and abroad, in Vietnam, at the time, correlating that to a general awareness toward criticism of the USA's position as a figure of authority and power. See James Cortese's 1976, "Bourgeois myth and anti-myth: the Western hero of the fifties", *SubStance*, vol. 5, no. 15, pp. 122-132. Nevertheless, I disagree with the division to begin with, arguing that elements of revisionism are clearly definable in canonical Classic Westerns, challenging assessments of divisions between the genres and the tendency to exclude authors and works which vastly shift definitions of the Western in the early 19th Century.

⁹⁷ This is a fairly contentious claim all the same, though Carter's aligning it with the political upheaval happening in the states is an understandable, if not logical correlation to make. However, Walter Van Tilburg Clark's 1940's *The Ox-bow Incident*, Delmar Dave's 1950's *Broken Arrow*, and Fred Zinneman's 1952 *High Noon* all meet the criteria of Revisionist Westerns that Carter himself lays out, complicating not only his distinction between the two genres, but also any simple chronological demarcation between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western.

nation,⁹⁸ forging the “frontier thesis” as a national mission, as “Manifest Destiny,” and transforming the Cowboy into a national emblem which carried with it the connotative positive socio-cultural representations found to be ideal by Americans at the turn of the century.

No longer were white heterosexual males wholly uncritically defined as the hegemon of the region, pushing for a national narrative of militarized Western expansion. This extended as well into non-normative relationships, the empowerment and focus of narratives onto female characters, concerns over land use and preservation, and increased awareness of Native American presence and identity beyond the one-dimensional static figure of mindless, savage antagonist (or simple background decoration). At the crux of this, however, remained the criticism against the Cowboy. The Cowboy had, by this time, faced a form of demythologization intended to reflect a contemporary America’s understanding of its past and how it has since then changed. And, it would be in the form of the Revisionist Western that this would find fruition.

Ultimately, the dividing lines between the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western have been blurred, constantly under confused contention within Academia for the problematic lack of a true division between the genres. As Mary Hall rightfully points out in her analysis of *Dead Man*, the problematic nature of a divide between Revisionist Westerns and Classic Westerns extends as well to a lack of appropriate criticism and misrepresentation in the Revisionist Westerns of the 1960’s onward:

Indeed, revisionism itself is something of a tradition in the Western. There is a long history of Westerns positioning themselves against previous Westerns, claiming to present a newly sympathetic and realistic view of Indian culture and a new condemnation of white conquest, only to find themselves a generation or two later the traditional Westerns against which new ones are positioned. This pattern is probably due to the fact that, as scholars such as Roy Harvey Pearce, Robert Berkhofer, and Armando Prats have shown, “revisionist” Westerns participate in the same ideology they attempt to criticize. (3)⁹⁹

As I will argue in Chapter Two, canonical Westerns represent the later criticisms of the Cowboy within their own texts as well, predating and anticipating later movements. However, unlike Hall’s

⁹⁸ See Theodore Roosevelt’s 1889 *The Winning of the West*, a four-volume series detailing in no uncertain terms the exceptional conquest of the West by the United States, defining it in the very mythic dimension that Turner similarly uses.

⁹⁹ Hall, M. K.. “Now you are a killer of white men: Jim Jarmouth’s *Dead Man* and traditions of revisionism in the western.”. pp. 2-14.

criticism, I do believe that there are genuinely progressive elements in what are classified as both the Classic and Revisionist Western.

2.3.1 *The Ox-Bow Incident*: The ‘Exceptional’ Western of 1940

As perhaps the earliest known example of a Revisionist Western novel, *The Ox-Bow Incident* by Walter Van Tilburg Clark, written in 1940, is what Max Westbrook calls “an exception, as a Cowboy story of literary merit; and it is still conceded to be, on critical grounds, the best or at least one of the best Cowboy novels ever written” (105).¹⁰⁰ The novel is unique for its approach to both the Cowboy’s role in the narrative and for emphasizing the fear and hate in man as elements which lead to his own self-destruction. The novel’s characterization and criticism for a variety of masculinities, as well as its ties to the natural world and the reflection of man’s position in that world, bind it neatly to the Revisionist Western. Above all else, the novel’s criticism over the very concept of frontier justice and the ineffectual presence of the Cowboy neatly place it in what is referred to as the Revisionist Western, despite predating the genre by at least a decade.

The novel opens with Art Croft and Gil Carter, two Cowboys new to the area riding into the town of Bridger’s Wells. They soon find that cattle rustlers have been active in the area, and that John Kinkaid is believed to have been murdered by the rustlers. Both Art and Gil are brought into a posse led by the violent and deranged Major Tetley as they go out looking to find the rustlers. Twenty-eight men in all comprise the posse, among them Gerald Tetley—the Major’s timid and reluctant son—and Arthur Davies, an ineffectual participant who attempts to place their actions into a broader scheme of intellectual universal justice. Art, as both our narrator and participant, provides insight into various discussions concerning the human condition and the nature of man, until finally three men are found with cattle they claim to have bought from the believed-to-be deceased Kinkaid. Eager for blood, the Major leads the posse to hang the men. Upon their return, they discover Kinkaid alive and the men whom they hung to be innocent. Both Tetleys commit suicide, and Davies sees his beliefs for the sham that they are. Art and Gil leave town having gained little through the tragedy, preventing none of it from passing. The novel ends with Gil saying “I’ll be glad to get out of here” to which Art says “Yeh” (309).

¹⁰⁰ Westbrook, Max. “The Archetypal Ethic of ‘*The Ox-Bow Incident*.’” pp. 105–118.

While the standard reading for the novel in 1940 was believed to be a condemnation of Nazi Germany's genocide and the corruption of law which allowed that to happen,¹⁰¹ what stands out for the Revisionist reader is the novel's approach to masculinity and its emphasis on a variety of masculinities operating within a socio-cultural hierarchy. Types of masculinities in the novel range from the dominating patriarchal hegemon to the effeminate, pessimistic submissive, and to the utterly ineffectual intellectual, with each representing a contesting perspective of the human condition.

Concerning the first of these three, Max Westbrook states that, "Certainly Major Tetley is a master performer, and his ability to control the lynching party is an actor's ability. He speaks to a man without looking at him... and thus keeps 'inferiors' in their place.... As the master of male ego, [Major Tetley] is the natural leader" (116). Major Tetley embodies an older generation of masculinity whose violent beliefs and world-views pose a risk to the future of society, a point Clark makes clear in Major Tetley's drive to hang the innocent men. Major Tetley is at odds with his son, Gerald, who embodies the pessimistic and effeminate masculinity, horrified with the potential evil man is capable of and his own contribution to the murders. Kenneth Andersen states that "Young Tetley's awareness and concern are formulated in psychological terms, and out of despair of the good, he concentrates his argument on the essentially evil nature of man that always seems to defeat the good" (296).¹⁰² Finally, Davies represents the ineffectual intellectual, who along with Gerald represent the two philosophical world views that Art as our narrator confronts. Davies tells Art that:

True law... is the conscience of society. It has taken thousands of years to develop, and it is the greatest, the most distinguishing quality which has evolved with mankind...it is the spirit of the moral nature of man; it is an existence apart, like God, and as worthy of worship as God. If we can touch God at all, where do we touch him save in the conscience? (66-7)

¹⁰¹ As Westbrook writes, "If the reader is not distracted by comparisons with the formula cowboy story—or by the belief that the book is an allegorical warning against Nazi tyranny, an approach which, in 1940, appealed to reviewers and even to Clark himself—he will find, I think, that the story itself suggests a quite different and much more rewarding set of questions" (107). This is a reading I do not disagree with, as I feel that there is enough of a connection between the novel and political discourse of the late 1930's to inform Clark's view on this. However, this view is not a focus of my own dissertation, albeit that the reading does serve as an example of how Western authors were keenly aware of world events around them and incorporated their views into their writing, demonstrating a contemporary awareness to their works.

¹⁰² Andersen, Kenneth. "Character Portrayal in '*The Ox-Bow Incident*.'" pp. 287–298.

Yet for the optimism he attempts to sway Art with, his beliefs and intellectualism fail in any meaningful way to reach the men of the posse, and so become useless. With regard to both Gerald and Davies philosophical views, Robert W. Cochran states that, in the end, “both Gerald Tetley and Arthur Davies are discredited, so that the novel’s meaning inheres finally in neither of their contradictory positions with respect to man’s nature” (258).¹⁰³

Clark’s ultimate view of masculinity is that in any extreme, whether it be Major Tetley’s hyper-masculine dominance, Gerald’s timid passivity and pessimism, or Davies’ failed intellectualism, it is doomed to failure. Without any compromise in world view and without deliberate action, these masculinities lead to destruction of both the self and others. The suicides of both Tetley’s serve as examples of self-destruction, whereas the murder of the innocent men is a clear example of the destruction their ineffectual and toxic masculinities produce. Art, as the narrator, is caught between these masculinities and finds himself ultimately led toward inaction and horror as he is incapable of successfully navigating their extremes.

The criticism that the novel conveys concerning these types of masculinities is underscored with an absence of any positive masculine example, notably from the Cowboy leads of Art and Gil. Clark’s novel enforces a cautionary narrative against the extremities of masculinity in either direction, and above all criticizes the mob mentality which draws this nature out, “through which the dark and destructive forces of evil flow, [finding] its manifestation in the collective, amorphous mob” (Andersen 291). Westbrook adds that “Man’s unconscious, then... is both his hope for contact with archetypal reality and, when pent up, when joined with mob-energy instead of with the energy of nature, the source of horror” (111). Additionally, Clark argues through Gerald that the danger of the mob mentality is bestial in nature, reflecting the destructive element of masculinity’s “cheap male virtues” (136) when forced out by the mob that is the socio-cultural West:

Nothing could make us tell [the mob], show our weakness, have the pack at our throats... We’re afraid that sitting there, hearing him and looking at him we’ll let the pack know that our souls have done that too, gone barefoot and gaping with horror, scrambling in the snow of the clearing in the black woods, with the pack in the shadows behind them” (137-8).

Gerald expands on the masculinity of mob mentality further, stating that:

¹⁰³ Cochran, Robert W. “Nature and the Nature of Man in ‘*The Ox-Bow Incident*.’” pp. 253–264.

All any of us really want any more is power. We'd buck the pack if we dared. We don't, so we use it; we trick it to help us in our own little killings. We've mastered the horses and cattle. Now we want to master each other, make cattle of men. Kill them to feed ourselves.

The smaller the pack the more we get. (141)

The mob, as it were, represents a clear and present public sphere which demands its male participants—all of whom operate on the socio-cultural expectations based around their masculine identities—to follow their roles to each natural conclusion. Clark makes no attempt to equivocate concerning their failings and the damage this mob mentality concerning masculinity inflicts upon the society which simultaneously demands a performance of its male actors. Most interesting, then, is Art, our Cowboy narrator, who flying against all expectation of the typical protagonist is rendered as little more than a bystander.

Clark dispenses with any denotative associations for the Cowboy's exceptionalism and his role as either a hero or even an instigator of change. Rather, as Andersen argues, Art "neither exercises any control over the course of the action, nor does he even feel very much involved" (289-90). This is evident in Art's hesitation and preference to observe in the novel, particularly after he is shot in the shoulder while attempting to stop a stagecoach driver: "I wasn't interested any longer, not either way; the voices talking were like those of people in another room, heard through the wall. They didn't concern me" (Clark 185). This is not to say that Art is incapable of action, as Cochran reminds us: "the ambivalence of Croft, indeed the ambivalence of the truly 'good' man, is to be recognized in his attempts to act and in his mixed success when he does act" (260). Yet, these successes are limited and minor: managing his partner Gil before he can act out in violent fashions and scaring a boy away from joining the posse (97).

However, the Cowboy through Art is deconstructed to the point of ineffectual change, a literal passerby in the process of deliberating upon and delivering frontier justice. What good does come from Art's actions, such as preventing the boy from joining the posse or even in his attempt to stop the stagecoach from accidentally injuring the group are eclipsed by his failings: the posse is entirely beyond his control and he is shot in the shoulder for what efforts he makes for trying to prevent violence with the stagecoach. From this moment onward, Art is further reduced to the role of observer, "In his immobility, Croft's feverish imagination tends to conceive of the affair as an extension of his own nightmare in which he, between dozes, awakes and catches just a glimpse of the horror which is being enacted before his eyes" (Andersen 289). Not only is Art immobile, a

complete antithesis to the Cowboy's natural roving tendency, but he is also merely a witness to a terror he can barely comprehend. Neither is there agency to his will nor is there righteousness in any of his actions. Westbrook elaborates on these failings, tying them to the philosophical failings of both Gerald and Davies in their attempt to place Art into some greater scheme concerning their roles as members of the lynch mob:

...neither Art (who later admits to Davies that he felt all along the lynching was wrong) nor Gil (who keeps remembering, though he is reluctant to confess it, an earlier hanging he had seen and been horrified by) wants to join the lynch mob. Both are participating in murder because they fear *an inner reality*. Both give in to society's divisive value system which associates virtue with a willingness to join the *he-man lynch mob*. Repeatedly, Art and Gil show themselves ready to fight with fists or with guns in order to show their allegiance to a cause in which they do not believe. (110, my emphasis)

The Cowboy is ultimately subject to the beck and whim of mob mentality in Clark's vision of the West: the socio-cultural demands of the West on men like the Cowboy to deliver frontier justice and engage in violence. Art's ruminations over the philosophical musings of Gerald and Davies shows that he is a fragile identity desperate to comprehend his place in the universe and the nature of man in that place:

I realized that queerly, weak and bad-tempered as it was, there had been something in the kid's raving [Gerald] which had made the canyon seem to swell out and become immaterial until you could think the whole world, the universe, in the half-darkness around you: millions of souls swarming like fierce, tiny, pale stars, shining hard, winking about cores of minute, mean feelings, thoughts and deeds. To me [Gerald's] idea appeared just the opposite of Davies'. To the kid what everybody thought was low and wicked, and their hanging together was a mere disguise of their evil. To Davies, what everybody thought became, just because everybody thought it, just and fine, and to act up to what they thought was to elevate oneself. And yet both of them gave you that feeling of thinking outside yourself, in a big place; the kid gave me that feeling even more, if anything, though he was disgusting. You could feel what he meant: you could only think what Davies meant. (139)

Art's weakness lies in his complete lack of a belief system that he himself embodies and espouses, concerning as well the representation of American Exceptionalism and a 'strong' masculinity that the Cowboy is expected to have. Art's reasons for joining the lynch mob are almost nonexistent

save for the fear of the socio-cultural West's potential to do him social and physical harm. Instead, as Andersen points out:

The reasons for [Art's] involvement in the spirit of the lynching party are that he is as weak and fragile as everyone else. He has the same emotions and prejudices... [and] his intelligence, too, is only normal. Like the other men, Croft has no conception of the meaning behind the brewing storm. (290)

The Cowboy, then, is entirely unremarkable and, as Clark would define him, susceptible to the very manipulative forces of the socio-cultural West just as anyone else, having no unique insight.

The lack of restraint on Gil's part, particularly when he is drunk, and the status of both Art and Gil as bystanders before the horror of mob violence, renders the Cowboy a flaccid figure. Clark affirms this point again and again as Art is incapable of confronting Major Tetley over the doomed hunt for the men he believes responsible for the rustling and the rumored (but false) murder of Kinkaid. Through his eyes as the narrator, the reader is placed into the position of comprehending this failure on an internalized level rather than through the Cowboy's external, monolithic figure. Through his eyes, Clark places the reader into the perspective of the 'everyman', "...implicating, through the reader, all of mankind. Thus it is in this way that the fanaticism, evil, and hatred of the lynching party is experienced, not only from what Croft as narrator tells us, but from what we, as participants in this universal drama, witness at first hand" (290-1). The Cowboy is human and he is ineffective, and we as readers see him suffer for it and so suffer alongside him.

Clark's expression of potential philosophies—all of which seem to be fraught with failure, misery, and death—attempt to provide guidance for Art's development over the course of the novel so as to provide some semblance of order or reason to what transpires in the Ox-Bow. Yet all fall short of successfully influencing Art. These philosophies are tied to the masculinities of both Gerald and Davies, representing respectively extremes in first the pessimistic submissiveness of Gerald and the ineffectual intellectualism of Davies. Westbrook states that:

The intellect, also severed from the permanent, is associated with a degrading version of the feminine. Thus the lynch mob in *The Ox-Bow Incident* misappropriates for itself a monopoly on virtuous masculinity, and thus the protestations of Davies and Gerald Tetley are repeatedly associated—both in language and action—with a degrading femininity. (109)

Masculinity then is failed. Gone are the values of American Exceptionalism and the promises of westward Manifest Destiny: the American West holds no success, development, or reinvention, and the Cowboy is above all else rudderless in his action. When Davies attempts to apply reason to the lynching party, Art contrasts it with Gerard's pessimism concerning the bestial nature of man and his ruinous tendencies. Art, lost as he is and without any guiding nationalism or positive masculinity, is desperate for some value system to associate himself to, falling in line like the others under Major Tetley, a symbol of failed and self-destructive violence that fled to the West from the Confederacy of the Civil War. Art watches Major Tetley lead the posse:

With military rigidity...alone on his tall, thin-legged palomino with the shortened tail and clipped mane like those of a performing horse. [Major Tetley] wore a Confederate field coat with the epaulets, collar braid and metal buttons removed, and a Confederate officer's hat, but his gray trousers were tucked into an ordinary pair of cowboy's shin boots.(123-4)

Major Tetley's role in the narrative is the driving force behind the socio-cultural demand for violence, in part to demonstrate to the mob both his own power and authority, but also to provide Gerald an opportunity to stand out by killing the rustlers. Major Tetley is the masculine hegemon of the socio-cultural West in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, and as Andersen points out, "he is a materialist who destroys Nature by breaking it down and subjecting it to an unnatural order" (295). Clark makes clear that these systems are ultimately futile and dangerous, and that the extreme polar views of Gerald, Davies, and Major Tetley lead only to a fall for both the individual and society. While Gerald takes his view to the logical conclusion in taking his own life, Major Tetley's suicide reflects the realization that the destruction of others can similarly only lead to a destruction of the self—the masculine hegemon, in attempting to establish both itself and its prodigy before the mob of the socio-cultural West, is doomed to evil and self-destruction. In the end, there are no heroes, and the Cowboy is merely an observer rather than any gallant American hero.

The ultimate culmination that Clark's criticism leads to is in a deconstruction of frontier justice and the potential for the West to accurately achieve a semblance of civilized order, much less order within the grand scheme of the cosmos. Instead, man is revealed to be a fragile creature incapable of discerning innocence, swayed as he is by the mob's mentality. As Westbrook states, the mob is best understood through Gerald's view of the mob as revealing the inner working of man, "that all men fear the pack, the mass of society which bullies its members, forcing each person to become brutish rather than risk exposing to mass contempt his own inner tenderness and

weakness” (109). Because the reader sees this revelation through the eyes of Art, our ineffective Cowboy protagonist, we bear witness to the Cowboy’s struggle to come to terms with his role in both the cosmos and the socio-cultural West. The result, as *The Ox-Bow Incident* makes clear, is a criticism of Western progress and the archetypal Cowboy who was believed to make real these ideals. The identification of these faulty masculinities—much less a clear presence of *masculinities*—establishes the author’s resistance to normative socio-cultural expectations concerning the performances of men as men: specifically in the character of Major Tetley, who is the ‘greatest actor of them all’ and thus loses both his son and his own life for his role. The socio-cultural West, the Cowboy, and in turn the audience’s role as a bystander to the horror of mob violence render Clark’s novel perhaps the earliest novel to be recognized for its revisionist elements, and a truly exceptional Western.

2.3.2 Revisionist Westerns in film: *Red River* and the Patriarchal Cowboy

As Western films had quickly become the more consumed media of readers and audiences of the 1950’s, it is understandable that, in adapting to their social consciousness, the Western film genre would be the form in which Revisionist writings would first find popular form and reception. Notably, it is in the adaptation from one medium to the other that film makers such as Howard Hawks and John Ford were able to integrate current concerns, issues, and criticisms into the Western formula. Thus, some of the first forerunners of the Revisionist Western appeared in 1948, just as the United States was beginning to come to terms with its role as a global superpower following post-World War II. *Red River* went into wide release on the 30th of September of that year, followed eight years later by its thematic successor, *The Searchers*,¹⁰⁴ a film which would be seen in retrospect as the first overtly Revisionist Western film despite *Red River* predating it. Crucially, for the definition of the Revisionist Western, both films emphasized a subversion of perhaps the most eminent, even sacred elements in the Classic Western: the dominion, dependability, wisdom, and righteousness of the classic white, heterosexual male protagonist, the Cowboy, epitomized as he was by John Wayne.

The deconstruction of the hegemonic Cowboy’s mythic status within the perception of American popular culture provided substantial criticism on the customary notions of authority and

¹⁰⁴ *Red River*, directed by Howard Hawks; *The Searchers*, directed by John Ford.

patriarchy, recognizing their gendered, racialized, and even class-based positions and the ways in which they attempted to apply normative processes for others. Of note here is the fact that even though both of these films inhibit much of the spirit of the social and cultural awareness of the 1960's, neither film had these popular movements to give them definition. Predating and predicting these movements, which proved to be so influential in actually revising the Western genre, they displayed a postwar awareness of the emerging conflicts and fomenting upheaval that would soon lead the nation into social and cultural revolution.

Despite *Red River* seeming at first glance to be in the same vein as the Classic Western, at least in so far as a contemporary viewing might provide, the film manages to offer a poignant analysis into the problematic nature of the Cowboy as hegemon. The premise of *Red River*'s narrative follows a male-dominated and overwhelmingly white social group (the Cowboys of the Red River D) who are attempting to carve a successful future for themselves upon the dangerous and trying frontier of the West. On the surface, the film presents itself as the standard narrative about American triumphalism as the Cowboys of the Red River D bring their cattle from the West to the East in Abilene. The film follows suit in depicting the Cowboys as 'tough' white men embodying the developing nation's success upon the frontier, having tamed the land, fought and killed 'Indians', and introduced industry and 'civilization' to the wilderness. But the crucial element of *Red River* lies not in its primary storyline concerning labors of these men, but rather in the primary subplot, providing the major dramatic tension of the narrative and subtly subverting the towering authority of the Western's Classical patriarchal protagonist.

Red River begins in 1851 with Tom Dunson (John Wayne) and his loyal friend Groot Nadine quitting a wagon train, taking a bull with them, and departing for the fertile ranchlands in Texas to the South. Their decision leaves the wagon train vulnerable to 'Indian' attack, and the remaining settlers—Dunson's love included—are slaughtered. Amongst the dead the duo find Matt Garth, a young boy who, along with his cow, joins them and sets off to find their fortune in the West. Upon their arrival in Texas, Matt's cow is used along with Dunson's bull to create the "Red River D" herd, and the trio begin their ranching outfit. Fifteen years later, the Red River D ranch has become the most successful in the region and Matt has made his return to the Red River D after having served in the Civil War.

Unfortunately, the war has left little market for cattle in the South, and with Dunson now facing bankruptcy as a result of this, he is forced to attempt a cattle drive to the rail line in Missouri.

Dunson, desperate to succeed at any cost, rounds the cattle of the Red River D together and departs for the Chisholm Trail, demanding that all of his workers sign a document swearing that they will see the cattle drive to its conclusion. The journey is long and dangerous, and soon the men are working long hours on meager rations and little sleep, browbeaten and threatened into submission by the growing desperation in Dunson. Dunson's fear over the financial situation of his ranch pushes him to become increasingly obsessed with getting his cattle to Missouri, and so he becomes an authoritarian, driving his men with a ferocity that borders on the fanatical.

Dunson also refuses to heed the reports of a new railhead in Abilene, Kansas that would make the trip shorter and easier, helping the herd and his men avoid risking attacks by savage 'Indians' and vicious raiders on the Missouri border. Dunson's oppressive rule over his men continues to mount and the others become increasingly mutinous after Dunson threatens to whip one of the Cowboys who accidentally caused a stampede. His acts become more savage and tyrannical as he shoots several others who intend to quit the job, and again when he sends a posse to bring back a group that tries to run away from the trail, declaring his intent to hang them as an example.

Matt, who has finally hit the limit of what he can stand out of Dunson's brutal autocracy, usurps control of the group and continues on to drive the herd to Abilene where he successfully negotiates a profitable sale. Dunson, blinded by his rage and the disbelief in Matt's refusal to follow, decides to make an attempt on the lives of his men by hiring murderers to assassinate Matt. The film finds its climax in a fistfight between Matt and Dunson, but it is ultimately stopped by the superfluous Tess Millay, who is for Matt the requisite love interest introduced on the trail.¹⁰⁵ The two men come to their senses and quickly reconcile, concluding not in bloodshed but the successful transference of ownership of the ranch to Matt.

Following the release of the film, the critical and popular reaction to *Red River* was mostly positive, audiences and film critics alike giving favorable reviews, so much so that the film became the third-highest grossing film in the United States that year.¹⁰⁶ Bosley Crowther gave it a vibrant and oddly personal review in *The New York Times*, describing it as "one of the best Cowboy

¹⁰⁵ Superfluous because Tess plays no real role in the film other than to remind the viewer of Matt's heterosexuality and potential to raise a family. Tess stopping the fight serves as the height of her character in the film, but it is quickly replaced by our focus on Dunson and Matt's relationship to one another and Dunson's acknowledgment of Matt's new leading role in the Red River D.

¹⁰⁶ Coyne, Michael. *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western*. pg. 53.

pictures ever made” and urging readers to “strap on your trusty six-shooters.... you lovers of good old Western fiction. It’s round-up and brandin’ time!” (31).¹⁰⁷ As mentioned earlier, the superfluous nature of Tess’s character was picked up on by general audiences and critics alike, drawing the ire of *The New Yorker*, which had otherwise found the film “an utterly satisfactory cow-punching drama” (111).¹⁰⁸ *Time* called *Red River*, “[A] rattling good outdoor adventure movie,” while *The New Republic* labeled it, “A workmanlike Western” in a review that analyzed the genre’s popularity and its ability to induce exhilaration, praising it for its success.¹⁰⁹

Pauline Kael, who was known for disliking the genre, offered criticism that was generously positive, stating that the movie was “A magnificent horse opera” (487).¹¹⁰ Since its release, the film has become one of the most enduringly popular Westerns, standing the test of time and becoming renowned for its solidification of John Wayne’s career as one of the greatest actors of his time. Roger Ebert went so far as to include *Red River* in his compendium of *The Great Movies*, referring to it as “one of the greatest of all westerns,” though he also found similar problems with the female leads, stating that “the insertion of female characters into the plot was largely contrived” (390).¹¹¹

While the element of Dunson’s transformation remained to be one of the more critical elements of the film, contemporary reviews instead focused on the central narrative thrust, finding echoes of Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* in the romantic evocation of hard, but rewarding labor amid beautiful landscapes.¹¹² Crowther’s praise to director Howard Hawks makes an effort to emphasize the working man’s attraction to the film, writing that *Red River* was filled “with action and understanding, humor and *masculine ranginess*. He has made it look raw and dusty, made it smell of beer and sweat” (31, my emphasis).¹¹³ Other reviewers, even Kael, appreciated the blend of typical Classic Western motifs: “Indian battles, cattle stampedes and deadly gun duels,” gushed

¹⁰⁷ Bosley Crowther, “The Screen in Review.”

¹⁰⁸ “To Abilene with Gun and Lasso.” Pg. 111. Almost all reviews found fault with the two female characters in the movie. They believed their inclusion in an otherwise male dominated story was a rather unrealistic concession to Hollywood box office formula.

¹⁰⁹ “The New Pictures.” pg. 100; “Movies: Git Along.” pg. 29.

¹¹⁰ Kael, Pauline. *5001 Nights at the Movies*.

¹¹¹ Ebert, Roger. *The Great Movies*.

¹¹² Of note here though is the crucial element of the missing Virginian: in his place we have a tyrannical overseer who uses the threat of physical violence as a means of ensuring his men’s labor. It is a contrast that is crucial in the comparison between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western, and in exploring the ways in which these two genres of the Western overlap.

¹¹³ Bosley Crowther, “The Screen in Review.”

Life magazine before going on to spend the remainder of the review on Clift's growing acting career.¹¹⁴

In this manner, film critics of the time lionized the iconography of tough men hard at work on the frontier, carving a nation out of the wilderness and defining it as a site for white, heterosexual males. On its surface, *Red River* was seen as a form of hero worship straight out of the myth of American triumphalism and the overarching metanarrative of the Classic Western. Indeed, so compelling was this cinematic treatment of the West that one reviewer, writing years later, called *Red River*, "[T]he last Western picture show—thundering herds and strong men having at it — before the demythologists took over" (12).¹¹⁵

2.3.3 *Red River* and the Progressive Generation of Cowboy Usurping the Hegemon

Regardless of critics not emphasizing the subtext of their own comments, there were enough who mentioned the peculiarity of the lead protagonist, John Wayne—who was well-known for his role in Westerns—appearing as such a monstrous character for much of the movie. Some reviewers seemed to be aware of the film's subversive approach to the archetypal Cowboy figure, stating that *Red River*'s characters "are neither all good nor all bad" (*Newsweek*). Other reviewers, such as *The New Yorker*, took note of Dunson's deplorable nature and his own callous violence toward those around him, writing that he is "a graying Texan who kills men as casually as the rest of us would swat flies" (111).¹¹⁶ *The New York Times* mentioned in John Wayne's obituary that Dunson was "a ruthless cattle baron, not altogether a good guy, but one with some depth to him" (88).¹¹⁷ While these observations were nothing that was particularly unique, the frequency of these statements and the ease at which they were made hid the rising awareness of how the Western regarded a combination of heroism and tyranny in its protagonists, and how fluidly one could slip into one role or the other—if in fact they did not simply overlap.

In a role that stands out within Wayne's career, Dunson as the Cowboy is unequivocally the film's villain. Even before the cattle drive, wherein his transformation into something of a tyrant is depicted, Dunson's actions beforehand hold little to be considered heroic to them, yet

¹¹⁴ "Montgomery Clift: Eastern Broker's Son Makes Fine Cowhand in a New Superwestern." pp. 73-76; Kael, *5001 Nights*, pg. 487.

¹¹⁵ Charles Champlin, "10 Favorite Movies."

¹¹⁶ "On the Chisholm Trail." pg. 78; "To Abilene with Gun and Lasso."

¹¹⁷ Richard F. Shepard, "John Wayne Dead of Cancer on Coast at 72."

coincide naturally to narratives in Classic Western texts and films. In order to get the land he needs for his ranch in Texas, Dunson callously guns down the local Mexican landlord's representative. Further, when the Cowboys are gathering cattle for the drive, Dunson demands that his men use the brand of the Red River D on any and all the cattle they get a hold of, despite evidence that many of the cattle are stolen and belong to ranchers nearby.¹¹⁸ While they are on the trail, Dunson is shown to drink heavily to hide the lingering pain from an injury he received in his shoulder. At night, Dunson disavows sleep out of the paranoid belief that his men will abandon him and their duties. Before Matt's usurpation of the Red River D, Dunson basks in his pleasure over having a returning posse hang some of his ranch hands who attempted to flee from him.

Early in the film, Dunson says, "Ten years and I'll have the Red River D on more cattle than you've looked at anywhere. I'll have that brand on enough beef to—to feed the whole country. Good beef, for hungry people. Beef to make them strong, make them grow."¹¹⁹ It is a sentiment of Dunson's that encapsulates the Classic Western notion of pioneering, establishing upon the frontier a productivity that translates into the betterment of the nation's people at large. Most fascinating is the fact that Dunson begins the film as a character who has noble intentions, and for the most part acts on these intentions. While he is a tough settler that is determined to make his fortune on the frontier, the film's narrative arc constructing Dunson's development into the ruthless villain of the film—a cattle baron, not unlike Luke Fletcher in *Shane*—seems fitting to the Cowboy.

At work here following the 15-year interval, then, is the confrontation between the patriarchal and tyrannical elder Dunson, whose settlement of the West has transformed him into a violent and normative hegemon, with that of the younger, more progressive Matt. Matt's conflict with Dunson revolves around the violent and forceful way he both rejects Eastern influences such as the train, and how he retains and exerts his authority over others. This juxtaposition between the two is notably at odds with the Classic Western's approach to this kind of relationship, which had previously established the Patriarchal male as in the right, his violent normative practices justified and glorified. In this Revisionist representation of the West and its growth, however, we

¹¹⁸ Interestingly, this marks Dunson as a cattle rustler, a fact that reviewers simply did not comment on. The significance here is that the cattle rustler is uniformly the villain of the Classic Western, marking in the subconscious of the audience clear evidence that the Cowboy is not the ideal hero we envisioned him to be.

¹¹⁹ *Red River*. Ranchers were often complicated figures in Westerns, and not always heroic characters. The ranchers in *Shane* are the villains of the movie. In *Red River*, though, Dunson's enterprising and pioneering ways are clearly portrayed in a positive light until his descent to madness and the need for a younger generation to replace him with more progressive values. *Shane*, directed by George Stevens.

see the young Matt eventually remove and replace the older Dunson, subverting control away from violent practices for approaches which are more peaceable and progressive.

Michael Coyne comments on the context of this historical theme, writing that “*Red River* is the archetypal generation-gap Western. Matt’s ultimate revolt against Dunson’s tyranny prefigures the edgy, occasionally neurotic youth-rebels of iconoclastic Westerns in the 1950’s and early 1960’s” (54).¹²⁰ Thus, in *Red River*, we are given foreshadowing into the rise of a progressive generation whose values would become popular in the films for their thematic representation of shifting away from more conservative, close-minded socio-cultural approaches. This form of usurpation is seen as well in the relationship between Ethan Edwards and Martin Pawley, with again John Wayne’s character representing a patriarchal and racist hegemon to be subverted and transformed into agreeing with the progressive values of a younger generation. Coyne compared Matt Garth’s performance with the works of actors such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, and Paul Newman in later years:

These were essentially anti-Western antiheroes who frequently mocked the assumptions of the genre, the national past from which Westerns sprang and the culture in which they flourished. Above all, such figures challenged the complacency of Eisenhower’s America, which they damned as flaccid, inert and implicitly hypocritical. (54)¹²¹

As such, Matt Garth represents a rejuvenation of American values in line with the shift toward progressive open-mindedness often at odds with older authority figures. Thus, in *Dunson*, the Cowboy figure is a representative of these normative processes forcefully pushed for in the older generation that needed to be challenged and replace. Here, then, is clear criticism against the Cowboy as a male hegemonic figure. On this growing criticism, Coyne adds that:

Red River was the film which punctured the moral authority of the mature Western hero, daring to suggest a potentially fatal discrepancy between age and wisdom. At the heart of the genre which exalted patriarchy, *Red River*... posited the subversive notion that father may not always know best. (55)¹²²

¹²⁰ Coyne, Michael. *The Crowded Prairie*.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid. It is unclear if Coyne is directly referring to the TV show “Father Knows Best” or is just using a phrase of the time. Coyne also makes a couple of other historical connections, of generally lesser significance. He notes that the warm reception that Matt receives in Abilene for bringing thousands of steers to a needy market must have had

Despite the simplistic conclusion of the film giving it a somewhat incongruous, albeit happy, ending, the underlying subtext of the film leaves one with a feeling of distrust for Dunson and the older generation he symbolized. Dunson's transformation into a tyrant following the hard work he has put into expanding the nation and settling the West is definitive of a Revisionist Western's self-awareness for the problematic nature of the Cowboy character as he had been understood within the framework of the Classic Western. The basis for the settlement of the frontier lies in violence, and challenging that continued authoritarianism found in Dunson is necessary for the success of the progressive American nation. For a genre accustomed to stoic, wise hegemonic male figures, *Red River* provided a shocking departure from formula, and was in its time an early indicator of the coming Revisionist Western.

For all of the film's inclusion of a subversive message about patriarchal authority and its criticism on the Cowboy figure, it is necessary to state that *Red River*, strictly speaking, contained more elements of the Classic Westerns than it did Revisionist ones. Additionally, while it did serve as a predecessor to such films as *The Searchers*, *Red River* did not at its release encourage any sort of revolution within the Classic Western and how the Western was understood. As an example, Wayne himself would go on to star in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *Rio Grande*,¹²³ the final films in John Ford's famous "Cavalry Trilogy", which celebrate and glorify the conquest of the Native Americans as the U.S. Cavalry fought them along the frontier.

These films were and still are firmly located in the Classic Western for their location of the protagonist within similar archetypes as that of the Cowboy, encouraging as they did violent conquest of a racialized other at the behest of a white, heterosexual male authority. After *Red River*, the next major film starring John Wayne in the production of the Revisionist Western would not come about until eight year later with the release of *The Searchers* in 1956, which would, contrary to *Red River*, spur recognition of itself as a part of the advent of a Revisionist Western genre. Of course, one could argue quite strongly that without the influence of *Red River* and its introduction of a critical stance on the figure of the Cowboy, *The Searchers* would not have been filmed, and so its importance remains.

relevance to an American populace that had withstood food shortages during the Great Depression and World War II. He also believes that the opposing types of leadership skills displayed by Dunson and Matt purposefully provided examples of good and bad labor relations soon after an era of widespread industry strikes in the U.S.

¹²³ *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, directed by John Ford; *Rio Grande*, directed by John Ford.

2.3.4 Revisionism in *The Searchers*: The Cowboy's Racism and His Objectification of Women

John Wayne, as the foremost symbol of the Western to most people in the 1940's, surprised audiences with his depiction of the tyrannical Dunson, even if his character was not at least recognized for its introduction of a criticism for the Cowboy character. More importantly, both to Wayne and to the development of the Revisionist Western, John Ford noticed. During a screening of *Red River* in what is now a famous incident in Hollywood, Ford remarked to another film-goer after seeing the movie that he had never known that Wayne had such acting abilities.¹²⁴ Wayne's clear drawing of Dunson's character into his portrayal of Ethan Edwards, the protagonist of *The Searchers*, is unmistakable. Both characters serve as a form of criticism against the authority of the patriarchal white, male Cowboy hegemon and the violent approaches an older generation takes in fanatical pursuit of their goals. In particular, the film emphasizes the violence this figure engages with as it attempts to reclaim women away from non-whites, expressing masculine identity as a conflict between the hegemonic Cowboy and the racialized 'Indians'.

The Searchers starts three years following the Civil War with Ethan Edwards unannounced return to his brother Aaron's Texas ranch. From the onset it is clear that Ethan shares a quiet romance with his sister-in-law Martha—though we are given little to know the full depth of their relationship.¹²⁵ Ethan treats his two nieces and nephew with fondness, though he has nothing but contempt and passive hostility towards his brother's adopted mixed-race son, Martin Pawley, who is one-eighth Cherokee. The next day a group of Texas rangers recruit Ethan and Martin to help them find cattle rustlers, though it becomes clear that the rustling was a ruse by a local band of Comanche 'Indians' meant to distract the rangers from the Edwards' ranch. Upon Ethan and Martin's return they find the homestead engulfed in ruinous flames, the men killed, Martha murdered and possibly raped, and the two daughters, Lucy and Debbie, kidnapped. Ethan and Martin join the rangers in pursuing the Comanche and the two girls. After a skirmish and the discovery of Lucy's possibly raped body, Ethan and Martin are left alone to continue their search.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 52. The story itself seems to have passed into some sort of Hollywood legend as an amusing anecdote that represents the growing awareness of not only a greater depth to Wayne's acting at the time, but to the significance and meanings of the entire Western genre. Strangely, Ford made this comment after making Wayne into a star in *Stagecoach* and directing him in four other leading roles and seven minor ones.

¹²⁵ This forbidden relationship is often written on as one of the definitive elements of Wayne's character, spurring friction between himself and Aaron as a man who seeks to disrupt the familial order by usurping his brother. This, however, never comes to fruition, though some have speculated that Ethan is in fact the father of at least some of Martha's children. This claim, though, is more or less made often without any real evidence to support it beyond Ethan's desperation in finding Debbie.

The two form a tenuous partnership that tested often by Ethan's deteriorating psychology and disdain for Martin's mixed-race heritage, and together they doggedly follow the Comanches and their leader, Chief Scar,¹²⁶ with the hope of rescuing Debbie. Their quest lasts the better part of a decade and carries them far across the western frontier.¹²⁷

As time passes, Ethan's drive for finding Debbie shifts away from rescuing her toward killing her instead, preferring that she be dead to her having been profaned by 'Indians'. Ethan, who continues to regard Martin's mixed-race heritage with disgust, despising the idea of miscegenation, falls further into despair at the prospect of Debbie's own involvement with the Comanche. Finally, they locate the camp where she is held and Ethan, torn between killing Debbie and saving her, scalps Scar—who has been killed by Martin—and gives chase after her. Martin's attempts to stop him are futile, but Ethan relents and lifts Debbie into the air before embracing her. Ethan brings her and Martin back to the Jorgensens, a homesteading family that Martin is intending to marry into, before turning away to 'wander the plains forever'.

Curiously, unlike *Red River*, which has been surprisingly consistent in its popularity since its initial release for being a film that caters as much as it does to standard formula, its criticism of Dunson notwithstanding, *The Searchers* has risen and fallen in the eyes of both critics and the viewing public over the years. Reviews were mixed as many film columnists, who were perhaps so inured to the status quo of the Western, had much difficulty in trying to interpret what was an ultimately morally convoluted tale from Ford, who at the time was known for usually being a director of feel-good stories.

Crowther applauded the film with his customary bravado: "[A] rip-snorting Western, as brashly entertaining as they come... Mr. Ford and his gang have plastered a wealth of Western action that has the toughness of leather and the sting of a whip" (21).¹²⁸ The reviewer for *Newsweek* was impressed by the more technical elements of the film, such as photography and set design, as well as the character development, and dialogue.¹²⁹ *Time* magazine, most notably, was utterly baffled by what to make of the film, ingrained as they were in the expectations of the standard,

¹²⁶ Played by Henry Brandon. Interestingly, the German version of the film translates the title of *The Searchers* to *Der Schwarze Falke*, a reference to Scar's name in the German version of the film. That the translation which shift the focus of the film's title from the supposed protagonists (the 'Searchers') to its antagonist (Scar) suggest an awareness in the shared position that both Ethan and Scar occupied.

¹²⁷ Nobody can ever agree on the exact length of Ethan and Martin's pursuit of Debbie and Scar. Various essays and reviews have ventured several estimates, ranging from two years to ten.

¹²⁸ Bosley Crowther, "Screen: 'The Searchers' Find Action."

¹²⁹ "Admirable Americana." pp. 116-117.

Classic Western narrative. They were, on the one hand, cognizant of Ethan's unapologetic racism, but on the other hand incapable of reconciling that with the heroic standard of the Cowboy figure.

Time alternately praised "a film as carefully contrived as a matchstick castle" and deplored "[t]he lapses in logic and the general air of incoherence," before concluding, in a manner that completely ignored the true tone of the ending, that "John Wayne seems to have done it once too often as he makes his standardized, end-of film departure into the sunset" (58, 60).¹³⁰ Robert Hatch was negative in his review for *The Nation*, critical of a mistaken belief that the film was celebrating Ethan's racism and the idea of killing Debbie. "The Searchers... is long on brutality and short on logic or responsible behavior.... [It] is a picnic for sadists in very beautiful country" (536).¹³¹ Yet despite the divisive reviews of the film, or perhaps even because of it, *The Searchers*' introduction of such strongly self-aware and critical commentary marks it as one of the first truly Revisionist Westerns with its focus on race, the subordination of women as trophies for white, hegemonic Cowboys, and the violent practice of normative processes.

Although the more complex elements of the film were largely missed by initial reviews of the film, later reviewers and scholars of the Revisionist Western would note its importance in helping to define the genre, and for its introduction of these elements as a form of criticism within the Western, forever transforming the Classic Western. As it was in *Red River*, so too does the majority of the film's drama and uncertainty stem between its older and younger protagonists, highlighting a conflict of generational values and beliefs. While the element of a youth / elder dynamic is still at play, *The Searchers* focuses this theme with the unmitigated racism of the lead character, which drives him relentlessly towards revenge. Unlike Dunson, who is at first a heroic pioneer, Ethan's nobility and commitment to justice—characteristics essential to any Western protagonist—are uncertain from the start, leaving audiences with only Wayne's star power to locate him within the Western genre, attributing presumptively characteristics expected of the protagonist to have.

Ethan's introduction to the audience is done as he rides into the Edwards' ranch proudly bearing the Confederate coat, an immediate external signifier of his racist *and* pointedly outdated beliefs, as the Civil War has been over for three years by now. When the Texas rangers confront

¹³⁰ "The New Pictures." This is an utterly befuddling review, in which much of the film seems to be completely beyond the reviewer. It is difficult to imagine how one reads into this film and still manages to miss the overtly critical tone it has concerning Ethan's own character and his development toward the self-exile he puts himself into.

¹³¹ Hatch, Robert. "Films."

him over his unrepentant allegiance and views still on displaying, Ethan defiantly retorts that “[I don’t] believe in surrenders. No, I still got my saber... didn’t turn it into no ploughshare neither.”¹³² Unlike Confederate veterans in other Westerns,¹³³ who were often treated sympathetically, having come to the West as a means of reinventing themselves, Ethan’s interests have nothing to do with reinvention. Ethan’s reasons for having fought in the Civil War brazenly stem from his belief in white supremacy and racial purity over any love for the South. Ethan’s loyalty to this cause of Confederacy is an acknowledgement of the movement of Southerners to the West following the Civil War and the values that they brought with them as they settled the West. It is an immediate portrayal of a figure typically associated with the protagonists of Westerns being transformed into the self-aware, critical protagonist: the Cowboy, then, wears his racist undertones on his sleeve, overtly displaying them for audiences.

The depth of Ethan’s racism and fear of losing racial purity extend into his conflict with Martin and for whom they individually search for: Martin, who is single-mindedly focused on Debbie’s rescue is dwarfed by Ethan’s unrelenting need for revenge against a race he despises. And, if need be, killing her so as to preserve her sexual purity. As an example of Ethan’s racist wrath, early in the search, Ethan and the party of rangers comes across the body of a dead Comanche warrior hastily buried by his brethren in a shallow grave in the middle of pursuit. Rather than let the body lie in peace, he shoots out the corpse’s eyes so that “he can’t enter the spirit land. He has to wander forever between the winds.”¹³⁴ Such unwarranted brutality revealed a violent and sadistic tone in the movie that was foreign to the Classic Western, highlighting not only the hegemonic Cowboy’s violent capacity, but the racist impetus behind it.

The Searchers is not a film which basks in its violence like later Westerns would, such as *The Wild Bunch*,¹³⁵ or *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*,¹³⁶ but the emphasis on Ethan’s revenge as the impetus of his search weds his actions to a broader belief system based on violent endeavors. The older Cowboy of *The Searchers* wears his racist fashions like his Confederate coat, working

¹³² *The Searchers*.

¹³³ The cavalry troupe commanded by Wayne as Capt. Nathan Brittles in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* contains both Union and Confederate veterans, who ride together in obvious harmony with no recriminations concerning the past. Likewise, in *Winchester ‘73*, Lin McAdam (Jimmy Stewart) and High Spade Frankie Wilson (Millard Mitchell) are friendly with Sgt. Wilkes (Jay C. Flippen) even after they realize they fought on different sides in the Battle of Bull Run. Also, it is clear after Matt Garth returns from the Civil War that he fought for the Confederates. *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*; *Winchester ‘73*, directed by Anthony Mann; *Red River*.

¹³⁴ *The Searchers*.

¹³⁵ Peckinpah, Sam, director. *The Wild Bunch*.

¹³⁶ Leone, Sergio, director. *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*.

toward the singular goal of either securing white women for his own, or executing them should they have been sexually used by the 'Indians'. Although nothing in the film overtly states as much, the implication is that the violence against Martha and Lucy was sexual in nature, that they were raped, an unthinkable violation in Ethan's eyes that transcends their deaths. As scholar Ken Nolley has written, "The invisibility of [their deaths] both signifies and constructs the unthinkable horror of [their] murder and supposed violation" (49).¹³⁷

In what are arguably some of Wayne's most emotive and powerful performances, he discloses these acts to the others: "What do you want me to do, draw you a picture? Spell it out? Don't ever ask me. Long as you live, don't ever ask me more,"¹³⁸ he yells when asked about his discovery of Lucy's body. No longer is the Cowboy the stoic hegemon dominative upon the West. Instead, as we see in Ethan, he is the emotionally turbulent, fragile, enraged figure who finds his own powerlessness entirely comprehensible, directing it openly against non-whites.

Scenes in which Ethan's expressed interest for revenge overpowered his desire to rescue Debbie are plentiful in the film: when the rangers, Ethan, and Martin pursue the Comanches early in the film, they catch up to them and Ethan urgently demands they raid Scar's encampment despite the stated risk he's told (and was well aware of) of Debbie being killed by the 'Indians' should the rangers attack. Debbie's safe return is entirely eclipsed by Ethan's rage and his wrath, demanding the eradication of the non-whites who would threaten white purity. Whenever Ethan and Martin question anyone, Ethan asks where to find Scar while Martin asks where to find Debbie, a clear distinction between the two as protagonists, with again the younger of the two more interested in the outcome which doesn't revolve around violence. When the film climax sees the rangers join Ethan and Martin in a final raid on Scar and the Comanche, Ethan's excitement over the slaughter is made clear when he tells them there are "About a dozen each, enough to go around."¹³⁹ Long after Martin kills Scar, Ethan finds his nemesis and scalps him, committing to an act he sees as a desecration of his white values which is, invariably, tied to 'Indian' savagery.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Ken Nolley, "John Ford and the Hollywood Indian."

¹³⁸ *The Searchers*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ This is also an act which arguably miscegenates Ethan in a way which allows for him to accept Debbie after she has been sexually integrated into the Comanche camp. It's worth noting though that this is done entirely within the context of violence, after Scar's death, and as a violation of his body. Ethan, though he does rescue Debbie in the end, could not have in any way allowed Scar to survive, much less for him to remain unmarred.

The racist origins of Ethan's fanatical search for revenge are expressed in subtler, non-violent scenes as well, a constant to his character and his motivations. Ethan distances himself from Martin as an outsider to the family from the onset of the film and throughout, goading him in to quitting their quest with the repeated line "[Debbie's] no kin to you at all."¹⁴¹ Ethan's racism boils over into an unrestrained slaughter when he begins to shoot buffalo after buffalo during a particularly hard winter, shouting at Martin that it would mean less food for the Comanche and all the other tribes. Ethan's horror over what he sees as the corruption of white purity reaches a peak when he and Martin find their way to a fort where a few captive white women are being cared for. When Ethan sees the insanity that has overwhelmed them his horror is palpable. He recognizes in them what may become of Debbie, and whispering, he tells the others "They ain't white, anymore. They're Comanche."¹⁴²

One of the most shocking moments in the film, and perhaps in the Western to the point of *The Searchers*' release, is when Ethan, Martin, and Debbie confront one another following their meeting with Scar in New Mexico. Debbie, trying to warn them to leave because she has settled into her life with the Comanche, has Ethan pull his guns out on her. Ethan then demands that Martin step aside so that he can execute Debbie, as her forced marriage to Scar has ruined her in his eyes, and she is now too 'no longer white', more 'Indian' than a part of his family.¹⁴³

It is in this moment more than any other that *The Searchers* solidly identifies itself as a Revisionist Western, for the Cowboy is no longer righteous or heroic, nor can the audience ignore his racist impetus for the search to sympathize with his cause. He is, instead, shown for what he truly is and it is only through Martin's rejection of his authority that Debbie is saved. Never before in the Classic Western had the mythos of the Western Cowboy been so deflated by the simple realities of hatred and violence. That John Wayne, the archetypal lawman and gunslinger of the Classic Western, would make it clear to the audience that murdering her niece over a perceived violation of her racial and sexual purity by 'Indians' was unreal to the popular understanding of the Cowboy as a noble, chivalrous figure. This confrontation between Ethan and both Martin and Debbie made clear the very unheroic intentions of the Cowboy and his obsession with revenge.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ The racism of Ethan in *The Searchers* was not only a factor in the film's demythologization of the traditional Western protagonist, but also a major theme itself with a definite historical context. This subject will be discussed in Chapter Five within the framework of the treatment and depiction of Indians in Revisionist Westerns.

In the famous last scene, Debbie is brought into the home of the Jorgensens while the opening music to the film plays. Martin and Laurie—Martin’s love interest in the film and an example of an inter-racial relationship that flies in the face of Ethan’s racism—follow Debbie and the other Jorgensens into the security and peace of the home. But Ethan remains beyond the frame of the door, outside of the home. He stands alone on the porch before turning away and walking into the empty desert as the door closes behind him, fading into the wind-swept sands, lost as the Comanche whose eyes he shot out.

The scene mirrors the introduction to the film and Ethan’s arrival into the West. However, for Ethan, a man of violence and vengeance, the idea of home was as remote to him as the idea of transcending his own blind fury and racism. As occurred at the end of *Shane* in 1949,¹⁴⁴ the monumental Western protagonist as best embodied by John Wayne found no sunset to ride off into, no home and family to go back to. The Cowboy was, from beginning to end, an outsider in the emerging civilization of the West. He had spent his life in conflict based on sexist notions of women’s supposed place in the world and the racialized basis upon which he defined his opposition.

Following the release of *The Searchers*, the film gradually was recognized for its artistic achievement and the drastic portrayal of its leading Cowboy figure, who in the end accedes to the progressive Martin’s pleas to spare Debbie. The film eventually became recognized as one of the greatest Westerns of all time, recognized for its cultural and critical impact on the Western. The resurgence of interest in the film sparked a reevaluation of the genre for broader shifts that might recognize it as something potentially different.¹⁴⁵ Richard Schickel, who wrote for *Life* and *Time* for many years, noted, “[I]t could be argued that in [*The Searchers*] Ford sent John Wayne riding for the first and last time into modernism... Obviously we are in the realm of the revisionist” (47).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Jack Schaeffer, *Shane*. Though the novel was first published as a whole in 1949, the original publication of *Shane* took place in 1946. As Richard Wheeler states in his 2007 “*Shane* by Jack Schaefer” in *Saddlebums Western Review*, that the book “was initially published in 1946 in three parts in Argosy magazine, and originally titled *Rider from Nowhere*.”

¹⁴⁵ This is due mostly to the enthusiasm for the movie expressed by a generation of filmmakers that came of age in the 1970’s, most notably Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and George Lucas, all of whom have in some way made reference to *The Searchers* in their own work. Their admiration of the film led many critics to reexamine the film, and in turn to reconsider it with a full appreciation for its cinematic artistry. Startlingly, British film critic Lindsay Anderson, as staunch a supporter of John Ford’s artistry as one can find, wrote, “*The Searchers* is an impressive work, the work of a great director; but it is not among [his] masterpieces.” Lindsay Anderson, *About John Ford*, (152).

¹⁴⁶ Schickel, Richard. *Schickel on Film*.

The majority of scholars and critics have focused on obvious elements of racism that are pronounced in Ethan's abhorrence to miscegenation, which has translated into a reexamination of how the Cowboy—as a mythic Western embodiment of white male hegemony—was laid bare to viewers and criticized. Arlene Hui noted that Martin was obviously a far more honorable and virtuous character than Ethan, in turn restating the same thematic elements to be found in *Red River*, simply taken a step further. Hui states that “*The Searchers*, while seemingly adhering to the stereotypes of the Western, undercuts them as the film unfolds. The white male hero... is not heroic, but a racist and psychologically disturbed man who will always remain outside society and the community” (204).¹⁴⁷

Ken Nolley understood the historical context of the film to reflect the emergent Revisionist Western, defining for later texts many of the themes that would later be developed upon. Nolley writes that the film is “reflective of changes in Ford, revealing in some measure a harsh attitude toward cultural enemies in the climate of 1939, just before the war, followed by the decay of an initially generous post-war optimism into cynical Cold War pessimism” (52).¹⁴⁸ As such, *The Searchers* revealed a culture adjusting to a world order that offered frightening new dangers and tensions, anticipating and reflecting the growing socio-cultural issues that would grip the entirety of the United States. For Brian Henderson, “[T]he uneasy relations between the restless hero, half-civilized, half-savage, and the community he benefits” becomes a symbol for cultural anxiety in 1950's and early 1960's America (10).¹⁴⁹

While there is always the potential for engaging the film with more significance and social awareness than what it merits, particularly in hindsight, it remains the case that John Ford was keenly aware of the issues at work in his film. In point of fact, as an adaptation of Alan LeMay's original novel of the same name, the Revisionist elements of the film are almost entirely created by Ford. Minor though significant changes between the film and the novel accentuate the problematic nature core to the Cowboy, emphasizing a violent and racist origin for his actions. As an example, the novel shows Ethan immediately returning to his brother's ranch after the Civil War rather than three years later, a change in the film which makes readily apparent the strength of Ethan's racist beliefs. Additionally, and more overtly, the novel depicts Ethan as having no over

¹⁴⁷ Hui, Arlene. “The Racial Frontier in John Ford's *The Searchers*.”

¹⁴⁸ Nolley, “John Ford and the Hollywood Indian.”

¹⁴⁹ Henderson, Brian. “*The Searchers*: An American Dilemma.”

hatred of ‘Indians’, a shift in the movie that Ford makes central to the film’s narrative and success.¹⁵⁰

If Ford had filmed *The Searchers* with this storyline, it would arguably now be a forgotten Western no different than the standard fare of the Classical Western genre. Both Ford and screenwriter Frank S. Nugent transformed the narrative into something which holds to its heart a reexamination of the traits driving the Classic Cowboy hero. *The Searchers* makes it a point to reevaluate the hegemonic, white, heterosexual male Cowboy, of which Wayne served as the most iconic representative figure for at the time of the film’s release—and, arguably, to this date. Their film reflected a growing cultural suspicion of such classic authority figures “on the eve of an era in which generational strife helped polarize U.S. society” (82).¹⁵¹

In combining the frontier thesis of Turner with the entertainment of Buffalo Bill Cody’s *Wild West Show*, the Classic Western became the fertile ground for the mythic narrative detailing America’s expansion westward and its development as a nation, as well as defining the ideal of American characteristics as seen in the Cowboy. Through an analysis of *The Ox-Bow Incident*, *Red River* and *The Searchers*, I have explored how the Revisionist Western distanced itself from the Classic Western through criticism and resistance to normative values. Both the novel and the two films stand out for their critique of the Cowboy as a hegemonic, violent figure, focusing on the deconstruction of the core element to the Classic Western genre concerning the values of American Exceptionalism that he represents. These examples also share a similar structure and thematic arc, featuring an older generation of Cowboys whose autocratic and homicidal intentions make apparent the problematic nature of the character.

The critique of the older generation by one that is younger—even miscegenated, as is the case with Martin Pawley—and more progressive in their views is also a questioning of the mythological underpinnings associated to the Cowboy concerning his role as an icon for white heteronormative males in the Classic Western. By directly placing a younger generation with progressive values and a greater sense of human care, these films cast the older generation of Cowboys as corrupt, violent, racist, and even villainous. The Revisionist Western is believed to be what first deconstructs the Cowboy and his oppressive normative construction of what socio-cultural America in the West should develop into. By addressing this problematic nature, the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 22; Hui, “The Racial Frontier,” pg. 203.

¹⁵¹ Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie*.

revisionist elements open the Western genre to non-normative identities and masculinities, marginalized figures who were previously othered into villains or rendered absent now brought into the center of the narratives. All the revisionist elements that transformed the genre in subsequent years trod a path first recognized in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, *Red River*, *The Searchers*, and their deconstruction of the traditional Western protagonist.

Taken together, *The Ox-Bow Incident*, *Red River* and *The Searchers* provide what could be called a clear and concise critique on the mythic qualities of the classic Cowboy as a hegemonic figure within the Classic Western. The novel and films directly confront the thematic structure of the Classic Western, based as the genre was on the figure of the Cowboy and his exploits. The perspective of society plays one of the more crucial roles in interpreting and understanding a text or film in the Classic Western to be openly critical of a concept, shifting the piece into Revisionist Western territory. The racism that was prevalent and natural in Henry Ford's 1946 *My Darling Clementine* was contextualized in Ford's movie and presented as the overt and wicked bigoted elements that they were, challenging the belief in their intrinsic natural order in the Western.¹⁵²

In the following chapter, however, I will extend this analysis of the Revisionist Western beyond a simple demarcation between the two genres. Rather, reading into Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, Zane Grey's *The Riders of the Purple Sage*, and Jack Schaefer's *Shane*, I will demonstrate how these earlier Classic Westerns complicate such an easy divide between the genres. Rather than simply accede to socio-cultural demands and expectations, these authors resist the oppressive normative values of the hegemonic male Cowboy and the expectations on the individual toward the community at the turn of the 20th Century.

¹⁵² This honor of making overt the racism in the West in film arguably belongs to *Broken Arrow* directed by Delmer Daves and *Devil's Doorway* directed by Anthony Mann. However, the transformative role of John Wayne's character in both *Red River* and *The Searchers* is indicative of a believed transformation within the genre, and so both films serve as unique examples. However, as I will argue in Chapter Three, these transformations and criticisms are not entirely unique to what is seen as the Revisionist Western and are quite apparent in canonical Classic Western literature.

Chapter Three: Challenges to the Classic Western from Within: The Subversive Cowboy in the Classic Western

3.1.0 Challenging the Revisionist Westerns

This chapter investigates revisionist elements in Classic Western texts. These elements range from the critique of socio-cultural demands on masculine figures to adhere to hegemonic normative constructs, institutions concerning the role of women—notably contrasted to clear identifiers of oppressive masculinities to those which are progressive—and their agency in society, and finally to non-normative relationships and attempts to dissuade newer generations from the violent aspects of the Cowboy masculinity for which it is known. The books which will be focused on are Owen Wister's 1902 *The Virginian*, Zane Grey's 1912 *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and Jack Schaefer's 1949 *Shane*. My reading of these canonical Classic Westerns suggests reconsidering the clear-cut genre distinction between Classic and Revisionist Westerns and an attempt to overcome those distinctions for their exclusion of progressive values, resistance to normative socio-cultural beliefs, and diversity of authors. The case studies here prove that Westerns considered to be Classic texts up to this point need to be read through the lens of Revisionist Westerns for containing clear elements of revisionism. I debunk previous genre assignments through my analysis in this chapter of the Cowboy as an epitomized Western character.

I will explore the Cowboy's treatment by these authors relative to his role in masculine hegemony. I will discuss how resistances to institutions which demanded his oppressive actions while subordinating women and non-whites can be found even in the Classic Western despite being criticisms that are believed to be isolated to the Revisionist Western. I will also show the ways in which authors portray women arguing for and demonstrating a desire for individuality, emancipation, and sexual freedom. Additionally, this chapter will examine how these narratives subvert traditional, normative institutes of marriage and sexual relationships. The study will cast new perspective into the canonical literature of the Classic Western, known the world over, and challenge its positioning against that of the Revisionist Western.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Richard White in *Trails: Toward a New Western History* comments on the global interpretation of the cowboy and the understanding of this genre's representation of the region, stating that, "for more than a century the American West has been the most imagined section of the US" (613).

Although the Classic Western is known for dramatizing the triumph of American virtues over the presence of marginalized non-whites and women, they also explore the dark side of a dominant masculine self-image, albeit in subtle, uncertain ways.¹⁵⁴ Upon consideration of the Cowboy's exploits, such as the *Virginian* or *Lassiter*, the awareness of their positions and actions make the authors of these texts peculiarly alive to the grave injustices of the social order they portray, especially as those injustices bear on people of color and women.¹⁵⁵ Yet, although each of these texts do contain within their bodies strong elements of counter-narratives and the like, they never seem to do so in fully pre-mediated, calculated ways. Instead, these texts present themselves as a disproportionate doubleness that, while it is aware of the injustices it portrays, portrays them nevertheless—though to varying degrees.

The Classic Western examples discussed in this chapter operate on an impulse of self-subversion that, as I will argue, anticipates the movement of the Revisionist Western, complicating the easy classification of texts within the periodized canon of Westerns. As Forrest Robinson argues in *Having it Both Ways*, “Suffice it here to say that Western literary discourse, especially of the popular variety, betrays a persistent pattern of doubleness, or self-subversion, in which conflicting moral perspectives compete for preeminence” (3). This self-subversion is the resulting effect of prominent social and political ideals obscuring the complexity of Classic Western narratives with beliefs which match the water-shed moments of socio-cultural upheaval running concurrent with the birth of the Revisionist Western. This complexity within the Classic Western places genre into the time “before” the popularization of Revisionist Western themes, yet contains within the Classic Western elements that anticipate the Revisionist Western. This ultimately has the effect of retroactively essentializing the Classic Western into a collection of canonical texts with which to focus more overt subversions and counter-narratives, despite elements of these existing in the texts they juxtapose themselves to.

¹⁵⁴ Most prominently is this seen in Jack Schaefer's *Shane*, wherein Bob is told by the eponymous protagonist that what happened to the Native Americans wasn't called for, and should not be sought after. However, even in the more overt arguments against Native Americans, as can be seen in Louis L'Amour's library of works, there exist resonances of respect (typically presented in a bungled fashion) and regret over the loss of Native cultures. The caveat is that this loss is also portrayed as a necessary action, and that it vindicated the will and character of America as a nation to successfully expand westward. This is perhaps best seen in *Shalako*, wherein Shalako himself has learned much of his skills from Native Americans and laments their loss at his hands, but inevitably presses onward after he defeats their greatest warrior. Of course, this is simply done because white men appropriate their skills and in a shameless display of arrogance “do better as Indians than the Indians”. See Chapter Five for more on Native America representation in Westerns.

¹⁵⁵ See further on for examples of this in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and to some extent *Shane*.

Although the Revisionist Western attempts to distance itself from the Classic Western in many ways, a noticeable bridge between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western remains. The Revisionist Western still contains the staples of mythological narrative, operating in a language and setting that suggests an origin for the United States.¹⁵⁶ However, the symbolism is used for a different purpose, complicating that mythogenesis in such a way that diversity in the people who partook in that origin becomes a fact from which audiences today cannot look away.¹⁵⁷ The mythology that the Western displays depicts a modified yet self-reflective realization of the viewers' desires and ideals. What was true with the Classic Western, with the portrayal of myth reflecting the will of a white masculine hegemony, so too does the Revisionist Western also reflect a mythology concerning American development in the West. Here, however, it is a reflection of a transformation in audience attitudes and culture,¹⁵⁸ emphasizing the recognition of a multicultural, multiethnic presence in the West.

The textual evidence provided below demonstrates the problematic nature of an attempt to offer a clean-cut periodization of the Revisionist Western against that of the Classic Western, and what is excluded in a reading that does attempt to preemptively divide the Classic Western from these revisionist elements.¹⁵⁹ Contrary to the belief that the Cowboy of the Classic Western reinforces and projects uncritically a belief in white male hegemony, I suggest that this archetype finds its origins rather in a multidimensional representation of masculinity. In this chapter, I will be analyzing the origins of the Classic Western through the lens of the Revisionist Western, not with the intent of defining one against the other, but in challenging the validity of their demarcation. When analyzing the Classic Western, then, there is no better place to start than where the Cowboy himself is believed to have found his first true materialization: in Owen Wister's 1902 *The Virginian*, whose popularity alone suggests the influence that Wister had on the genre.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ This is notable in the presence of a grandiose setting upon which the protagonist is typically pitted against, framing the largeness of his or her endeavor and quest / journey (depending on the particular narrative structure) so that it takes on a more dramatic feeling, implying definitive moments in the formation of the nation, if not simply the region. As for an example, Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* employs just such tactics in its representation of the West and of Cowboy figures, but is done so for other, more self-aware and even critical reasons.

¹⁵⁷ For more on the Revisionist Western, see Chapter One and Two.

¹⁵⁸ See Clark Mitchell's *Westerns: making the man in fiction and film*, pg. 226.

¹⁵⁹ Contrary to Matthew Carter, however, who focuses his deconstruction of differences between the genres on the presence of disillusionment, my interest lies in the presence of elements within the Classic Western that anticipates and finds resonance with later, more modern Westerns over such issues as class, race, and gender, specifically concerning representations and deconstructions of masculinity.

¹⁶⁰ As John Bright-Holmes writes in his review "How the west was spun" he discusses both the novel and its impact on his life, mentioning the popularity of the book and its high sales numbers: "Published in 1902, it had achieved

3.2.0 *The Virginian* – Wister’s Formulation of Eastern and Western Values of Masculinity

While *The Virginian* stands as an oft-cited beginning to the Classic Western genre and as the first instance of the Cowboy in American Western fiction, perhaps just as interesting is his author’s own personal history. Wister, pushed away from expressing himself in musical endeavors and other artistic actions, fell into depression and was sent West under the belief that he would there rejuvenate his masculinity. The experience was formative, not only in creating a conceptual masculinity figure for Wister that would find form in the *Virginian* as ‘real’ or ‘socially acceptable’, but also in defining a regional set of values and characteristics that influenced the individual: to Wister, the environment of the West shaped men to be more masculine, whereas the environment of the East threatened to make men effeminate. Yet it is precisely the socio-cultural expectation of this regionalized demands on gendered identity that Wister attempts to resist.

Mody Boatright states that “as an advocate of racism, Anti-semitism, social Darwinism, and laissez-faire economics, Wister seems like an unlikely author of a critique of Western masculinity” (160-162).¹⁶¹ Barbara Will contests that, for Wister, *The Virginian* served as a personal diary, “narrated from the semi-autobiographical perspective” of the unnamed narrator. From this reading of the novel as a text which is therapeutic in nature, we see how Wister responds to the psychological burdens of an oppressive socio-cultural code for masculine expectations.¹⁶² This reading of the *Virginian* as a Cowboy who is self-subversive gains validity, albeit in a whining, apathetic manner, over the course of the novel as Wister vents his frustrations. Wister, at the age of twenty-five, was forced by his father to forsake his musical promise and pursue a legal career, something that Wister considered to be a “detested occupation” and a “gloomy thing” (Wister quoted by Edward White, 123).¹⁶³ His dread and depression led to a nervous breakdown, and following the gendered instructions of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, Wister was sent West to find

astonishing sales in the US: 20,000 copies in its first month, 300,000 in its first year. By 1938, the year Wister died, the total had risen to 1.5m, and the book had been filmed three times.” John Cobbs, in his book *Owen Wister*, also mentions that *The Virginian* was greeted with “unprecedented public acceptance” as it was reprinted fourteen times in its first eight months of publication (24, 73). John Nesbitt also mentions that, “as demonstrated by its sales of 1.6 million hardcover copies between 1902 and 1952, it has been perennial[ly] popular” (199, 208). Nesbitt, John D. “Owen Wister's Achievement in Literary Tradition.” pp. 199–208.

¹⁶¹ Boatright, Mody C. “The American Myth Rides the Range: Owen Wister's Man on Horseback.” pp. 157–163.

¹⁶² Will, Barbara. “The Nervous Origins of the American Western.” pp. 293–316.

¹⁶³ White, Edward. *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience: The West of Frederic Remington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Owen Wister*.

physical and psychological relief.¹⁶⁴ West, because it was in this region that masculinity was to be encouraged, distinct from the East's industrialism and urban spaces which for those like Mitchell signified a shift toward femininity.

Thus Wister travelled to the West in 1885 as a means of treating his nerves based on the socio-culturally held belief that the West held rejuvenating properties for men. As Jane Kuenz writes, "Like the treatment prescribed in ["The Yellow Wallpaper"], Mitchell's diagnosis of and prescription for Wister's neuralgia was highly gendered," with Mitchell advising for Wister a treatment of "physical exertion untainted by manual labor and a little free time in big sky country" (110).¹⁶⁵ In contrast, the type of treatment that women received from Mitchell focused on their confinement to the home, and was intended to enforce the standards of middle-class feminine behavior so that they would "enjoy the confinement of the private sphere at the very moment they were being shoved definitively into it" (110).

In direct opposition to that was the male's experience in the West, which was intended to reconcile young men like Wister to the "gendered requirements of the modern businessman, in his case, to the loss of music and a life in banking" (110).¹⁶⁶ Countering fears young men had concerning their cultural and economic conditions at the end of the nineteenth century, men like Wister were encouraged to see the West as a site for the realization of those masculine ideals that stood against the 'hostile' new world around them.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the definition between the East and the West was understood culturally as a gendered one.

¹⁶⁴ Barbara Will's "The Nervous Origins of the Western" discusses at some length the internalized resistance to the role Wister had been forced into. Silas Weir Mitchell, a psychologist whose approach toward dealing with 'neurasthenia' in women was to have them confined in domestic spaces which he believed to be better suited to their sex. For men, however, "Mitchell's prescriptions for curing male neurasthenics were exactly the reverse of those for female sufferers: rather than being sent to bed, male patients were told to "go West and seek rest," and to record this experience in writing" (293). Thus, being told that the West was a site for the rejuvenation of Wister's psychology and masculinity, there is a clear correlation to why Wister would associate the region with the Cowboy and a form of dominant hegemony. However, Wister still resists this through the infrequent contemplations of the Virginian, doubting the actuality of the West and the Cowboy figures as epitomes for a dominant masculinity and, in turn, whether that was the only true form of masculinity that should be accepted. I will discuss later in this chapter the socio-cultural pressures that the Virginian responds to so that he better fits the role of the masculine hegemon.

¹⁶⁵ Kuenz, Jane. "The Cowboy Businessman and 'The Course of Empire': Owen Wister's 'The Virginian.'" pp. 98–128.

¹⁶⁶ Of note here is that the Virginian is engaging with acts of writing throughout the novel, establishing it as a male pursuit and a means by which men can express themselves and, following this, inform and influence others.

¹⁶⁷ Hostile, of course, in the sense that men were losing their uncontested position in the workforce to women and other marginalized figures.

Neal Lambert has posited in his establishment of Wister's *Virginian* as a cultural hero,¹⁶⁸ that the cultural dialectic between the East and the West typically ascribed values of refinement and femininity to the East, whereas the West was rugged, masculine, and reserved. Contrary to his view,¹⁶⁹ the opposition was much more complicated, involving expressions of values that were considered feminine with the masculine persona of the Cowboy. Martin Pumphrey explains that the Cowboy is not diametrically opposed to the Eastern or the feminine, but is rather positioned between refined women and anarchic villains: "the hero's masculine toughness must be partially feminized" (82).¹⁷⁰

This partial femininity in the figure of the Cowboy is not the mere expression of certain values that would be located to the East. Rather, the effect this has on the Cowboy character is highlighting problematic dimensions to his hypermasculine construction. Donald C. Jones adds that, "When the complex characteristics of Wister's original figure are conceived as gender-related traits... the flaws of the subsequent rugged, reserved cowboy [are exposed]" (9).¹⁷¹ To this end, when the *Virginian* as a character expresses a repressed yearning for a more tender, vulnerable intimacy, something that "Western masculinity labels antithetically as Eastern and feminine" (7), he reflects Wister's own resistance to the masculine definitions pushed upon him while in the West.

John Seelye expresses the accepted, traditional reading of *The Virginian*, writing that "Wister... rose to literary fame as a chronicler of the western barracks and bunkhouse, writing short stories in which women are either absent or cast in roles that emphasize a *fatal unsuitableness* to the landscape" (317-318, my emphasis).¹⁷² Contrary to Seelye's analysis however, and against the idea of gendered regions reflecting suitability for either men or women, the fatal unsuitability of the landscape in *The Virginian* was not contained simply to women. Rather, both masculine and feminine constructs of identity that did not fit the role of the white, heteronormative Cowboy, ranging from Molly to the ill-fated, lazy Shorty and to the 'Indians' who briefly flash through the novel, were all at risk.

¹⁶⁸ "Owen Wister's *Virginian*: The Genesis of a Cultural Hero".

¹⁶⁹ White, Edward. *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience*.

¹⁷⁰ Pumphrey, Martin. "Why do cowboys wear hats in the bath? Style politics for the older man." pp. 78-100.

¹⁷¹ Jones, Donald, C. "The Unexpected Burden of Manhood in Owen Wister's '*The Virginian*.' 'Can't Yu' See How It Must Be About A Man?"

¹⁷² Seelye, John. "Captives, Captains, Cowboys, Indians: Frames of Reference and the American West." pp. 304-319.

More importantly, however, is that the *Virginian* expresses ideas of questioning masculine social order in the West and expectations for men to fulfill those orders at all—albeit briefly, and often in a manner that is unproductive and glossed over. The *Virginian* as a Cowboy is thus positioned, at least partially, as non-normative to the ideal of the archetype for the Western white heterosexual masculine hegemon. However, over the course of the novel the *Virginian*’s brief musings over ‘what it means to be a man’ are called childish dreams, and so the *Virginian* returns to the West and establishes his patriarchal dynasty over a vast field of enterprises in Wyoming, fulfilling the socio-cultural, gendered expectations of American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny. Both the *Virginian* and Wister concede, in the end, to the expectations held of them to perform the “responsibilities” of the hegemonic Western male. Yet, while this may have been the conclusion to their stories, the examination for the arguments that are made by the *Virginian* and others concerning the expectations of the Cowboy masculine figure highlights how the novel, before the Classic Western was even established, anticipates the Revisionist Western with its criticism and discourse concerning non-normative masculinities.

3.2.1 The *Virginian* and Language: the Vocalization of Societal Demands Concerning Masculinity

Owen Wister’s novel *The Virginian* serves as a unique point of analysis for the vocalization of the Cowboy construct and the beginning of his career as a mythic hero within American culture, not least of all for being the first Western to feature the Cowboy prominently.¹⁷³ The wide-spread appeal for this figure and the push that made him out to be an ideal masculine character are to be found in Wister’s definition of the *Virginian*, seen throughout the novel by both the narrator’s description of him and his actions, as well as his success against all others in every field he tries his hand.¹⁷⁴ The Cowboy’s adoration from other men, who are depicted as lesser when compared to the *Virginian*, encourage the hegemonic placement of the Cowboy figure above other male figures who do not fit the expectations of the Cowboy’s racial and class-based status.

¹⁷³ In clarifying my examination of masculinity within the American West, I will mention in passing various dime-novel texts and the occasional B western film to illustrate a point of analysis or critique that I am making. Others, like Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*, will occupy a longer focus because of their standing out within the field upon either side of my reading: in the case of *The Virginian*, my interest lies not only in its originating of dominant themes and constructions of patriarchal, white masculinity, but also in its ambiguous, even contradictory resistance to these constructions.

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter Two for more on the ‘Mary Sue’ character.

The clearest example of the Virginian's attempts to vocalize an authority over women dependent on his status as a hegemon is in his desperate appeal to Molly for her understanding in his dueling Trampas. However, in attempting to argue the idea that society expects and demands that he confront Trampas, the Virginian is unable to voice his concerns over what may happen to his reputation as a man should he fail to rise up to this challenge. He tells her, "What men say about my nature is not just merely an outside thing. For the fact that I let 'em keep on sayin' it is a proof I don't value my nature enough to shield it from their slander and give them their punishment" (407-8). Here, a clear acknowledgment concerning social pressure is given, and the Virginian feels obligated to accede to the demands of a socio-cultural norm concerning masculine honor. Specifically, it is a concern over 'what men say', placing the dialogue concerning this gendering of the West into a public sphere that is notably male-dominated in nature. However, despite all this he is unable to define his masculinity to Molly in a clear way, and so language fails him. In the Virginian's conflict over socio-cultural demands and Molly's disapproval, he finds that language and his emotions become conflicted and thus he is unable to voice his ideas.

Daniel Worden writes that "Emotions in *The Virginian* are legible in public but often opaque in private. Only after an emotion has been noted by another can the feeling subject recognize the emotion" (71).¹⁷⁵ This suggests that externalized forces influence the beliefs and behaviors of the characters, convincing them that what they do is in fact what they want to do.¹⁷⁶ In many ways, Wister's writing of the Virginian contours to the construction of the hegemonic masculinity that later novelists would build into an archetype. Yet Wister criticized these constructions prior to their establishment without ever overtly doing so, creating a protagonist who is emotional, at times verbose yet eloquent, surprisingly shy toward violence, and ultimately opposed—at least in private, however tepid—to the performativity of masculinity.

The role of language and communication relative to the Cowboy's expectation in the socio-cultural American West becomes more obvious concerning the case of Molly and the Virginian's wedding. Both persons only recognize their love for one another when told by third parties that

¹⁷⁵ Worden, Daniel. *Masculine Style: The American West and Literary Modernism*.

¹⁷⁶ For an excellent examination into the process of gender performativity, see Judith Butler's 1988 essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", which frames this concept within the analogy of theater performance, distinguishing between the public and private spheres' concepts for what is believed to be acceptable behavior. In the context of the Virginian, it is only ever in the private sphere with the unnamed narrator and again later with Molly, where he is believed to be her equal, that he begins to confide in her his resentment toward the expectations placed onto him about performing his masculine role in the public sphere.

they are attracted to each other, or that the other is attractive. Worden adds that “this externalization of emotion—as something caused in public and later acknowledged privately — does not so much naturalize as publicize marriage” (71). The final establishment of the patriarchy that the Virginian creates by the novel’s end, with his grasp on both industry and a legacy of sons, is not so much a natural process, then, but one that has been manufactured so as to maintain a social norm. This is of particular necessity for the role of the white heterosexual male in a society who is acting as a representation of a hegemon. Wister’s ending to the novel signifies a resignation to the demands of society rather than an overt confirmation of these masculine roles and the superiority of them.

With regard to the Virginian’s position in society as a hegemon and Wister’s own lamenting of that demand for just a performative identity, language and the use of language plays the largest role in the novel. This is above even the physical threat of violence or the use of the gun, as language and the ability to articulate is in the grounding of discourse on a variety of subject matters in *The Virginian*, ranging from violence and justice to women’s subordination to men.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps even more so than any actual violence in the text, of which there is little. Concerning this lack of typical Western conflict, Lee Clark Mitchell writes that:

The classic identifying functions of the western are either absent or no more than vaguely implied: the hero is not a mysterious loner nor is the villain a menacing figure, and neither one poses a significant threat to the social order. The novel so contravenes formula, in fact, as to seem at least scarcely a ‘western’ at all. (66)¹⁷⁸

Quick wit and the use of intelligence is prized in *The Virginian* over the typically violent responses later Westerns would adopt, an element Ford similarly criticized through Ethan in *The Searchers*. Donald C. Jones adds that “Unlike his successors whose masculinity increasingly depends upon their virility, the Virginian’s heroic stature also depends upon his discerning eye and his rhetorical flair” (2).¹⁷⁹ That is to say that the Virginian’s stature as a mythic hero of the West depends less

¹⁷⁷ While I am making an argument for the subversive element of counter-narratives within what is termed the Classic Westerns, it should be made clear that this does not mean that the Classic Western is entirely devoid of those elements for which it is precisely, and rightfully, criticized. However, it is important to bear in mind when making and reading this criticism that these texts should not be reduced solely to their faults, and precisely the argument of this dissertation that alongside these representations of hegemonic masculinity, nationalism, and even racism—perhaps even despite these issues—they exhibit counter-narratives within their own bodies that predict and resonate with the criticism they receive later.

¹⁷⁸ Mitchell, Lee Clark. ““When You Call Me That...”: Tall Talk and Male Hegemony in *The Virginian*”. pp. 66–77.

¹⁷⁹ “The Unexpected Burden of Manhood in Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*”.

on his confrontation with Trampas than it does with his conversations with Molly and the unnamed narrator.

Thus, not only is the Virginian's masculinity as a Cowboy established through the gunfight with Trampas and his other physically demanding tasks (all done with ease and skill, naturally), but so more so is the Virginian's masculine stature established verbally between himself and others. And again, the most evident example lies in his dialogue with Molly, where he always eventually wins out. Mitchell also adds that "in a region becoming rapidly easternlike [sic], at a time when the suffrage movement was regaining strength, Wister offered an elegy for the old West that was also a defense of male hegemony" (67).¹⁸⁰ Indeed, the conversation with Molly and the unnamed narrator that the Virginian has are the true showdowns and climaxes of the novel. More important than any action performed by the Virginian is his careful rhetoric for the subordination of both women and—albeit with reluctance—non-normative male identities while simultaneously acknowledging his distaste for these acts of oppression.

To illustrate the point, even in the Virginian's duel with Trampas, the preceding dialogue between the two never evolves to the point of arguing or eloquence of the Virginian's lengthy verbal triumphs over Molly.¹⁸¹ Yet both men see the need to put their argument into the context of language. Mitchell adds that "the narrative logic becomes clear when one realizes that, however less skilled Trampas is as a wordsmith, he nonetheless shares the Virginian's belief in the shaping power of words" (70-71).

Molly is the only character who disputes this view—and her dispute is met by the words of the Virginian, an icon for white masculine hegemony—right up to the very moment that she folds to the Virginian's legitimation of male hegemony.¹⁸² This is important because, as a woman who stands opposed to the Virginian, at least in terms of ideology, she represents a radical alternative to his male hegemony until she ultimately succumbs to him. Molly's argumentative loss here and subordination into the background at the novel's end culminates into the affirmation

¹⁸⁰ "'When You Call Me That...': Tall Talk and Male Hegemony in *The Virginian*".

¹⁸¹ This is to say, that Trampas himself never manages to rise to the level of language use and persuasiveness that the Virginian (or anyone else, really) does. As a character Trampas unfortunately becomes one dimensional because of his inability to communicate his views, leaving himself to either make terse threats or curses, or to engage in vaguely threatening actions which, together, culminate into the Virginian eventually meeting him in kind.

¹⁸² As I mention later, this is only part of the case, as the Virginian himself has sincere misgivings about his own participation in the performance and execution of hegemonic masculinity in Western society, though it is notable first in his lamenting Steve's death to the unknown narrator and then again to Molly before he kills Trampas, and finally at the reclusive honeymoon paradise located in the wilderness, specifically from any public spheres where scrutiny would follow the Virginian's lamenting society's demand on him to perform his masculinity.

of the Virginian's domineering standards, even though he reluctantly ascribes to them. Language then, and the Virginian's efforts to educate himself so that he could be the better scholar than Molly,¹⁸³ become the means by which social hierarchy define themselves.

To explore the climax of the novel further, which is, rather than the gunfight between Trampas and the Virginian, his attempt at persuading Molly into accepting the need for conflict and the violent assertion of the Virginian as sole victor in the West. Jones writes that "the burden of the masculine code is dangerously exposed when the Virginian meets a manly iconoclast who is almost his rhetorical equal. This daunting figure, of course, is not Trampas, but Molly" (5).¹⁸⁴ Prior to this discussion concerning the morality of the Virginian's meeting Trampas in combat, however, the Virginian also seeks out the advice of a local Bishop.

The Virginian, rather than speak to Molly first about these events, seeks out the authority of a higher, more notably masculine power. The Bishop is of course male and in turn represents Christianity's verbal argument against the Virginian's decision, though he in the end gives tacit blessing to the Virginian's confrontation and thus violent masculine conquest:

[The Bishop] knew that Trampas was an evil in the country, and that the Virginian was a good man. He knew that the cattle thieves—the rustlers—were gaining in numbers and audacity; that they lead many weak young fellows to ruin; that they elected their men to office, and controlled juries; that they were a staring menace to Wyoming. His heart was with the Virginian. (402)

In the context of the Virginian's resistance to the normative demands of masculine hegemony, his desperation to find counter-arguments or non-normative opinions that would allow him to defer his forced duel with Trampas stand out. The Virginian does not want to fulfill the expectations of the socio-cultural West concerning his 'responsibilities' as a man. Because he ironically lacks the will or strength to stand up for himself, and cannot find another man to make his argument for him, he must go before Molly and assert his actions as righteous. Except he does not. The Virginian blames his 'responsibility', a deflection to the will of the socio-cultural West, and leaves to kill Trampas even at the risk of losing his marriage. The Virginian's attempt to appeal to what may

¹⁸³ Notably to the point where he has surpassed his teacher, Molly, dismissing her views on texts for readings that she finds insightful and clever.

¹⁸⁴ "The Unexpected Burden of Manhood in Owen Wister's *The Virginian*."

be higher than the socio-cultural constructs and expectations of him in performing his masculinity are ultimately met with failure and he is thus forced to kill Trampas.

However, the Virginian argues with the Bishop that “I have given [my life] to her. But my life’s not the whole of me. ...I can’t give my—my—we’ll never get at it, seh! There’s no good in words” (404). His reluctance to name the unspoken rule of the male hegemon to adhere to social expectations a second time and his unwillingness to give it up for Molly are at once the Virginian’s admittance of the pressure put upon him to perform his identity as the male hegemon, and yet also Wister’s own unwillingness to confront it. As Jones states, “to continue would be to state his unwillingness to relinquish his manly honor and to name the masculine code explicitly would subject it to critical analysis” (5). Unlike Lee Clark Mitchell, who first wrote on the importance of language in *The Virginian*, Jones notes that the Cowboy hero’s dependence on language ultimately places “his Western masculinity vulnerable to deconstructive critique” (5). However, Jones also neglects to discuss the importance this has on the shaping power hegemony has on societal values, and why it is that Trampas, who questions the Virginian’s very character, is ultimately the one punished for having done so.

As Molly and the Virginian’s argument begins with the Virginian’s timid explanation for how events escalated so as to force the two into a duel, he emphasizes both for him and for Trampas the importance external factors had on their following through with their threats:

“I did my best,” he went on. “I think I did. I know I tried. I let him say to me before them all what no man has ever said, or ever will again. I kept thinking hard of you--with all my might, or I reckon I’d have killed him right there. And I gave him a show to change his mind. I gave it to him twice. I spoke as quiet as I am speaking to you now. But he stood to it. And I expect he knows he went too far in the hearing of others to go back on his threat. He will have to go on to the finish now.” (406)

Trampas’ folly, of course, is in his failing to take the opportunity that the Virginian has provided him, that is, in the opportunity the hegemon gives him in walking away from the challenge. Both are thus compelled by the social world around them into conflict lest their masculine characters (or rather, their performances) become tarnished. In her objections to the match between him and Trampas, Molly proves herself the Virginian’s rhetorical equal and exposes the actual basis of his Western hegemonic masculinity:

“I work hyeh. I belong hyeh. It’s my life. If folks came to think I was a coward—”

“Who would think you were a coward?”

“Everybody. My friends would be sorry and ashamed, and my enemies would walk around saying they had always said so. I could not hold up my head again among enemies or friends.”

“When it was explained—”

“There’d be nothing to explain. There’d just be the fact.” (407)

The Virginian’s behavior, and that of the hegemonic Cowboy, is understood in terms of how it is conditioned by the Western community, rather than “being dependent on an innate masculinity as is suggested by earlier phrases like ‘natural man’ and an ‘untamed man’” (Jones, 6).

The Virginian, exasperated by the risk of naming his vulnerabilities—his own masculinity and its adherence to social expectations of its performance—cuts Molly off, telling her “I am goin’ my own course... Can’t yu’ see how it must be about a man?” (408). He has been swallowed by the community of Cowboys whose codes “necessitates the showdown with Trampas and conceals its own context by precluding discussion of the code itself as unmanly” (Jones 6). He is, in this case, and again in his excursion into the wilderness for their honeymoon, less the master of the rhetoric behind establishing male hegemony and more so reluctant participant to its domineering position in society. After all, as the unnamed narrator tells the reader, “There was seldom a day that [the Virginian] was not *obliged* to hasten and save me from sudden death or from ridicule, *which is worse*” (57, my emphasis).

Jones writes that when the Virginian defends his acquiescing to Trampas’ demand for a gunfight, he does so in order to maintain his status within the West. The Virginian, and through him Wister, acknowledge the conditioned expectation of his masculinity:

This justification unintentionally reveals that the Virginian’s behavior is conditioned by his Western community, rather than being dependent on an innate masculinity as is suggested by earlier phrases like “natural man” and an “untamed man”. (6)¹⁸⁵

The Cowboy’s actions and the doling out of his justice provide for the reader a manifestation of the values adhered to in the culture espousing the Cowboy figure. The Virginian, by ignoring Molly, is forced into the confrontation out of society’s expectation of him to meet Trampas in

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

battle.¹⁸⁶ Despite how much he may prefer to leave the matter alone, he must kill Trampas so as to preserve the image of his manhood — in the eyes of the western community, to Molly, and to the reader as well.¹⁸⁷

Wister's reluctance to name this masculine code— an act that later authors would do, and do willingly—is because he himself is unable to confront his own disbelief in its value via the Virginian's character. And so, like the Virginian, he adheres to the community's wishes and props up the Virginian as the victorious hegemon, both in rhetoric and in combat, that he is expected to be. The result is a conclusion where the Virginian gains great success and land, begins a dynasty in multiple enterprises, and Molly fades to the sphere of domesticity.

3.2.2 Emotion in *The Virginian*: the Appeal of Non-Normative Masculinities through the Gentle Treatment of Animals

While encouraging a singular construct of masculinity as being predominant, Wister at the same time demonstrates certain desires and attractions for alternative masculine identities, and in all instances where this fondness is demonstrated emotions in the Virginian find expression. Wister's fondness for the unnamed narrator, as an example, is a reflection of his own experiences traveling from the East to the West and the naivety he experienced, yet the unnamed narrator is nowhere near the Cowboy that the Virginian is. Additionally, the Virginian sees a close bond and affection for the unnamed narrator, recognizing him as a non-normative masculine figure. Wister's portrayal of the Virginian implies a sense of regret and disagreement with the treatment of minority

¹⁸⁶ As Richard Howson states in *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*, “hegemonic masculinity provides its own form of justice, which is delivered through the adherence, or at least, the desire to adhere, to certain privileged principles that set the benchmark for social order” (4). The concept of hegemonic masculinity, as developed and articulated by Connell, is an attempt to synthesize some of the fundamental ideas from Gramsci's theory of hegemony, such as the emphasis on socio-cultural and ideological structures and processes, the importance of history as a generative force, and recognition of praxis or the nexus between theory and practice, with his own practice-based masculinities theory. Herein, then, the Virginian must become the symbol for social order out of a society's demand that he fulfill his masculine duties. He is in this way stripped of his autonomy and is, ironically, gendered beyond his own control.

¹⁸⁷ Mike Donaldson posits that all masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity, do not operate within an autonomous gender system. To see masculinities in this way directs attention to an introspective view of gender that is incapable of recognizing any exteriority. Without recognition of the exteriority of gender, there can be no hope for challenge to a dominative masculine hegemony that has effectively covered all its bases. In the above analysis, hegemonic principles have been argued to represent the defining and privileged values, norms and beliefs as well as the strategies employed to ensure the maintenance and expansion of a particular hegemony in any one situation. Therefore, closer examination of these principles is imperative to understanding the nature of the benchmark and how it operates within the current socio-cultural and historical situation. Donaldson, Mike. “What is Hegemonic Masculinity?”

masculinities, such as that of the unnamed narrator. A similar feeling is expressed in the Virginian's lamentation over the expectations imposed on men in the West, even if he chooses not to change in any meaningful way following these introspective thoughts.

Similarly, in the hanging of Steve, an old friend of the Virginian and cow-puncher turned rustler,¹⁸⁸ the Virginian bursts forth in emotion to the unnamed narrator, whom he is alone with. The Virginian expresses his regret for being unable to publicly mourn having been forced into the position of leading the lynch mob against the rustlers and in turn hanging Steve. Interestingly, the Virginian is most torn up by the idea that Steve's masculine *identity* has shifted from that of the Cowboy, similar to the Virginian's own identity, and into something he views as 'lesser':

[The Virginian] was lost in a fog of sentiment. He knew, knew passionately, that he had done right; but the silence of his old friend to him through those last hours left a sting that no reasoning could assuage. "He told good-bye to the rest of the boys; but not to me." And nothing I could point out in common sense turned him from the thread of his own argument. *He worked round the circle again to self-justification*: "Was it him I was deserting? Was not the deserting done by him the day I spoke my mind about stealing calves? I have kept my ways the same. He is the one that took to new ones. *The man I used to travel with is not the man back there*. Same name, to be sure. And same body. *But different in—and yet he had the memory!* You can't never change your memory!" (342, my emphasis)

My emphasis in this quote exemplifies the Virginian's referral back to Steve's failure to live up to the codes of masculinity as defined by society that he himself adheres to. "The man I used to travel with is not the man back there" is a recognition of change not in outward appearance but in their individual adherence to masculine structures as defined by the West's male-oriented hegemony. Steve *is not* the man that the Virginian believed he knew because the Steve the Virginian knew was a performance made to appease socio-cultural expectations. Ironically, for failing to adhere to these expectations Steve is killed, and by none other than the one who reluctantly exemplifies that masculinity: the Cowboy. It is a fact that wracks the Virginian with guilt.

The Virginian's inability to name this shift to the unnamed narrator reveals the threat of having to name the structures which define masculine hegemony in the West, which would in turn

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter Two sub-chapter 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 for more on rustlers and their roles as villains in the Western.

open it to the discourse that the Virginian is so apt at.¹⁸⁹ Even so, to do so would be to reveal the discontent and disdain that he feels for the system which led him, perhaps even forced him, to kill his friend. It is precisely over this point that the Classic Western finds in the origins of the Cowboy counter-arguments to the definition of the male hegemon of the West. Actions, performances, and demands upon the psyche and body which for all of the pomp that had been given to the Cowboy prior has led to the death of the Virginian's friend and to his own psychological self-harm.

However, in relation to language, it is important here that Steve is ultimately silent before the Virginian executes him, acquiescing to his punishment. The Virginian's reference to Steve as a 'man' suggests a hierarchy of recognizable masculinities defined by the roles they perform in society, and following this, Steve acknowledges that the Virginian is his superior. Yet the Virginian laments this treatment, arguing that "the man back there" is a different man whose identity is now othered as a result of his change in behavior and company. If the rustlers are othered, and Steve's falling in with them results in his own change in identity, then the Virginian's punishment—dictated as it is by the social expectations of the West and, ironically, not the individual—is seen to be just. And it is precisely because it is seen as just that the Virginian has such difficulty comprehending it on an emotional and psychological level, and why he must reach out to the unnamed narrator for emotional support.

However, the Virginian is conflicted by this in his need to justify to himself over what he has done, and it results in his emotional breakdown to the unnamed narrator, admitting to a feeling of fractured identity. When the Virginian tells him that "this experience has woken up that little kid in me, and blamed if I can coax the little cuss to go to sleep again!" (358), he is personifying his emotions as child-like in an effort to preserve his masculinity as something distant. Yet, at the same time, he is acknowledging the presence of this emotional nature and its proximity to his own identity and its influence over him. Worden adds that "Rather than attributing emotion to interiority, he externalizes and others emotion from himself through the figure of the inner child" (75).¹⁹⁰ Authentic emotions remain unspeakable, and when they must be expressed they are distanced so as to keep the speaker's masculine identity intact.

¹⁸⁹ This will not be the last time that the Virginian confides in someone his frustration over the controlling societal structures in the West that demand he perform a masculine identity which is ruthless and incapable of sentimentality or emotional interaction. As it will be discussed, his status as a man in the West is wholly dependent on the community's view of him and their judgment of how well he contours to the expectations of that performance.

¹⁹⁰ *Masculine Style: The American West and Literary Modernism*.

The emotional outburst of the Virginian's masculine performance is marked as one of the few instances where his sentimental nature finds expression toward what is truly problematic about his own negotiation with his identity and his disagreement with it. The Virginian is aware of the societal structures which have created a culture that demands such performativity, and though he passively-aggressively questions these structures, he nevertheless has relegated these outbursts to moments when his emotions come through. The essence of his sentimentality runs counter to the archetype of the Cowboy that is violent, distant, and even aloof about his actions either in the West or against others.

This sentimentality extends beyond other men and women to animals, with Em'ly the chicken standing out.¹⁹¹ In chapter six, titled "Em'ly", we see the unnamed narrator's persistence in raising the chickens of the Sunk Creek Ranch (along with his other domestic duties, such as flower planting, cooking, etc) touch on the Virginian's emotions, bonding with them as he might another person:

"I'm regular getting stuck on Em'ly," continued the Virginian. "Yu' needn't to laugh. Don't yu' see she's got sort o' human feelin's and desires? I always knowed hawsses was like people, and my collie, of course. It is kind of foolish, I expect[.]" (67)

His readiness to associate human qualities to the animals he works with suggest a treatment of them that is not only utilitarian in nature. The Virginian's emotional attachment is evident as well when the hen passes away, the unnamed narrator reaching a point of bonding over their shared sentimentality in the hen:

I did not think less of the Virginian when I came upon him surreptitiously digging a little hole in the field for her.

"I have buried some citizens here and there," said he, "that I have respected less."

¹⁹¹ This is not to imply that the Cowboy as an archetype is traditionally unkind toward animals. Rather, the kindness and close relationship he has with horses and other beasts—though always with an air of his control—generally exceed his relationships to other humans. What stands out for the Virginian in the instance with the chicken, however, is that the animal is representative of a domestic sphere rather than one of mobility, as the horse would be. Additionally, the chicken is clearly female, and the Virginian's fondness for the animal stems to his fondness for the unnamed narrator. Here he verges on sentimental sympathy for both. Neither the chicken nor the unnamed narrator are exceptional in their expected duties (the chicken is infertile and cannot lay eggs, and is more a pet, while the unnamed narrator cannot be trusted to do any of the chores the other men do). All the same, the Virginian is fond of them both, and has perhaps as much of an emotional bond with them that he does with Molly.

And when the time came for me to leave Sunk Creek, my last word to the Virginian was,
“Don’t forget Em’ly.”
“I ain’t likely to,” responded the cow-puncher. (69)

The Virginian’s fondness in Em’ly finds strength in figures which do not embody the masculine hegemon but rather resist it: Em’ly is a female chicken as opposed to a rooster, and it is in this hen that the Virginian finds a stronger connection. This follows after the unnamed narrator tells us that “The Virginian had not ‘troubled his haid’ over the poultry” (60). Specifically, he even appreciates Em’ly’s disdain for roosters, symbols of masculinity that are publicly demonstrable and dominative over hens: “I never knowed her name before,” said he. “That runaway rooster, he hated her. And she hated him same as she hates ‘em all” (60). The correlation between the Virginian and Em’ly is interesting, and revealing of his inner resistance to the position of the masculine hegemon, of whom the rooster metaphorically represents. However, the Virginian is both the rooster and Em’ly, and ultimately can only admire that part in him which he sees in others while fulfilling socio-cultural expectations as the Cowboy.

When the Virginian is alone with the unnamed narrator or, later, Molly, his emotional interiority manages to break away from the stoicism expected of the Cowboy as a masculine hegemon. Instead he is able to find expression via sentimental examinations of the physical landscape around him, or over the treatment of animals, and most importantly with men who are unlike him. In discussing his disdain for the everyday cruelty to animals he experiences,¹⁹² the Virginian makes a personal distinction in the quality of men that runs contrary to later iterations and archetypes of the hegemonic Cowboy: rather than finding unity in men who treat the animals and men they work with as utilitarian, the Virginian has a fondness for men who are *gentle* with what and whom they work with. The Virginian opposes the use of force and dominance in the control of animals and others. Rather, he is appreciative of a gentler, more peaceable way of working with both animals and, more importantly, men: the Virginian shows a clear preference for emotional bonding rather than forcing others to do as he sees fit.

¹⁹² The Virginian, in a conversation with Scipio in chapter 23, comments that “When a man is kind to dumb animals, I always say he had got some good in him”, and further adds that “...This hyeh is a mighty cruel country,” pursued the Virginian. “To animals that is. Think of it! Think what we do to hundreds an’ thousands of little calves! Throw ‘em down, brand ‘em, cut ‘em, ear mark ‘em, turn ‘em loose, and on to the next. It has got to be, of course” (227). The Virginian does point out that this sort of cruelty is necessary in running a ranch, but it is a point which exemplifies both his disapproval of socio-cultural expectations of men in the West to be cruel and his reluctant adherence to this norm. The Virginian in any case has no real love for cruelty or the violence it engenders.

The process results in the fraternal bonds the Virginian establishes with the unnamed narrator, who typifies this gentler approach and becomes, by the novel's end, a confidant for his more personal, sentimental experiences. This bonding can be seen in the Virginian's emotional outburst to the narrator as he anguishes over lynching Steve. As Jones writes, "[t]he quiet facades of these laconic men actually mask their inner strain as demonstrated during Steve's lynching" (4).¹⁹³ Both men are forced by their expected masculine roles to feign indifference toward the hanging because, according to the Virginian, when a Cowboy "looks upon life with a man's eye," he "seldom shows [sadness] openly; it bides within him enriching his cheerfulness and rendering him of better service to his fellow-men" (376-7). This is juxtaposed by the letter Steve writes the Virginian, in which he laments their inability, or rather prohibition, to communicate with one another openly about their feelings because they must maintain their masculinity.

3.2.3 The Unnamed Narrator and the Honeymoon Retreat: Escapism from Heteronormative Masculine Hegemony

The unnamed narrator's relationship to the Virginian is perhaps foremost at the reader's attention throughout the novel, first read with an introduction to the Virginian that begins "Lounging there at ease against the wall was a slim young giant, more beautiful than pictures" (3). That he finds the Virginian beautiful is an interesting description for a character intended to represent and reinforce masculine hegemony, as the word is more often associated with femininity. The reader's first impression lies with the unnamed narrator's non-normative definition of the Virginian, and this description goes a long way in representing the unnamed narrator's non-normative masculinity in the West: his city-like appearance, his inability to ride a horse well, his lack of practical knowledge concerning work, and his shying away from violence. Yet it is precisely for these reasons that the Virginian finds himself drawn to the unnamed narrator, confiding in him his personal, emotional difficulties concerning his performance as the masculine hegemon in the West.

Though rarely discussed, too, is the unnamed narrator's constant referrals to the Virginian in terms of marriage, beginning immediately after he describes him as beautiful, "Had I been the

¹⁹³ "The Unexpected Burden of Manhood in Owen Wister's *The Virginian*".

bride, I should have taken the giant, dust and all“ (4).¹⁹⁴ Though the unnamed narrator’s sexual orientation is never questioned or brought up, his admiration for the Virginian and his own inability to fit the role of masculine hegemon render him as someone distant from the societal expectations held over the Virginian, and thus make him safe for the Virginian to confide to. The Virginian thus shares his emotional, sentimental outbursts and discussions over their love of the land, their trauma and sorrow, and the Virginian’s love for Molly. All of these expressions, save for love of the land,¹⁹⁵ demonstrate a strong sentimental characteristic of the Virginian. This runs counter to traditional approaches in understanding Classic Westerns, reserving it (erroneously) for representations of masculinity within the Revisionist Western genre.

Such examples as his affectionate relationship to the unnamed narrator suggest a preference for masculinities that ran against acceptable constructs of male identity, and thus encourage—albeit in a confused fashion—a rejection of socially determined roles expected of men. Molly, who fulfills the expected gender role of women by becoming an educator in the West,¹⁹⁶ shares with the unnamed narrator background in a formal education. The unnamed narrator is thusly tied to a characteristic that is seen as feminine, the formal education. In the male-oriented sphere of the West, an education from the classroom is understood to be contrary to the education gained in the male-dominated spheres of work and physical conflict. Yet it is with the unnamed narrator that the Virginian becomes closest to, just as the Virginian also gets close to Molly.

The second most notable instance in the novel, beyond Steve’s hanging, where the Virginian expresses his emotionality and dissatisfaction with Western expectations, is on the honeymoon island he shares with Molly. The honeymoon island represents a retreat for the Virginian, who prior to his marriage had gone there alone as a means to escape the Western world and, in turn, his duties as a hegemonic figure in that world. Thus, the honeymoon island is a type

¹⁹⁴ References to the Virginian as a man for whom the unnamed narrator would take as a husband were he a bride are numerous, and typically find themselves in reference to Molly’s presence in the book, or whenever the concept of marriage is discussed in the novel. However, there is neither a sexual nature or implication between the Virginian and the unnamed narrator regarding potential homoeroticism, and so it remains a great admiration from the unnamed narrator upon the Virginian. This particular scene is in reference to the unnamed narrator over-hearing the Virginian’s discussions with a man who is at the railroad station waiting for his fiancé at the beginning of the novel.

¹⁹⁵ Expressions for love of the land or landscape are common throughout Classic Westerns and many, if not all, Revisionist Westerns. This is to say that there is nothing about it which stands out, aside from the Virginian confiding it specifically and only to the unnamed narrator and Molly.

¹⁹⁶ In this way Molly is the archetypal ‘School Marm’ female character of the Classic Western, contributing to society in the West as an educator for children before the Cowboy sways her romantically and transforms her into a housewife. Rarely do they return to the schoolhouse once they are wed, and in the case of *The Virginian*, Molly remains at home, no longer a teacher, almost entirely absent as a character.

of geographic and psychological bubble, avoiding the gender constraints and rhetoric which plagues the Cowboy community. Forrest Robinson, who describes the honeymoon as the Virginian's escape from "his dual, incomplete, and finally incompatible allegiances to the natural and the civilized" mistakes the natural for the Cowboy's "context of violence... and code of survival" (36-7).¹⁹⁷ However, as it has been argued, the Virginian's adherence to this constructed performance is a performance conditioned by his Western masculinity, an identity that has been defined by the community's expectations of his role as hegemon. Thus, the island retreat marks the natural world as a retreat from those expectations.

Seeing the Virginian's celebration for their having come to the island, she tells him "This is how I have dreamed it would happen. Only it is better than my dreams" (418), Molly is able to equally share in his excitement, just as she is able to share in the physically demanding tasks that both her and the Virginian must undertake in setting up their camp. The Virginian is no longer expected to subordinate Molly or keep her following his lead, but can now share with her equally their tasks and the work he finds beautiful in the West. Jones writes, it is because "they have come to a place where [they] can withdraw from the confining constructs of Western gender roles" (6).

As the Virginian's expresses his emotional conflict concerning this masculinity, he ponders "the gain in being a man" (422), providing a direct reference to his uncertainty and resistance to masculine socio-cultural norms in the American West. Jones, commenting on the Virginian's vocalization of his 'responsibilities' and desire to escape them, writes that:

As a man in the Western code, the Virginian is burdened by his responsibilities as a rugged individualist, as a dominant foreman, and as a chivalrous husband. Fulfillment of these obligations depends upon his rhetorical mastery and physical dominance as a Western man, and to perpetuate this construct of masculinity, he is obligated to repress those emotional and verbal response which would subject the code to scrutiny. (7)

However, while Jones accurately explains the inner conflict behind the Virginian's concern over confronting this masculine code verbally, he fails to contextualize it with the position the Virginian holds in society as the hegemonic male. Just as the Virginian's understanding of masculinity's code of representation would come to be understood as an artificial construct of society, so too

¹⁹⁷ Robinson, Forrest. "The Virginian and Molly in Paradise: How Sweet Is It?" pp. 27-38.

does he see the position of the hegemon as similarly artificial. The Virginian tells Molly this as well:

“Often when I have camped here, it has made me want to become the ground, become the water, become the trees, mix with the whole thing. *Not know myself from it. Never unmix again.* Why is that?” he demanded, looking at her. “What is it? You don’t know, nor I don’t. I wonder *would everybody feel that way here?*”

“I think not everybody,” she answered.

“No; none except *the ones who understand things they can’t put words to.* But you did!” He put up a hand and touched her softly. “You understood about this place. And that’s what makes it—makes you and me *as we are now*—better than my dreams. And my dreams were pretty good.” (422-3, my emphasis)

The Virginian’s desires to remove his identity as a masculine figure whose responsibilities to the socio-culturally constructed expectations the West has of him extend into musings about a complete removal of his physical being into something entirely at one with the rest of the world *and* others such as Molly. His recognition of their current egalitarianism being a product of the paradise island is made clear to Molly as a condition which exists only when he is not expected to act as a hegemon of the West. Her shared belief in the egalitarian view of one another is what attracts the Virginian to her and her to him, and ultimately what makes this secluded paradise in the West ideal for both the Virginian and Wister.

The Virginian’s sentimental nature finds expression not only in the paradisiacal honeymoon retreat but also through a form of spiritual catharsis, relieving him of the constraints society pressures him into. Spirituality traditionally finds expression for characters in the Revisionist Western genre and within the landscape, and the Virginian’s exploration of it in the Classic Western is no different: the geographical area is as much an ideological reference. As the West in fiction and film is both real and imagined, it is a physical region which represents a psychological and spiritual place. Most of the ideological references of the West are related to the symbolic landscape.

As Tompkins states, the desert, which is the most classic Western landscape, functions as a “*tabula rasa*,” a blank slate on which one can write “the story [one] wants to live” (74). The honeymoon paradise then serves as a fulfillment of an egalitarian West come to realization, and

notably outside of the socio-cultural West. As such, it is when the Virginian is free to explore this wilderness that he finds the strongest spiritual connection to it:

For their first bridal camp he chose an island. Long weeks beforehand he had thought of this place, and set his heart upon it. Once established in his mind, the thought became a picture that he saw waking and sleeping. He had stopped at the island many times alone, and in all seasons; but at this special moment of the year he liked it best. Often he had added several needless miles to his journey that he might finish the day at this point, might catch the trout for his supper beside a certain rock upon its edge, and fall asleep hearing the stream on either side of him. (414)

The island is a spiritual place for the Virginian precisely because it takes him away from the constraints of society. Here he is free to express himself and his dissatisfaction with what society demands of him. Yet this expression is temporary, as both he and Molly eventually leave the egalitarian site and return to the socio-cultural West to fulfill their expected roles.

3.2.4 Work and Defining Masculinity through Labor in *The Virginian*

The idea that the Virginian represents a figure holding power, selected according to the merit won by his transformation of the West into the Garden of Eden, an Agrarian paradise for rural America, is a reflection not only of Owen Wister's own understanding of his experience in the West, but also of how masculinity was defined. The transformative properties of labor in the West extended not only to landscape and development, but also to the individual. For white males, this labor brought out the full potential of male characters and established their dominant position in society. However, Wister himself resisted this demand to contour to masculine expectations in society, though he did cave to them in the end. Wister was not able to reject these expectations of himself and so too does the Virginian fail to. Their commitment to labor has transformed both Wister into 'a man' and the Virginian into the successful entrepreneur by the novel's end, solidifying the Cowboy's legacy and top position in the socio-cultural West.

The West, its landscape depicted by Wister in terms that define it as a wilderness despite its fruitful nature, is written as a land where, should one be inclined to work for what they hope to achieve, then they would be able to realize their full potential and be successful. But it is also a land of gendered expectations and these expectations are harsh: they demand men be the distant,

emotionless forces which conquer the West through both the tools of agriculture and, when need be, the tools of war. These expectations also demand the gendered subordination of Molly and non-normative men to figures like the Virginian. Men who fail to fit into the mold of the male hegemon, or at least to hold it as their ideal, are, as the Virginian is so afraid of, cast aside, shamed, and even killed.

The Virginian tries to explain this situation to Shorty and the expectation that he commit himself to labor, asking him “Who stopped yu’ taking up land? Did it not stretch in front of yu’, behind yu’, all around yu’, the biggest, baldest opportunity in sight? That was the time I lifted my finger” (232). The Virginian tells Shorty that here, as opposed to in the East, is a land of opportunity, and responsibility lies on the individual rather than external circumstances. As such, the Virginian and, in turn, the Cowboy, were models who championed labor as an opportunity for self-improvement and establishing masculinity. As Jane Kuenz elaborates:

...it is in this parallel universe that Wister’s cowboy emerges for the first time not as the bit player he was in the dime westerns, but as a full-fledged romantic and cultural hero—the figure of fully achieved manhood implicit in the broader cultural discourses about both labor unrest and alienating work conditions. (111)¹⁹⁸

Through his hard work and the effort he embarks upon to educate himself and to improve himself in a variety of ways, the Virginian earns through a narrative of meritocracy his definitive role as a hegemonic male character *and* as an ideal American realizing the American dream upon the frontiers of the new world. But it is Shorty who, failing to match up to such a normative model, is killed off, betrayed by Trampas who had lured him into rustling as an easy way of making money.

Ultimately, labor serves only the Virginian, who because he is the dominant figure in the West, is able to capitalize on his privilege as acting masculine hegemon. The Virginian acknowledges this, laments his inability to escape this structure, struggles to express his emotional confusion to those he is closest to, and in the end is incapable of breaking free of social constructs. In fact, he makes no real effort to attempt this: the Virginian is as resigned to his labor as Wister is to his. The Virginian’s ideal of escaping as it were to the paradise island of egalitarianism that he could share with Molly, free of the expected performances of masculinity that plagued both him

¹⁹⁸ “The Cowboy Businessman and ‘The Course of Empire’ – Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*”.

and Wister, is an impossibility once because the socio-cultural West will not tolerate his breaking from normative expected behavior, and twice because he cannot make the effort to do so himself.

3.2.5 *The Virginian* between Classic and Revisionist Western

Later authors and film makers of Westerns would take the rhetoric of violence and domination found in the *Virginian*'s duel with Trampas as the foundation for the archetypal male Cowboy, using this confrontation as the climax of their own stories. These stories would use that violence to define the actions of the Cowboy as a means for representing masculinity and justifying his hegemonic position within society. Such characters as Shalako from Louis L'Amour's *Shalako*, as well as his Catlow from *Catlow* and Hondo from *Hondo* all follow this expectation within the Classic Western genre. Larry McMurtry would capitalize on this feature for a variety of his own Westerns, including his seminal work *Lonesome Dove*. In film, both John Ford and Sergio Leone would define their protagonists almost solely upon their capacity and willingness to use violence as a means of affirming white masculine hegemony, such as Goldie in *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*, or 'Harmonica' in *Once Upon A Time in the West*.

All of these are a clear departure from Wister's own *Virginian* character, emphasizing a facet only tangentially defined in the book. Rather, the *Virginian*'s emphasis remains on his use of rhetoric and love of language, his sentimental, gentle and emotional nature and in the internalized struggles he has negotiating his position in society. The expectation of him to perform this identity well comes through as an internalized struggle which belies a resistance to the normative values ascribed to masculinity in the socio-cultural West. The *Virginian* finds the trip to the honeymoon island spiritually invigorating, as this allows him to escape this social construct. The emphasis on his spiritual catharsis once free from the constraints which engendered conflict find juxtaposition to the resigned, terse conclusion of the novel that both Wister and the *Virginian* were compelled to partake in. Though the *Virginian* rebels, he does so passive-aggressively, resigned from the beginning to fulfill what he feels is his responsibility. And this shows.

3.3.0 The Cowboy's use of Violence Against Oppressive Masculine Hegemony within the Socio-Cultural West: Women and Non-Normative Masculinity in *Riders of the Purple Sage*

Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* expands on the criticism of gendered socio-cultural expectations seen in *The Virginian* and includes, as I will argue, a belief in the suffrage of women

and the value in a truly egalitarian socio-cultural West. I have chosen Grey's novel because it stands out as a canonical Western for defining the Cowboy toward his gun-fighting role in the settling of the West, establishing in many ways the archetype's future predilection for violence. However, in what is a misunderstood reading of the novel, the Cowboy is also a force operating *against* the socio-cultural norms of the Mormon-lead society, criticizing the mistreatment of women and encouraging relationships which go beyond what is acceptable in the normative, masculine hegemony of the socio-cultural West.

The shift from *The Virginian*'s emphasis on labor and self-transformation toward the violence that grew to be core to the Classic Western genre can be traced in large to Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*, which introduced Lassiter, a man of remote origins whose deadly skill with revolvers was unmatched. However, the standard reading of the novel, which focuses on a stranger coming to town in order to take revenge and, in the end, win the girl, is overshadowed by the often neglected narrative thrust of the novel: Jane Withersteen's violent oppression under the Mormon leadership. This portion of the chapter will examine how Grey's novel explores the issue of women's independence and resistance to hegemonic socio-cultural institutes in the West, as well as how Lassiter, as a Cowboy, operates as a non-normative masculine identity within the context of the narrative's conflict. This shift in the Cowboy's position in the West, particularly against something as violently oppressive as Elder Tull's hegemony, positions him as a champion for the non-normative and marginalized rather than a figure who adheres to the socio-cultural expectations of the West for men, marking elements of the Revisionist Western in his character.

Jane Tompkins claims in *West of Everything* that *Riders of the Purple Sage* "openly dramatizes... the destruction of female authority" (40). She perceives the struggles for both Lassiter and Jane against the Mormon church and Elder Tull as emblematic of the novel's conflict between the masculine world of violence and the feminine world of Christianity and domesticity. Lassiter, still a part of that masculine world of violence tied to Elder Tull's, turns that violence onto the domineering society that Tull has fostered, being both a 'killer of Mormons' and thus killing Bishop Dyer. Tompkins maintains that Lassiter's world triumphs when Jane is convinced of the need to kill, as violence ties itself to masculinity and Jane accedes to its demand. The cost of this acceptance is Jane's flight from the home she has inherited from her father.

The impact of landscape and the transformation it undergoes is important to the characterization of Lassiter's masculinity just as it is to Jane's loss. Lassiter's connection to the

very wilderness through which he rides and conquers becomes an extension of his character. Even his introduction to the reader is tied to the world he travels through. When compared to the Virginian's entrance, Lassiter's demonstrates the evolution of the Western hegemonic male toward violent means for asserting his dominance:

Jane Withersteen loved that wild and purple wilderness. In times of sorrow it had been her strength, in happiness its beauty was her continual delight. In her extremity she found herself murmuring, "Whence cometh my help!" It was a prayer, as if forth from those lonely purple reaches and walls of red and clefts of blue might ride a fearless man, neither creed-bound nor creed-mad, who would hold up a restraining hand in the faces of her ruthless people. (7)

This restraining hand, while violent in nature, is still held up against the 'ruthless people' who seek to subordinate Jane. Lassiter makes his arrival, and it is to the dismay of the Mormons who threaten Jane.

Like the Virginian, he too rides a fine horse, yet, as the men who are in awe of him note, he "wears black leather" and "packs two black-butted guns—low down—they're hard to see—black akin them black chaps" (8). Lassiter inspires fear in the men as they become careful of the way he moves his hands, and as such his authority is immediately understood through his mere presence. The Cowboy, at this point, has become so symbolically significant that the dress and appearance of a man performing this identity is enough to establish his authority as dominant hegemon. But dominant in the socio-cultural West Lassiter is not, for he is a gentile in the Mormon setting of the novel,¹⁹⁹ and his views and belief concerning the rights of women stands counter to their domination.

Richard Slotkin uses *Riders of the Purple Sage* to support his thesis that Westerns, like so many American texts, "represented the redemption of American spirit or fortune as something to be achieved by playing through a scenario of separation, temporary regression to a more primitive or 'natural' state, and regeneration through violence" (12).²⁰⁰ Grey's novel does indeed accord

¹⁹⁹ At least within the context of the novel, the label of gentile marks men as non-normative to a socio-cultural West that is dominated by the Mormon church. Additionally, it is dominated by Elder Tull, whose violent and abusive treatment of Jane and Venters serves only as the tip of the iceberg regarding his general treatment of women (their objectification and expected subservience to himself and other Mormon men) and to all gentile men.

²⁰⁰ Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence*.

with Slotkin's argument, for Lassiter's violence is employed for the regeneration of socio-cultural values which challenge corruption, even if it is masculine and domineering in nature.

The regeneration through violence that it portrays, however, occurs as a response to the crisis of masculinity *and* to the Women's Rights Movement, which in 1912 was underway toward giving women suffrage and equal rights.²⁰¹ Lassiter's violence, then, is faced by the white heterosexual hegemon embodied within the Mormons and Elder Tull. Lassiter as a Cowboy shows a rejection of oppressive normative constructs which subject women like Jane and men like Venters to the subordinate position beneath figures like Tull, who look only to exploit and abuse their marginalized status and persons. Lassiter makes a point of criticizing these institutions, and pointedly does so with reference to violence as a solution:

I've seen their women's strange love en' patience en' sacrifice an' silence en' whet I call madness for their idea of God. An' over against that I've seen the tricks of men. They work hand in hand, all together, an' in the dark. No man can hold out against them, unless he takes to packin' guns. For Mormons are slow to kill. That's the only good I ever seen in their religion. Venters, take this from me, these Mormons ain't just right in their minds. Else could a Mormon marry one woman when he already has a wife, an' call it duty?" (30)

Lassiter's violent actions then serve as a regeneration of a more progressive masculinity through fictional conflict, critical of the oppressive masculine hegemony that the Elder Tull and other Mormons represent. Notably, Lassiter's anger is directed toward their mistreatment of women, which is in accordance with how he imagines himself: equal to both women and non-normative masculine figures. Thus, Lassiter's violence results in an attempt to dismantle socio-cultural norms which threaten non-normative figures.

3.3.1 Lassiter and Jane: Romance and the 'Woman Question' in Establishing a Progressive Western Environment

This reading of the novel suggests that Grey was grappling with something "undiscovered" in *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and that he was trying to make sense of the complex social situations. These find form in Grey's presentation of ideas about love, sex, violence, socio-cultural progress,

²⁰¹ As I will be discussing in further detail below, "the woman question", that is, the question about the equal rights and suffrage of women, remains forefront of the text.

and the development of a nation and its values. From the beginning of the text, Grey illustrates an interest in conflicting conceptions of gendered identity and their place in society.

Relative to Lassiter and Jane, beyond their romantic connection, the novel explores the way in which power and authority functioned to subordinate women and non-normative men, and in turn how Lassiter and Jane negotiate that.²⁰² When the Elder Tull comes to visit Jane Withersteen about her friendship with a gentile, Venters, he tells her:

“That’ll do from you. Understand, you’ll not be allowed to hold this boy to a friendship that’s offensive to your Bishop. Jane Withersteen, your father left you wealth and power. It has turned your head. You haven’t yet come to see the place of Mormon women. (6)

Central to Grey’s novel is the conflict that arises from a woman seeking to establish her own individuality in American Western society, and the novel explicitly explores the masculine hegemon’s frustration over this ascension. However, her attempts at establishing herself *alongside* figures like Tull find resistance in the Mormon community, who would rather see her *beneath* them. In the context of the novel, Tull and the other Mormons represent the repressive hegemonic masculinity that threaten Jane’s freedom, demanding she contour to their expectations of “Mormon women”. But, as with Wister, Grey was at the same time unwilling to confront the full potential of his novel’s conflict, and so presents a complete escape from the socio-cultural West rather than its transformation into something more egalitarian. In this way, Jane still loses her place in society and is equal to only Lassiter, while Tull and the others remain.

In coming to terms with the representations of Mormon society as a metaphor for the overbearing dominance of masculinity, *Riders of the Purple Sage* becomes a text that is on the surface ambiguous concerning its stance. As a Classic Western, *Riders of the Purple Sage* is also a romance, in much the same fashion as *The Virginian*. Within this context, the novel’s resistance to masculine hegemony allow for Grey to foreground them through Lassiter and Jane’s relationship and the normative socio-cultural West’s rejection to it.

²⁰² To a lesser extent Venters’ relationship with Bess is similar in nature, for theirs also deals with negotiating social expectations and the gendered expectations they would have for one another. However, Venters’ relationship to Bess also serves as an example of a problematic presumption of ownership over women, especially before they agree to be together. Compared to Lassiter’s relationship with Jane, which is truly more egalitarian in nature and demonstrates an acceptance of the others’ values and beliefs, Venters’ approach to Bess is tainted by his violent murdering of Oldring for no reason other than that he believed Bess belonged to him, and that she had had sexual relations with Oldring.

Jane's relationship with Lassiter, then, is a romance because Lassiter is the champion *against* the violent, normative demands of the masculine Mormon society, arguing as he does for the emancipation of women under this system:

"To my everlasting sorrow I confess it. They have been driven, hated, scourged till their hearts have hardened. But we women hope and pray for the time when our men will soften."

"Beggin' your pardon, ma'am—that time will never come."

"Oh, it will!... Lassiter, do you think Mormon women wicked? Has your hand been against them, too?"

"No. I believe Mormon women are the best and noblest, the most long-sufferin', and the blindest, unhappiest women on earth." (10)

Grey is able to present both a romance and a Western,²⁰³ presenting a text that is ambiguously championing a Cowboy figure like Lassiter, who is dressed for violence, solitary, distant, and skilled. Yet at the same time, Lassiter's romance with Jane takes him against the socio-cultural expectations of performance for genders.

Through this context then, the back and forth attraction which Jane has to Lassiter is grounded not merely in the high religious and moral scruple,²⁰⁴ but also in the shameful knowledge that her father was deeply complicit in the wrongdoing that Lassiter seeks to revenge. Jane is deceptive in keeping that knowledge from Lassiter, concealing her personally interested motive as a righteous one, and admitting as her father's complicit participation in the hegemonic system that attempts to ruin her. Interestingly, if Grey's characterization of Jane is an attempt to address the contemporary question of women's equality and in turn her resistance to subordination, then the answer to whether the novel contains subversive intention and revisionist elements is yes.

Examining the novel in the context of gender relations, which was as stated not the standard reading of the novel, explains Jane's otherwise rather inexplicable opposition to Lassiter's feud

²⁰³ As Wayne Ude argues, the "romance-adventure-novel" as practiced by the likes of Grey generally arrives at "morally correct" if "limited and shallow" conclusions by way of baffling twists and mystifications. To the extent, then, that the book's confusion is at once indulged and to some extent concealed, the bad faith inheres in the form of the fiction, in the genre of romance-adventure, and in the license that goes with it. See Wayne Ude, "Forging an American Style: The Romance-Novel and Magical Realism as Response to the Frontier and Wilderness Experiences," in *The Frontier Experience and the American Dream*. pp. 55-56. In addition, Northrup Frye observes in "The Mythos of Summer: Romance 1957" that "the romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream," *Anatomy of Criticism*. pg. 186.

²⁰⁴ She insists time and again that he must learn to love his enemies, "despite her errors and her frailties and her blindness, she had one absolute and unfaltering hold on ultimate and supreme justice. That was love. "Love your enemies as yourself!" was a divine word, entirely free from any church or creed." (176)

with the Mormon leadership on the basis of religious scruple. Jane's only connection to the Mormon group is through her father, and her attachment through him and under Tull—while reflecting the influence such a gendered socio-cultural hierarchy can have on an individual—alone does not make sense without the gendered reading. After all, the correlation here between religion and masculine hegemony is that Grey is using Mormonism as a metaphor for the other, contextualizing Jane's subordination and the resistance of non-members against masculinity's prevailing, forceful demands.

Additionally, without the gendered reading of the novel, Grey's attachment of an erotic strain on her motivations with regards to Lassiter lack depth or any lasting meaning. In other words, without the context of resisting a gendered social order, and choosing to only emphasize the purely religious level of the text, her motivations and actions make little sense. Within the sphere of the Revisionist Western genre, this gendered reading being so core to the narrative is a trait which is more common, including Lassiter's progressive values regarding gender hierarchy in the West. Nonetheless, this is found within one of the canonical Classic Westerns, and marks a clear anticipation of the later genre.

3.3.2 Domesticity in *Riders of the Purple Sage* and the Cowboy's Sentimentalism: Surprise Valley and the Egalitarian Paradise

Riders of the Purple Sage, as Jane Tompkins observes, was engaged in discourse with the “domestic” fiction of its era with novels in which women take the lead for pushing “feminine” virtues. Among these ‘feminine’ virtues was the idea of peace and Christian love, but more importantly, the concept of empowerment for women and the emancipation from patriarchal systems. Tompkins takes the view that authors like Owen Wister and Zane Grey were writing in direct reaction to such books, arguing that the Classic Western “owes its essential character to the dominance of a women's culture in the nineteenth century and to women's invasion of the public sphere between 1880 and 1920” (370-71).²⁰⁵

While Classic Westerns like *Riders of the Purple Sage* were sites for the negotiation of competing male and female agendas, neither Wister nor Grey were explicitly writing *against* these fictions, as Tompkins suggests. While there is a difference between the Classic Western and fiction

²⁰⁵ *West of Everything*.

produced elsewhere, the domestic fiction of the early 20th Century was not flatly rejected by the Classic Western, as Tompkins claims. As this study has explored, the Classic Western has even gone so far as to challenge normative structures such as the subordination of women.

Riders of the Purple Sage “insists,” Tompkins writes, “that you can’t live by Christian love because if you do you’ll be destroyed. The truth the novel asserts is that Jane Withersteen’s goodness and mercy... and the whole Judeo-Christian tradition it represents won’t work when the chips are down” (375). This view is a simplification of the matter at hand: even ignoring the context of resisting normative gender roles, Grey does not simply align women with peaceful Christian charity on one side, docile in nature and doomed to subordination by the violent hypermasculine hegemony on the other side. Both Lassiter and Jane explicitly work together to overcome Tull’s efforts of violent subordination and, in turn, escape together to Surprise Valley, the paradisiacal valley that, like the Virginian’s honeymoon island, is a site for egalitarianism away from the socio-cultural demands of the American West.

Venters’ own direction over the course of the novel shares a similar arc, and brings both him and his love Bess to the same valley. Venters rejects the lone Cowboy lifestyle and the forceful attempts brought on by the normative process of the Mormon masculine hegemony to exclude him from society and to prevent him from having a plutonic friendship with Jane. Venters’ desires do cast him searching “for the sound of a voice, the touch of a hand” (39), and ultimately for both a wife and home at a safe remove from the violence of the Western society which spurns his non-normative status. The implicit idea here is that Venters has no interest in the dominative process that the Mormons engage in, and is instead attracted to the emotional, sentimental connection he can share with another on a deeper, more personal level.²⁰⁶

Rather than Lassiter and Jane’s relationship being a strictly one-way process, Lassiter warms to Jane’s views on the concept of forgiveness. Lassiter acknowledges respectfully that, where he was raised, “a woman’s word was law”, adding, “I ain’t quite outgrown that yet” (101). To this end, Lassiter takes flight to Surprise Canyon at the novel’s conclusion precisely that he may exchange his guns for a version of domestic life, ultimately avoiding any final conflict where the demand for violence would be made against Elder Tull. Grey, after all, insisted that “love... is

²⁰⁶ It should be noted, however, that for all of Venter’s desire for a more personal connection with others, he falls into the habits of the patriarchal masculinity which finds a need to obsess over Bess’ virginity and her ‘ownership’. See sub-chapter 3.3.3 for more on Venter’s relationship to Bess.

only another name for romance,” and that his own romances were written to prove “that hard men of the open also climb to the heights of nobility and sacrifice, *to a supreme proof of the evolution of man*, to a realization of God” (19, my emphasis).²⁰⁷ Interestingly, Lassiter’s evolution of a man is toward the progressive, as would the Revisionist Western’s protagonist also be. His narrative arc supposedly being about revenge never *fully* comes to pass, and it transforms into a narrative of forgiveness and internalized growth.²⁰⁸

True enough, Grey stumbles in his fundamentally sympathetic characterization of Jane, who verges at points toward self-delusion concerning Tull’s treatment of her. But Jane’s problems with regard to emancipating herself and to being independent while also taking part in the repressive society dominated by patriarchal rule resist Lassiter’s desires to change her situation. These conflicts for Jane are more deeply grounded in sex, gender, and pride than in religion or spirituality, for those are the issues with which she is involved with and emotionally drawn to through Lassiter. Specifically, one of the major themes of the novel for the issue of emancipation is the freedom to fall in love and be sexually attracted to figures who fall outside of the range of acceptable normative men. In *Riders of the Purple Sage*, these hegemonic figures are defined as Mormon men, and she flatly rejects their advances. This resistance to their demands to give in to social pressure is an issue that Elder Tull takes up with Jane time and again, and what ultimately runs at the core of the novel:

She might never be able to marry a man of her choice, but she certainly never would become the wife of Tull. Her churchmen might take her cattle and horses, ranges and fields, her corrals and stables, the house of Withersteen and the water that nourished the village of Cottonwoods; but they could not force her to marry Tull, they could not change her decision or break her spirit. (80)

Her resistance is not simple subservience to either Elder Tull or Lassiter, but attempts to negotiate these variations of masculinity in her life. Even at the cost of the hegemonic masculinity’s patriarchal rule and seizure of her property by birthright, Jane refuses to concede to Tull. She is overwhelmed by the appropriative nature of the male-oriented hegemony of the Mormon

²⁰⁷ Grey, Zane. “My Own Life.” *Zane Grey: The Man and His Work*.

²⁰⁸ Of course, with the notable exception of Lassiter shooting Bishop Dyer, Lassiter largely gives up his hunt against Mormons, having come to some peace concerning what happened to his sister, Milly Erne.

community, but her choice to marry who she will—Lassiter, a rejection of the normative marriage institution society has demanded her to partake in—reflect her move toward emancipation.

At the extreme we have the male leaders of the Mormon church, heartless hypocrites whose zeal is transparently a cover for ruthless masculine hegemony. The Mormons and Tull wield and define their power and authority as they see fit, operating overtly through the guise of an institute such as religion to make their claims. Their privileged gendered situations in society are core to their seats of authority, fueled by a form of dogmatism and hypocrisy that ensures their patriarchal rule of the West. Elder Tull and the other Mormons serve as a comparison for the greater virtue of Lassiter and Jane, Venters and Bess: all of whom represent non-normative identities opposed to the violent control of the Mormon church. Where the elders are fixed in their evil ways, the younger heroic protagonists are progressives confronting an older, outdated form of masculinity: the four of them are earnest searchers after truth and justice, they aspire to goodness, and they display potential for positive change when it comes to the matter of emancipation and egalitarianism.

3.3.3 Venters and Bess: Virginity and Female Sexual Freedom

The other relationship within the novel that challenges the normative ideas of socio-cultural norms in the West is the relationship between Venters and Bess. Of the two, Bess is the more complex of the two: nameless, virtually without an identity or a fixed gender, as it is unclear from the start whether she is a man or a woman, Bess develops under Venters' guidance toward self-confidence and love. This blankness about Bess's character, while serving as a potential starting point for whatever she may like to become, is also a reflection of her profound anonymity and the idea that she is "pure." More telling, though, is Venters' initial attraction to an equally non-normative woman in Western society. Bess, like Jane, is confronted with the oppressive dominance of Mormon society yet, unlike Jane, openly rebukes this system and thus becomes initially unreadable by those who hold power.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Bess ultimately gives in to Venters' love for her and they establish a traditional male-female relationship. All the same, while her identity does eventually become fixed, the initial attraction Venters has for her when he is uncertain of her gender, and their later retreat to Surprise Valley to escape the domineering system of masculine hegemony in society does put them into the realm of non-normative and subversive in their overt resistance to cultural norms and practices.

As a character, Venters is more complete, yet his development in the novel is marred by his obsession with Bess's status as a virgin. Venters is initially a man whose solitude and loneliness have left him confused and slow, even to the point where he fails to recognize his attraction to Bess, even when his initial confusion at their meeting produces his interest in her. Although both Lassiter and Venters are considered Gentiles, or non-normative men, Venters differs greatly from Lassiter for his preoccupation with Bess's virginity. Grey, in a manner that is more in line with the hegemonic standard he is criticizing in the Mormon church, adheres through Venters a double-standard concerning women's right to independence and their sexual freedom.

Venters stance and resulting actions in the novel run counter to the narratives of the Revisionist Western, and it is ambiguous as to whether or not the reader is meant to be aware of this double standard from a perspective which condemns it: the answer, most likely, is not.²¹⁰ Even as Venters ponders whether Bess is the product of "a tragic fate rather than a natural leaning to evil" (80), implying rape, the reader is encouraged to feel the pressure of Venters desire, his own repressed "leaning to evil," to possess Bess sexually.

Venters' hope that Bess is 'pure' reflects a desire from him which he cannot, or refuses to, name: Venters' demand for Bess to concede to the social expectations *he* has of her. So great is Venters' belief in this demand, and so great his belief in Bess's loss of virginity at the hands of Oldring, that his sexual jealousy provokes him to murder the suspected offender. In a twist that complicates the entire affair, the reader is lead to believe that Oldring is Bess's father. The deep flaw in Grey's sexual scheme of things surfaces abruptly and tragically in Venters' murder of Oldring, an ironic reflection of Elder Tull's own murder of Jane's father to wed her and to take her land. The novel side-steps the socio-cultural contradiction of the narrative thrust when it is discovered that Bess is in fact the daughter of Frank Erne. Venters is thus given a pass, preserving his relationship to Bess and providing him an opportunity to transform himself into the more progressive Lassiter, though he does not sincerely deserve the chance.

Like Wister, Grey's refusal to completely write against the socio-cultural norms of the West and of hegemonic masculinity marks a retreat from more complex issues. Venters'

²¹⁰ Even if the reader were aware of the hypocrisy in Venters stance, little in the novel itself holds him to any real scrutiny concerning his approach to Bess. Even in moments where all four characters convene and a chance for comparison between Lassiter and Jane to Venters and Bess presents itself, Venters beliefs are glossed over. This in particular is highlighted by the group's shared retreat to Surprise Valley, which metaphorically excuses Venters behaviors as he is allowed into the Western paradise beyond the socio-cultural West as dominated by Elder Tull and his Mormon following. It is thus presumed that, despite his failings, he is also capable of progressive change.

characterization is a retreat from the implications of the sexual double standard and male violence left upon him, a dark foil to Lassiter's own actions.²¹¹ Bess is publicly acceptable to Venters, yet in the private sphere her virginity is a focal point for Venters, either being intact or having been avenged. Vengeance, we are told, is "utterly foreign to [Venters'] nature" (200), yet "his passion to kill" prevails, and he murders Oldring without hesitation. Venters' actions are professed to be done through some form of love, yet his is a love that is conditional on Bess's "purity". Bess's virginity is her's to give to whom she will, yet in the event of her having been raped, Bess has virtually no control in her relationship to Venters. In either case, Venters' belief expresses itself in gestures of outright possession, "She belongs to me!" (109), and is similar to Elder Tull's domineering attitudes toward Jane.

Venters actual confession of love is even more problematic. When foiled to Lassiter and Jane's relationship and in the context of egalitarian gendered relationships, Venters only fully acknowledges his love for Bess when she discovers a fortune in gold. Bess is suddenly 'worth' Venters' admission of love, and only through his own selfishness: "I love you! I'm free!" he exclaims; "I'm a man, a man you've made no more a beggar!" (194). Venters first tastes the "unutterable sweetness of desire" (158) in Surprise Valley, but there is far more of social significance in this discovery than he can manage and so he ties their relationship to a narcissistic focus on himself. However, taken against the healthier, more progressive relationship that Jane and Lassiter share, Venters' is shown to be filled with concerns and jealousies.

Riders of the Purple Sage operates within a contradiction, confused just as Grey sometimes presents himself to be. The novel asks the reader to accept that love and vengeance may go hand in hand, as seen in Venters and Bess's relationship, and at the same time, that true love knows nothing of violence, as seen in Lassiter's relationship to Jane. The novel presents little in the way of a middle ground between the two relationships. As an example, Jane has "one absolute and unfaltering hold on ultimate and supreme justice. That was love. 'Love your enemies as yourself!' was a divine word, entirely free from any church or creed" (176). Jane's belief leads Lassiter to give up his guns, an act that, rather than emasculates Lassiter, instead serves to encourage him in his resistance to hegemonic masculinity: "Come with me out of Utah," he pleads, so "I can put

²¹¹ It is apparent that these topics troubled him, and that they are so prominently at the heart of *Riders of the Purple Sage* is in a significant way speaking to his attempt at subtly questioning these values, albeit that like Wister, he lacked the resolve to outright criticize these systems.

away my guns an' be a man" (225), with being 'a man' only possible outside of the socio-cultural West's male-dominated sphere of influence.

But Lassiter's attempt to surrender the Western symbols of his masculinity is instead turned down, for Jane returns them "With blundering fingers" as she "buckled the belt round his waist where it belonged" (226-27). Grey then sets Lassiter back to his mission of vengeance when he kills Bishop Dyer and restores Jane to her elevated Christian principles,²¹² entrenching her again into the expected gender performance she's supposed to have. Neither Lassiter nor Jane seem to be any surer than Grey is about the "correct" place to stand in this confrontation against hegemonic masculine structures of the West.

3.3.4 Sexuality and Sexual Repression in *Riders of the Purple Sage*

Just as the Virginian and Molly dreamed of a paradise outside of the conventional social norms of the West, so too do Lassiter and Jane, and it is significant that, unlike the Virginian and Molly, Lassiter and Jane act out on this desire. "Don't look back!" (246) Lassiter cries as they gallop out of Mormon country, leaving the burdens and constraints of a society demanding the gendered performances of both characters. And Surprise Valley is a paradise, as both Venters and Bess are allowed to join despite Venters' problematic beliefs, for they too have rejected the demanding normative process of the violent and ruthless Mormons. Their decisions to be equals with their partners, rejecting the binary dynamic of master and subordinate, forever cuts them off from the rest of the world, and they are free to be emancipated in their gendered egalitarianism.²¹³

William Bloodworth explains that the impetus of the characters' actions in *Riders of the Purple Sage* derives from sexual interest and the desire to express that sexual interest with non-normative characters is the running conflict of the narrative. Grey's "characters often experience intense internal conflict... and often in a more complicated and subtle way than we might expect, the conflict comes down to sexual desire" (6).²¹⁴ Lassiter is more self-aware than the others in this

²¹² Though it should be noted that this is only a temporary return to Lassiter's quest for revenge, as he finally eschews it by the novel's end out of interest in fleeing with Jane to Surprise Valley. Still, he does murder Bishop Dyer, the man largely responsible for his sister's death, and so the hesitation in Lassiter's decision and Jane's confused stance on his violence stand out for their uncertainty.

²¹³ This isn't to say that Venter's stance on Bess's virginity is acceptable or egalitarian. If anything, it has the potential for leading to future harm in Surprise Valley's Edenic paradise. Still, one might also read their acceptance into the valley as a sign of Venters' own potential for transformation.

²¹⁴ William Bloodworth, "Zane Grey's Western Eroticism." pg. 6. See also John D. Nesbitt, "Uncertain Sex in the Sagebrush." pp. 15-27; Tompkins, *Introduction to Riders of the Purple Sage*, who speculates that "Grey can't even

regard, himself being the one who is more keenly aware of desires that exist beyond the normative social orders. “I’m burnin’ up with hell’s fire,” he admits. Jane is uncertain, but weak in her reproach: “Oh, Lassiter,” she replies, “no no you don’t love me that way!” (131), despite her treatment of Lassiter being based on just this sort of attraction to him.

Despite Jane’s agonizing about Christian love, she is flexible, if not also conspicuously self-deceived, in her sexual desires and attempts to attract Lassiter. Grey is not entirely able to overtly lay the tension or erotic desire bare for all to see. Jane is compared to Delilah (226), and earlier she admits to having “made love” to Lassiter so as “to bind his hands” (128). But Jane persists doggedly under the delusion, just as Grey does, that her primary and sole interest over the course of the narrative lies in a Christian preservation of life and peace. Both Jane and Grey believe in the adherence to social norms and not that her motivation stems from sexual interest.

To the contrary, Jane shows a great fascination with Lassiter’s guns, only one example of a variety of obvious indicators concerning her that her intention to control the Cowboy is sexual in origin. This desire is perhaps a result of her having been pushed into subordination by the larger Mormon society, resulting in her wish to subvert that control.²¹⁵ In laboring to portray a fundamentally good and intelligent woman, Grey accidentally gives off an air of having a sense of repressed fascination with sexuality. In the case of Jane and Bess, this fascination is focused on feminine sexuality, something that is tied to the emancipated status of women and their independence.²¹⁶

But the result of Grey’s handling of these issues in a half-hearted fashion is confusion, contradiction, and bafflement, and it is precisely these elements which complicate the easy location of the novel within the Classic Western genre, bordering and even crossing into those elements which have typically been left solely to the Revisionist Western genre. Grey dealt with this problem, as I have already suggested, by retreating to a romance between Lassiter and Jane, wherein he could explore such oppositions to societal norms (contextualized against Mormon

let himself know that sex is what he is portraying” (xvii); and T. K. Whipple, who long ago observed in *Study Out the Land* that “in Zane Grey’s conception of human nature nothing is more curious than his view of sex” (240).

²¹⁵ One could argue that submerged in the resolute Christian peacemaker of Jane is the stereotypical emasculator. However, this archetype is typically portrayed negatively and, most often, as a type of spinster, and so Jane does not fit that description.

²¹⁶ William Bloodworth argues that the presence of sexuality in the novel is “a doubling pattern of ‘arousal’ and ‘recontainment [sic],’ of glancing, largely unconscious revelations operating in tandem with dutiful concealments of what has been revealed.” (6). However, the implications of this sexuality within the novel bears strong ties to the suffrage and egalitarian elevation of women in American culture, and so, regardless of whether Grey was just looking to add excitement into his novel, the impact this has on a reading with progressive values in mind stands out.

society) without having to overtly argue for these values, albeit his subversion of masculine hegemony is far from subtle.²¹⁷

In fact, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, by addressing leading social issues at the beginning of the 20th Century such as women's rights, establishes clear revisionist elements. However, like *The Virginian*, Grey's novel does so without enforcing focused, direct deliberation or any final confrontation which would result in closure. Readers are permitted to have their budding male patriarch through Venters, and to see what progressive values might be had in a relationship like Lassiter's and Jane's. While the "actual world" through the novel is thus not so much avoided, presenting a progressive West through and through, the novel does present a negotiation of these values, confusing and blurring the line between Classic and Revisionist Western.

Grey's major characters cannot openly name masculine hegemony as the source of their trouble, much the same as Wister was unable to directly define it through the *Virginian*. The characters of both *The Virginian* and *Riders of the Purple Sage* are all confronted with major questions about identity and sexuality, and to a point these characters and the readers of these novels are all willing to entertain alternatives to their leading assumptions. However, that point hits a wall, and becomes difficult to come to terms with, and so the authors of these texts retreat to standard conventions. Venters and Bess both revel in their escape from the socio-cultural West, as Venters decides, "to dream is happiness," while thinking "clearly" is not. Hence his delight in Surprise Canyon, where he finds contentment "living a beautiful dream" outside of the constraints of the socio-cultural West. "How glorious it would be," he muses, to stay in his remote hideaway, "and never think again" (160-61). Bess has a similar aversion to sustained reflection and the demands of society on her to consider her performative role. "I'm happy when I don't think," she tells Venters, and settles into life outside of the socio-cultural West (152-53).

Meanwhile, in response to the ever-growing threat of the Mormon society threatening to force Jane to bend to their whims, Jane observes that "she had lost, or had never gained, the whole control of her mind. In some measure reason and wisdom and decision were locked in a chamber of her brain, awaiting a key. Power to think of some things was taken from her" (169). As her settled response to a confusing reality of gendered expectations, Jane finally concedes with

²¹⁷ Readers by the millions have dealt with it, presumably, by adopting a version of T. K. Whipple's first rule for reading Zane Grey: "We must never ask of him truth to the actual world as we know it." There has been more to the audience response than this, I would argue, though a widespread loosening of "realistic" expectations is undoubtedly an element in Grey's popularity.

Lassiter that “things aren’t what they seem.” They are losing their individuality before the overbearing nature of the masculine hegemon that is represented in Elder Tull. In their own failure to outright resist they are “like the rest of the women, an’ men, too” (225) who have been subordinated. Jane insists that some of the “blinding scales” have fallen from her eyes as she bears further witness to the injustices around her. “But when I attempt serious thought I’m dazed,” she goes on to admit. “I don’t think. I don’t care any more” (225). This feeling of lost control ultimately drives the lovers to Surprise Canyon. The ultimate fear of losing their individuality and egalitarianism amongst themselves before the face of Elder Tull pushes them away from Western society entirely, even though Jane’s horses have always been waiting to take them away.

Jane and Venters’ incapacity for reflection repays them with blindness over what they would prefer not to know about themselves, and is thus the source for much of the novel’s delayed reaction to the overbearing systems of control they are subjected to. The implication of their retreat from the reflection that they have glimpsed is the truth of their socio-cultural bindings, and they believe it better to escape to a location in the West isolated from the masculine control of Elder Tull and what the Mormons represent. Even more so is this notable in the ending’s lack of any violent conflict with the masculine hegemony of the social West, refusing, as Lassiter partially does, to engage with it in a way that is congenial to the expectation for what is required of men. While Grey does shrink from a full, conscious engagement with the contemporary social issues that caught his attention, he by no means is removed from them and his novel does in very strong ways resonate with elements of sexual and social emancipation, subversion of masculine hegemony, and non-normative masculine identities.

In finding the resonance between his own internal feeling about the demands of society on him, Grey professed to love the remote outdoors—away from the socio-cultural West he so clearly wrote against. Moral reflection was evidently a heavy blessing for Grey: he preferred the vastness of the open West to that of civilization and its demands upon him. “Thoughts do not oppress here” (37) claims Grey in “What the Open Means to Me” in *Zane Grey*. Especially thoughts about his writing, which, not surprisingly, were conflicted and painful for him. “My state” in the great out-of-doors, he observed gratefully, “is one of languor, comfort, and dreaminess. It comes to me here what I should most heed the very things that are here. These can never fail me. Their meaning is the secret of life. Sweet rest and dreamful ease!” (42). It is no wonder, then, that he should also

have his protagonists escape to the paradise of wilderness that is Surprise Valley, a haven away from the domineering society which demanded he heed these constraints.

3.4.0 The Classic Western Hero Evolved: *Shane* and the Transformation of the Cowboy

To a greater extent than either *The Virginian* or *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Jack Schaefer's *Shane* encourages a non-normative view of the Cowboy and anticipates the Revisionist Western's progressive views on relationships and violence. My emphasis on *Shane* lies in how this canonical Classic Western challenges so many of the standard conventions of what is to be expected in the genre. The Cowboy in *Shane* is keen to the spiritual presence of the landscape, the problematic nature and use of violence, his struggles with the oppressive patriarchy of the regions as seen in the cattle baron Luke Fletcher, and with his own internalized resistance to the way of life that demands he fulfill the performance of the masculine Cowboy: a man who is violent, solitary, and in control. In addition, his non-normative relationship between Joe and Marian demonstrates a break from the socio-cultural expectancy of the West for purely heterosexual, monogamous relationships. Despite the novel's location as a canonical classic within the Classic Western genre, the elements of revisionism that *Shane* exhibits are numerous and difficult to ignore.

Perhaps more so than either the *Virginian* or *Lassiter*, the title character of Jack Schaefer's classic, *Shane*, exemplifies the Classic Western hero: Shane is attractive, young, strong and, when needed, skilled. More importantly, Shane represents goodness in men and a kindness for those who need help. Joe Starrett, the homesteader who more than befriends Shane, tells the gunfighter, "There's still a lot of kid in you" (55). Shane's role as an iconic hero figure extends to young Bob Starrett, Joe's son and only child, and through Bob's eyes the reader sees the world and understands it. Bob is enamored with Shane, and over the course of the novel his faith and loyalty to him is made readily apparent. Shane's reply to Joe, "The first real smile I had seen yet flashed across Shane's face", is to acknowledge Joe's insight: "Maybe. Maybe there is at that" (55).

As a figure of American Exceptionalism, Shane is utterly independent and self-reliant, "cool and competent," Bob observes at a climactic moment when Shane is "facing that room full of men in the simple solitude of his own invincible completeness" (254). Bob goes so far as to tie the Cowboy to the very world he understands, describing Shane "as self-sufficient as the mountains" (161). In this way, Schaefer ties his Cowboy to the natural world in language more

direct than either Wister or Grey. Shane enforces this idea when he tells Joe that “There’s no man living can tell me what I can’t do. Not even you, Joe” (243).

Shane, as the ideal, Classic Western Cowboy hero is solitary, taciturn, and socially remote. “Shane was not anxious to meet people. He would share little in their talk” (124). Shane’s admiration for Joe stems from Joe’s resistance to Luke Fletcher, the corrupt cattle baron who threatens to run out the settlers. Those who cower before Fletcher garner his silent disapproval, and he does little to hide his disgust. (165) Shane is also a roving and homeless Cowboy, telling Marian Starrett, Joe’s wife, “I was fiddle-footed and left home at fifteen” (77), leaving the rest of his history obscured. “He had no news about himself,” says Bob, who ties him neatly to the home. “His past was fenced as tightly as our pasture” (71). The novel’s end and Bob’s elevation of Shane transform the Cowboy into a mythical figure, tied inevitably to his origins. To Bob, Shane represents the region’s destiny for transformation toward progressive development: “He was the man who rode into our little valley out of the heart of the great glowing West and when his work was done rode back whence he had come and he was Shane” (274).²¹⁸

Yet unlike the familiar violence that Lassiter may have embodied, Shane’s values run counter to the violence and conflict that the Classic Western is renowned for. While he is capable of gunfighting and violence, it is something he resents and finds no real pride in, going out of his way to vocally eschew violence when given the chance. Shane tells Bob:

Listen, Bob. A gun is just a tool. No better and no worse than any other tool, a shovel—or an axe or a saddle or a stove or anything. Think of it always that way. A gun is as good—and as bad—as the man who carries it. Remember that. (72)

Rather than tie his masculinity to the use of firearms, though, he distances the quality of a man—in this case good or bad—from the weapon itself, an act typically seen as inconceivable in the Classic Western but more the norm for the progressive Cowboy of the Revisionist Western.²¹⁹

Shane’s aversion to violence is only one of the more outstanding qualities which mark him as a figure who rejects many of the Classic Western’s conventions. Instead, Shane embodies an

²¹⁸ His mythical status upon the West is furthered when another nameless homesteader speculates that “No bullet can kill that man... Sometimes I wonder whether anything ever could” (266).

²¹⁹ Though Shane is well aware of the necessity for violence, and when the time calls upon him to make use of it to preserve the Starrett’s homestead and the other homesteader’s lifestyles, he is more than apt for the job and is quick to do what he feels he must. That said, he is at least aware of its problematic nature and its potential for misuse and goes to great lengths to ensure that Bob sees them negatively rather than positively.

awareness of progressive attitudes more in sync with the Revisionist Western than perhaps the Classic Western. Not only is Shane adverse to the use of violence, he is versed on the modern fashion of the time for women, sensitive to the appeal and Marian's interest in the subject matter:

[Shane] sat there, easy and friendly, telling her how they were wearing wide floppy brimmed bonnets with lots of flowers in front on top and slits in the brims for scarves to come through and be tied in bows under their chins.

Talk like that seemed foolish to me to be coming from a grown man. Yet this Shane was not bothered at all. (15)

Shane's awareness for women's fashion from the East marks him as socially conscious to non-western attitudes and cultural values, suggesting a more renaissance background in his learning than what might be seen in other contemporary Cowboys of the time.²²⁰ Shane is learned not only in the tools of war but in ways deemed 'foolish... to be coming from a grown man'. The Cowboy, then, revels in his resistance to the expectations that the socio-cultural West has of him.

3.4.1 Work and Non-Normative Relationships in the Classic Western

In point of fact, Shane's emphasis in the book is not on the overt conflict with Fletcher and his men, but on the physical work at the Starrett's farm necessary to maintain the homestead. The uprooting of a stump that has been a problem for the Starretts is the source of the novel's first major conflict, taking up an approximate third of the book.²²¹ *Shane* offers an alternative of masculinity in the West through this work ethic.

Wordlessly, Shane intuitively approaches the stump shortly after arriving and begins to work on removing it. Joe, who had left the stump there for lack of an ability to move it on his own, joins in and the two begin a furious demonstration of strength geared toward physical labor. Their labor continues through two brief and tellingly quiet episodes. As both Shane and Joe start, their

²²⁰ Louis L'Amour's *Shalako* marks a prime example for a protagonist who is worldly in his knowledge and upbringing as well. However, the key difference marked in these men is that while *Shalako* and others may have a history of learning from both abroad and within the USA, it is typically a knowledge which emphasizes warfare, strategy, and survival. Shane's knowledge instead is emphasized on a variety of subjects and extends to knowledge outside the standard learning for men, such as women's contemporary fashion of the time.

²²¹ Work in and of itself in the Western is not out of the ordinary for a novel to focus on. According to Robert Pippin in "What is a Western", the conquest of the West through work is seen as one of three traditional narratives in the Classic Western. This is something that marks *Shane* as a part of the genre. However, as I will discuss, the emphasis of this working mentality behind Shane's actions is also something which marks *Shane* as a Western which anticipates the Revisionist Western because work translates into an alternative toward the heteronormative Cowboy lifestyle.

“eyes met over the top of the stump and held and neither of them said a word. Then they swung up their axes and both of them said plenty to that old stump” (93). When they are finished with their labor by the dusk, “they both looked up and their eyes met and held as they had so long ago in the morning hours.” Bob expounds on their moment, sharing it with the reader:

The silence was clean and wholesome, and this was one of the things you could never forget whatever time might do to you in the furrowing of the years, an old stump on its side with root ends making a strange pattern against the glow of the sun sinking behind the far mountains and two men looking over it into each other’s eyes. (107-8).

As it was with the Virginian and the unnamed narrator, so too is it with Shane and Joe that their bond is built off of work which is intended to stabilize and improve the homestead. Rather than violence and danger being the meeting ground for men’s fraternal bonding, it is in the work that they do in the domestic sphere. Of interest here, as it was implied with *The Virginian*, is the element of homoeroticism and intimacy shared between the two men, which is pronounced over their meeting eyes and the ‘clean and wholesome’ nature of their bond.

Take for example the earlier exchange of long, knowing, silent glances across the base of the stump. The “clean and wholesome” relationship between the two serves, to Bob at least, as an expression of human love. This love is non-normative in the standard heterosexual conventions of the Classic Western, but the understanding of their love is positive, even stabilizing for the homestead. Later episodes in the novel encourage Bob’s view of their relationship together: Bob’s speculation of his father following Shane’s fight with Chris over the honor of the Starrett’s homestead suggests an awareness of this change but an approval for it as well:

It scarce seemed possible that he was the same man I had first seen, stern and chilling in his dark solitude, riding up our road. Something in father, something not of words or of actions but of the essential substance of the human spirit, had reached out and spoken to him and he had replied to it and had unlocked a part of himself to us. (113-14)

This ‘human spirit’ finds itself manifest in the strong bond that Shane shares with Joe, and later in a triangular relationship with Joe’s wife, Marian. The couple both accept Shane’s love for the both of them, and Shane’s devotion to the homestead does not stem from a desire to strictly remove a corrupt ruler from the West, but rather from his love of Joe and Marian, and on a different, more fatherly level, Bob. Spirituality, in this sense, finds itself explored not only in the characters’

exploration of the wilderness, but also in the tentative yet sincere non-normative relationships that they share with one another.

By contrast, the shallowness and even inauthenticity of simple male/female relations in the novel are made clear by their dependence on language. Only when Shane becomes involved in Marian and Joe's marriage as a guest at their home do all three find expression in each other through the context of the Starrett's conflict with Fletcher. Marian pleads:

"Don't go, Shane. Joe needs you. More than ever now. *More than he would ever say.*"

"And you?" Shane's lips barely moved and I was not sure of the words.

Mother hesitated. Then her head went up. "Yes. It's only fair to say it. I need you too."

"So-o-o," he said softly, the words lingering on his lips. He considered her gravely. "*Do you know what you're asking, Marian?*"

"I know. And I know that you're the man to stand up to it." (120, my emphasis)

Again, in an instance where their language dances around the complex non-normative relationship that they share, their intimacy with one another defies social conventions. They are not married, and thus Marian's love for Shane would be deemed unacceptable to the socio-cultural West, and so their dialogue must remain subtle. But Marian insists that 'Joe needs' Shane 'more than he would ever say', and that she too needs him. Shane's weighed response considers not only her needs, but Joe's as well, and because it is the both of them he stays.

Through their success in thwarting Fletcher and in the growth of the homesteader's home, however, the fruitfulness of their non-normative erotic triangle becomes plain, as none of this would be possible without Shane's involvement in their lives.²²² This is evident later, when Joe confronts her about her interest in Shane:

"But you don't. Not really. You can't. Because I don't know myself."

Father was staring over her head at the kitchen wall, not seeing anything there. "Don't fret yourself, Marian. I'm man enough to know a better when his trail meets mine. *Whatever happens will be all right.*"

²²² As Forrest Robinson remarks in *Having it Both Ways*, Marian is at first not receptive to her competition with Shane over Joe, for "as Joe and Shane labor silently over the great stump, she dresses herself in her prettiest clothes and advances toward the men, feeling "mighty proud of herself." They are "so busy and intent that even if they were aware she was there they did not really notice her." Finally, at her insistence, they pause and offer perfunctory praise. But then Joe speaks his mind: "'Now stop bothering us. Can't you see we're busy?' And he swung back to his root'" (234).

“Oh, Joe ... Joe! Kiss me. Hold me tight and don’t ever let go.” (203, my emphasis)

Joe not only understands his wife’s attraction to Shane, but shares it. Marian rejects his interpretation, forcing away even the convention of a relatively simple affair. Her bond with both men extends beyond normative relationships in the West and is instead an acceptance of all three into her life. Marian, Joe, and Shane share an erotic energy for all parties involved. And how could they reject any one of them, for as even Bob notices, “Did a woman ever have *two such men*?” (205, my emphasis).

3.4.2 Marian and the Domestic Sphere: Subversion of Masculinity to the Empowerment of Women

While Marian’s relationship to both men may share in a form of erotic attraction, there remains an unequal distribution of that love between Joe and Shane. The initial work on the stump distinguishes a certain demarcation between the working world of masculinity and the feminine domesticity. Marian’s failure to adequately provide the men food is an embarrassment to her, as she has burned the pie she was baking for them. The act is seen by Marian as a failure in her duty toward labor, and so she resolutely returns to the kitchen despite the men’s ridicule.

Marian labors at length, emphasizing her determination to provide a new pie. Shane is quick to tell her that “It’s prime,” too. “Yes,” he goes on, “that’s the best bit of stump I ever tasted” (108-11). Shane acknowledges Marian’s contribution to the stabilizing and improvement of the homestead, but her victory here is minimal. Marian has been given this acknowledgement with a wink and a nod, a slight condescension from both Joe and Shane. Whatever victory Marian might have in baking the pie comes solely from the subordination of her “feminine” qualities, relegated clearly to the domestic sphere, to the kinds of “male” virtue that go into subduing the stump, located openly in a public sphere.

Despite this divide, the homestead remains the location where Marian is most valued and also where she holds the most authority. Her derision at the hands of the men aside, the farm is the place where she can most effectively compete with the men for authority and self-esteem, and most importantly, control. Marian’s interest in the continuation of the homestead, even in its success, leads her to willingly subordinate all other components in her life to ensure this. Marian would rather risk the lives of both Joe and Shane in the confrontation against Fletcher to ensure a future

for her and Bob. Marian's manipulation of the men toward her objectives is evidence of this authority, and contributes to her independence.

In the end, however, Marian's confusion and final retreat from self-reckoning should not be taken as failures of intelligence or virtue on her part or on Schaefer's. Instead, they are part of the consequences for her rebellion against "the woman's role" in her social and cultural setting. Just as the Virginian attempts to break free of the masculine mold the socio-cultural West have put him into but ultimately fails to do so, so too does Marian attempt a similar escape in her relationship between Joe and Shane.

Marian is successful in this regard not only for her establishing a non-normative triangular relationship with both men that is mutually acknowledged, but also in subverting standard masculinity roles to her own gain. The end result is her self-empowerment and assurance of a future she has control over. Yet it is not happily that she places the men against Fletcher, and there is sympathy for her conflict as well as an admiration for her independence. Inevitably, she calls on Shane to knock Joe out and to face Fletcher alone, for only his capacity for violence—no matter how much he may personally reject it—will remove the threat to her home.

3.4.3 Violence in *Shane*: Shane's Resistance to the Demand for Violence

Marian, Joe, and Bob all recognize Shane's violence as "magnificent." Each bears witness to the violence in a variety of ways, and to various ends. It is this violent nature in Shane that Marian directs toward the service of the homestead at the conclusion of the novel. However, as Joe signaled to Shane a form of homoeroticism over their work against the stump, so too does Marian react to Shane's sexual gravity, brought on by his episodes of violence and commitment to her family. However, for all of Shane's magnetism, he resists the desire that he triggers in others, never acting out on the romantic ties he builds between Marian and Joe. Ultimately, Shane's presence in the homestead is paradoxical: while Shane is non-normative in a variety of ways, his presence also causes conflict. Although Shane takes it upon himself to preserve the warm, wholesome integrity of the home, he is unable to maintain that relationship and is turned again toward his gunfighting to resolve the issues.

Despite Shane's disavowal of violence as unfavorable, as he tells Bob, Shane inevitably engages with violence when either confronted or called upon to. Marian sees the exploits of both her husband and Shane as "Magnificent" after their bloody triumph at Grafton's Saloon. (201) In

this way Shane is notably similar to many other Cowboy figures in the Classic Western, and like both the Virginian and Lassiter, he is unable to successfully complete his rejection of normative expectations in the socio-cultural West. Yet, more directly than either, Shane confronts his violent nature and makes an effort to ensure that Bob will not follow in his footsteps: whereas the Virginian and Lassiter respectively bemoan and flee their problems, Shane acknowledges his flaws and takes on the role of educator for Bob's sake.

Eruptions of violence are commonplace in the Classic Western, where incidents of violence in *Shane* bring about awe for Shane's power from both reader and characters alike, anticipated by both as inevitable. Including Shane's assault on the stump, we seem him fall back onto violence as a solution again in his confrontation with Chris, and again later with Fletcher and the hired gunman, Stark Wilson.²²³ As he makes his final assault on the stump, Shane "was all of him, the whole man, pulsing in the one incredible surge of power. You could fairly feel the fierce energy suddenly burning in him, pouring through him in the single coordinated drive" (106-7).

But this power finds itself to be of great concern to Shane, and it is here that the astute reader finds the central conflict of the novel: not in the contest between the Starretts and Fletcher over land, but with his own internal conscience resisting the urge to engage in destructive, standard Western masculine violence. Take, for example, the scene at Grafton's bar:

He was standing there, straight and superb, the blood on his face bright like a badge, and he was laughing. It was a soft laugh, soft and gentle, not in amusement at Red Marlin or any single thing, but in the joy of being alive and released from long discipline and answering the urge in mind and body. The lithe power in him, so different from father's sheer strength, was singing in every fiber of him. (191-92).

The core of Shane's character wrestles with an internal desire for conflict, and so his restraint and silence throughout the novel see his victory here as a moment where Shane has broken free of all restraints, displaying awesome physical power and victory. Yet this is not a victory, for Shane's disavowal of violence and desire to move away from the gunfighting Cowboy figure that the socio-cultural West expects him sees his resorting to violence as a failure of these attempts and wishes.

²²³ What does stand out for *Shane* is that only in the final confrontation does Shane bring his guns with him, and only then is it that he uses them. The end result, however, is ambiguous. As I will discuss further on, this use of violence that is deadly is a compromise to his rejection of a violent life-style, and so in the end it potentially reflects onto him and perhaps mortally wounds him. Whether this compromise kills him in the end is debatable, but it ultimately marks his departure from the Edenic paradise that he attempted to build with both Joe and Marian when he chooses to leave.

This release “from long discipline” is a spectacle brings an array of unsettling feelings amongst the Starretts and the other homesteaders. Marian recognizes him as dangerous and so too does Joe, but they are in need of his potential violent capabilities and are thus glad to have him with them. Bob is quite understandably impressed with the “indescribable deadliness” (88) that he witnesses, and so he holds the Cowboy in awe.

However, no one more than Shane himself is as upset about the violence he has unleashed onto the West. This potential has been from the beginning of the novel the origin for his attempt at finding an alternative lifestyle to the one he has been living. Rather than in the gun, as the Classic Western Cowboy would, Shane’s desire is for something that is non-normative for a Cowboy. This desire finds expression in those moments filled with emotionality and sentimentalism, when he talks to Bob or is with Joe and or Marian. Shane is regularly stirred to emotion, even sentimental sadness, by memories of bloodshed “along the dark trail of the past” (139).

Shane’s victory over the villainous Stark Wilson is followed with a mixture of regret and sorrow as he tries, unsuccessfully, to reason with Bob over what happened: “‘I gave him his chance,’ he murmured out of the depths of a great sadness” (258). Shane’s shame over his violent ability extends beyond his gunfight with Stark Wilson and Fletcher, even in his fight with Chris and the barroom brawl he has at Grafton’s. (196) Bob understands that Shane is “hurt” to find that the Starretts saw him there, “A woman shouldn’t have to see things like that” (201), he instructs Marian, because he is ashamed of what that participation in violent, hegemonic masculinity looks like. And when Shane backs away from a fight with Chris, one astute observer assures the others: “He wasn’t afraid of Chris. He was afraid of himself” (157). And for good reason, as the end result is partaking in the violent hegemonic masculinity that Fletcher and Stark Wilson represent, even if this violence is in confronting them.

The division within Shane over his capacity for violence and his desire for peace is reflected in the sadness and shame he feels after any violent act he takes part in throughout the novel, even if he demonstrates a keen capacity for it. Shane’s internal desire for violence is at odds with a complete comprehension for the consequences of that violence. However, this is also what makes Shane such a fascinating character, for he knows better than anyone his violent potential and, unlike Lassiter or other Cowboys who play it off as a cool command over others, sees it as an element in himself that *needs* to be kept in check. This fuels the conflict in the story and delays the inevitable confrontation between himself and Fletcher. More notably, this confrontation with

violence is also what ambiguously kills Shane in the end, if not at the very least drives him away from all that he cares for in the West that he has helped the Starretts to build.

Shane gives signs of an awareness of the contradiction within himself, and takes the view that this contradiction stems from his masculinity as the Cowboy, though it saddens him to acknowledge this: “A man is what he is, Bob, and there’s no breaking the mold” (203). Shane, though he attempts to break the bonds of socio-cultural expectations of him to engage in violence, seen as it is in the homesteaders’ desire to see him confront Fletcher and his men, is drawn to that violence whether he wishes to or not. In attempting to find a life with Marian and Joe, Shane has attempted to find a non-normative male identity away from that violence which so deeply saddens him. But, he observes, even though the experience ended in failure and more violence, it produced within him a bond with Bob, first established in a very positive response to “a freckled kid on a rail up the road”, and the desire to help “him for the chance another kid never had” (263). Ultimately, in helping Bob, Shane hopes that the next generation will be able to do without a need for violence, and so his acquiescence to violence is, in part, heroically sacrificial: both for Marian’s homestead and Joe’s marriage, but also for Bob’s future.

3.4.4 Shane and Bob: The Inheritance of Progressive Values by a New Generation

Shane’s connection to Bob extends beyond the role of playing a second father-figure to Bob, a product of his relationship to Marian and Joe. Rather, Shane’s relationship to Bob lies in the realm of the educational, intending to guide a younger generation toward a future that is both free of violence and also prosperous: ultimately, toward a progressive shift in values. Shane’s identification with Bob—seeing in him ‘a kid who deserves a chance another kid never had’—inspires Shane to try to steer the boy away from the life of a gunfighter, a Cowboy, the same sort of lifestyle that falls in line with hegemonic Western masculinity. The danger inherent in the Cowboy’s life comes to life as Shane leaves the farm on his way to town for the final shoot-out.

At that moment, Bob recalls, “he was the symbol of all the dim, formless imaginings of danger and terror in the untested realm of human potentialities beyond my understanding. The impact of the menace that marked him was like a physical blow” (249). Shane cannot break his own masculine mold, and in the end it ruins him, and Bob recognizes his sacrifice in attempting to give him an alternative to that masculine mold. Shane produces then the non-normative mold that

informs Bob's development and steers him away from the masculine hegemonic adherence to violence that both Shane and Fletcher found themselves a part of.

For Bob, the informative role Shane plays is not in the episodes of violence in the novel—aside from his barfight, which Bob was witness to and Joe was a part of, there is little actual gunfighting and detail given about Fletcher and Stark Wilson's deaths—but in his support of the Starrett family on a personal and emotional level. The end result is not only a future without bloodshed for Bob, but also without the normative masculine figures dominating the West through forceful means. In leaving, however, Shane experiences that violence and rootlessness that he hopes to spare Bob from, making his sacrifice all the more pronounced: "It's up to you now," he instructs Bob, "Go home to your mother and father. Grow strong and straight and take care of them." Recognizing the hard truth that "there's only one thing more I can do" (263) for the family, which is to take with him that violence he embodied and shouldered.

Shane's sacrifice then translates into rooting the Starretts to their home, his progressive spirit finding form in Bob's growth following the novel's end. "He's here, in this place, in this place he gave us," Marian proclaims. "We have roots here now that we can never tear loose" (270-71). Marian's words of triumph illustrate that the deep tension in Shane between the natural urge and the reluctance to engage in violence has translated into the successful establishment of a progressive future for Bob and the other homesteaders. Shane's internalized conflict translates into a contradiction between the hegemonic masculine values that are attached to his heroism and the non-normative values that inspired Shane to support the Starretts, and it is these non-normative values that remain. In taking his stand for the family, the gunfighter brings his heroic qualities to the service of home and hearth, shifting those qualities to a non-normative identity and eventual continuity, found in Bob, and the community's future.

Shane's influence on Bob and the Starretts produces yet another conflict, one that is paradoxical in nature: if his heroic sacrifice at the novel's end is to the service of traditional family values, then he simultaneously represents a shift away from those values with his non-normative actions. Examples of his subverting these traditional, normative institutions lie in the triangular, non-normative relationship he shares with Joe and Marian, in demonstrating the weaknesses in the adult members' ability to handle Fletcher on their own, and finally in exposing the tensions and moral flaws in their way of living, that is to say, their final resort of using violence.

If Shane's intention over the course of the novel is to provide a *bildungsroman* for Bob, that is, to ensure that he is formed in its wholesome mold, then he also works against precisely these notions. By helping Joe and Marian, Shane reveals their inability to effectively ensure Bob's future, as well as in the lacking elements in their own marriage. Shane unwittingly shows Bob that the homestead is a site of constraint and struggle, even vulnerable: the homestead is proven to be incapable when operating under the structures of a normative process, ultimately set toward failure under the control of Fletcher. Even if the homestead is a site of empowerment for Marian, it is also what binds her to a sphere of domesticity. Joe, on the other hand, is subservient to Marian there and incapable otherwise.

This is what Bob is witness too, who tells the story, and who is thus the primary interpreter of what develops at the homestead. This is an explanation for the fact that Bob tells two stories: one, a mingled tale of heroism and utopian domesticity; the other, a subversive undercutting of the first. In this subversive undercutting of the first, the novel finds much of its resonance with later Revisionist Westerns, though it is rarely, if ever, considered as such. Though Bob is witness to these events and interprets them as an adult for the reader, via his narration, his take on Shane and Shane's influence is sincerely positive. Then, rather than exerting a destabilizing and negative force, Shane's revelation about the flaws in both the institution of marriage and the role of violence have been successful, and Shane's efforts to create a more progressive Bob have worked.

The effectiveness of Shane's actions in the novel, as well as the acts of subversion that exist against normative institutions and hegemonic masculinities, are all done through the lens of Bob as a narrator. The reader understands the transformation of the socio-cultural West through Bob, and thus through Bob we see the maintenance of the mythic, heroic, larger-than-life cast of the narrative, specifically Shane. Bob's innocence in the novel depicts Shane as a larger than life figure, definitive not only in his and the reader's life, but in the very formation of the American West, and a progressive West at that.

But what then of the mythic elements in the Classic Western which seemed to be undermined? In arguing *Shane's* anticipation of the Revisionist Western, Schaefer's management of Bob's point of view is subtly subversive of the narrative's heroic trajectory, emphasizing a pacifist Cowboy who, against his will, must engage in violence. The tension this produces, which amounts to an almost outright contradiction of Shane's desired goals insofar as instructing Bob

goes, is vital not only to our understanding of Bob, but also to our understanding of his story as a subversive narrative of the Classic Western genre.

This is not to say that Bob is self-aware of this ironic contradiction. One could argue that the narrative he tells us is in fact a dramatization intended to reflect his wish to deny just that, steeped in nostalgia and romanticizing as it is. However, Bob's behavior and the actions he witnesses give up ideas he is hoping to hide. As one of the more subversive elements of the novel thus far, which goes against the social norms of a society run by the patriarchal Luke Fletcher and his representation of western masculine hegemony, it is the freedom from gendered, masculine expectations that Bob emphasizes in his final observations on Shane.

Bob has been witness to this in his own parent's relationship and love for Shane. If Shane has sacrificed himself against Fletcher and Stark Wilson so that Bob may have the "chance to live out his boyhood and grow straight inside as a man should" (273), it is so that Bob might reject the same normative structures which had initially threatened his family prior to Shane's arrival. Shane knows "what goes on in a boy's mind and what can help him stay clean inside through the muddled, dirtied years of growing up" (262), and as such he recognizes the powerful ways in which these social structures can define an individual. Shane sees what the Virginian and Lassiter see, yet unlike either of them he makes the effort to guarantee that the next generation to grow up in the West won't have the same experience.

It is a misreading of the novel, I would argue, to suggest that Shane's role here is to reinforce the normative institutions of mono-relational marriages. After all, Bob's experience over the course of the novel shows a positive challenge to normative sexual expectations and relationships. Bob's parents both engage Shane in mutually consensual attraction, and Marian positions both Shane and Joe in such a way as to make sure that the homestead prospers, as it can only do with two men in her life. Most crucially, perhaps, Bob watches when Marian asks Shane, "Are you doing this just for me?" (245). Both the implication for a deeper relationship is too blunt for even the young Bob to miss, yet it is something that he accepts, and sees as good.

Joe's position is also shifted in Bob's worldview when Shane is introduced to the homestead, as he witnesses his father's confidence and self-esteem rely on Shane almost entirely. When Bob first asks, "Could you beat Shane? In a fight, I mean" (122), Joe beats around the bush, but Bob leaves the question because he already knows who the better is. When Joes states "It helps a man to know that if anything happens to him, his family will be in better hands than his own"

(238), he acknowledges that Shane has usurped his status in the family, but is delighted to see both Marian and Shane dismiss his subordination—his expectation of a better man replacing him is thwarted, and so the three express mutual and shared attraction. Bob is witness to this, and there is an underscore of sexual awareness that Bob presents in narrating the relationship between his father and Marian and Shane, yet it is preserved by Shane's own insistence on serving both Marian and Joe.

This, as I have argued, is more complex though than the simple recognition that Shane is the better man: in truth, for Joe it is because of his love for Shane and for Marian that he concedes to just such an open relationship, and as such it is to his happiness that Marian invites him back into the triangle. Notably, however, she does not confirm to him that Shane is banished from this relationship, and Bob sees and knows this. Bob looks on while his mother is “watching Shane,” and he observes “her throat curving in a lovely proud line, her eyes wide with a sweet warmth shining in them” (244).²²⁴

Shane's instructive influence that he is providing Bob is progressive in its core, yet it remains a diminishment of Marian and Joe as he nears his point of self-sacrifice, of which all parties are aware—Shane has, through Bob's fascination in the Cowboy, come to be hero to the boy, and so he is worshiped as such. Though farming was an attempt to explore the non-normative molds that the West had to offer Shane, along with the opportunity for the triangular relationship he would share with Marian and Joe, the demands of the family and the socio-cultural West's expectation of him to engage him in violence force Shane to leave, perhaps even to die.

But “already,” Bob admits, midway in Chapter One, “I was imagining myself in hat and belt and boots like those” (12). By the novel's end, Marian and Joe fade into the background and Shane's presence fills Bob's worldview. Shane has become for Bob a mythic figure who is capable of rejecting institutionalized norms, even the hegemonic masculinity seen in Fletcher, while also departing from them entirely should the time come. *Shane*, for all of its attempt to exemplify the Western and the heroes that the genre would contain, as well as for all of its mythological underpinnings, is a novel that is filled with more acts of subversion against just such mythological constructs that it is a wonder the novel is not more regularly considered to be Revisionist.

²²⁴ It is hard to ignore the presence of an Oedipal element in the passage with young Bob being witness to his mother's men in her life, acutely aware of his own presence in the relationship. However, Shane manages to brush this under the rug in his rejection of Marian's implied suggestion.

True, that it is not overt in its attempts to do this, and Marian is ultimately relegated to the domestic sphere behind both Joe and Shane, but her actions and the openness of her relationship between Joe and Shane, as well as Joe and Shane's relationship with one another, runs strongly against the normative, masculine hegemony that so defines the American Western Cowboy and genre. In the end Shane's departure, if not death, allow for the institution of marriage to potentially reassert itself, but it is implied that this is not the case, for Shane's presence, or rather spirit, have entered into the region, strengthening the people there, and it has entered into Bob as well, whose lens into the narrative is meant to be our own interpretation and take away from the novel. Shane's anti-violent message and non-normative lifestyle are the bedrock for the foundation of Bob's growth in the progressive American West that Shane helped build.

3.5.0 The Revisionist in Classic Westerns Re-Visited

Through the examination of some of the most iconic Classic Westerns, I have identified elements in each of them which challenges their relegation away from the social awareness preserved for Revisionist Westerns. Though these texts are considered Classic Westerns, clearly distinguished as I have made mention in the previous chapter from that of the later Revisionist Western, they bear in them clear elements of subversion which predict and even resonate with that of the Revisionist Western genre. The Virginian's own reluctance to engage in the violent actions of a performative hegemonic masculinity that he has been pressured into by the socio-cultural West is a reflection of Wister's own attempts to distance himself from those beliefs. This is exemplified by the Virginian's desire to escape with Molly to the paradise outside said male-oriented hegemonic society where they can engage in a practice of egalitarianism. Wister's novel reflects his own struggles with the expectations of society on men to both engage in hegemonic masculinity, and to subordinate women for the advancement of men. His efforts to resist this social pressure and to bond with non-normative figures eventually give way, and both Wister and the Virginian cave to the pressure of the socio-cultural West. But his resistance is core to the novel and definitive of his character, and marks what is often cited as the first true Western—one that I argue is also revisionist in nature.

So too does Zane Grey present resistance to normative institutions, as seen in Lassiter's own resistance and opposition to the practices of the Mormon church—clear and obvious representations of a Western masculine hegemony run rampant, ruthless and violent in their desire

to seize power and subordinate “gentiles” and women alike. Lassiter and Jane’s resistance to the Mormon community represent a strong element of revisionism. As I have shown, Grey’s novel similarly capitalizes on the spirit of women’s emancipation from such systems of subordination and their own individuality and freedom of sexual choice. Notably though, both Grey and Wister fail to realize their rejection of normative institutions entirely, for while the Virginian goes on to start his various enterprises and dynasty, Venters’ possessive attitude of Bess also contradicts the non-normative elements that are expressed in the Classic Western. Both anticipate in their own ways the Revisionist Western, but neither complete their desire to fully become it.

This anticipation of the Revisionist Western finds expansion in Schaefer’s *Shane*, wherein the very institutions of marriage and the family are questioned and complicated by non-normative, sexualized interest, as well as seeing violence disavowed for non-normative masculine lifestyles that contradict the expectations of the Classic Western Cowboy. Though Bob believes in Shane for his mythic qualities, it is his resistances to these male-oriented hegemonies and institutions that ultimately fuel his position as a powerful, attractive mythic figure. Where Grey and Wister fail, Schaefer extends his efforts much further, but also sees his protagonist end conflict with violence. While these texts may have not overtly criticized these systems of oppression as the later Revisionist Westerns would do in a manner of self-awareness, they did predict their criticisms, and so incorporated these subversive natures into the characters and narratives of their texts.

Chapter Four: African Americans in the Classic Western: Stereotypes and Counter-narratives about Race, Class, and Gender

4.1.0 Expanding the Classic Western: the Inclusion of African Americans

I will now move to those texts and characters who were most often subjugated before the oppressive, normative processes of the American Western's frontier setting and the many fictive narratives which it spawned. African American authors and film makers approached the Western genre tenuously, but approach it they did, and their contributions to the Classic Western denies the categorical placement of marginalized authors to the Revisionist Western. These authors produced counter-narratives of resistance against the hegemonic, white, heteronormative narratives of the West, empowering their own communities while subverting the thematic elements of American Exceptionalism and the Cowboy figure for their own purposes.

Bringing in marginalized authors alongside canonical fiction establishes an equivalency between their literary and filmic accomplishments rather than relegating them to sub-genres typically placed beneath the Classic Western. The presence of African American film and fiction in the Western is an understudied portion of the genre, yet African American Westerns exist and are persistent, and the inclusion of African American works highlights their involvement in the process of defining the Western.²²⁵ Even with the increased awareness of marginalized African Americans writing within the genre, it cannot be stressed enough that, despite neoliberal capitalism's racist, classist, sexist and general oppressive curbing, these authors and their accomplishments are still not being paid the attention they need and deserve.

Historically, while many African Americans made their way westward,²²⁶ the Western genre was believed to have held little interest to them in the early 20th century.²²⁷ Instead, African

²²⁵ For more on this, Mirian Strube's "Blacks Go West: The Rise of the African American Cowboy" provides insightful analysis into the rise of African Americans in Westerns.

²²⁶ See Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway's 2001 *African Americans on the Western Frontier* for more information concerning the presence of African Americans upon the frontier. Their experiences ranged from settlers, ranchers, Cowboy's, gold diggers, adopted Native Americans, and many more. Of course, this is emphasizing willful, consenting movement and immigration, ignoring the forced relocations to various positions in the West.

²²⁷ Part of this belief stems from the historical legacy of slavery and racism in the American South, where large populations of African Americans resided with the memory of both antebellum America and life afterwards. However, such works as Laurie Champion and Bruce A. Glasrud's *The African-American West: A Century of Short Stories* (2000) reveal the often-neglected existence of African American writers in the American West. See also *Black Cowboys of the Old West: True, Sensational, and Little-Known Stories from History* (2010) by Tricia Martineau Wagner.

American literature tended to drift to the Noir detective genre when exploring the West as a region, focusing on the urban settings that more closely reflected their real life situations and the situations familiar to African Americans back East, in cities like New York and Chicago.²²⁸ Yet the experience of African Americans in the West is a comparatively new field, with awareness to the Westerns written by African American authors only emerging recently. According to Blake Allmendinger in *Imagining the African American West*:

Since the 1960s, the field of Western American literature has expanded—both in the authors contributing to the Revisionist Western and in the attention given to those contributions made prior—to include works by Chicanos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. (xix)

In addition to the focus on other marginalized figures, scholars have invested the locus of their studies toward the experiences of religious minorities, women, studies on environmentalism, and the political leaning of Western studies prior to the 1960's to be conservative in nature.²²⁹ Yet as the Revisionist Western and the New Western Historiography expanded, the focus on African American works in the early Classic Western remains understudied.

The division between Classic and Revisionist Westerns depends on a self-awareness and subversion of the oppressive, normative processes common to socio-cultural America as it is represented in fiction. The resistances to these hegemonic socio-cultural processes concerns a gendered position in society, and the treatment of non-normative, marginalized fictive and cultural types in the socio-cultural West. The placement of marginalized groups as subordinated stems from the resistance of marginalized figures and the non-normative identities and values that they espouse. The Classic Westerns thus far in my study have explored the problematic nature of reinventing an American gendered identity in a frontier setting, but they have stemmed from an internalized resistance to normative processes coming from the white male author's perspective.

²²⁸ Of particular note is that, rather than focusing on the Western literature of the region, many African Americans in the West emphasized other avenues of artistic expression, such as music and painting. Jacob Lawrence's 1941 series *The Migration of the Negro* illustrates this shift of African American artistic interest to the West. See Dan Kopf's "The Great Migration: The African American Exodus from The South" for more information on the migration of African Americans to the West and their artistic interests there.

²²⁹ For more information on studies which focus on the works of other marginalized figures, see Lincoln, Kenneth. *Native American Renaissance*; Saldivar, Ramón. *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*; Livingston, Josh and Moses Rischin, eds. *Jews of the American West*; Goldman, Anne. *Continental Divides: Revisioning American Literature*; and Corner, Krista. *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women's Writings*.

The awareness of Revisionist elements in canonical Classic Western texts challenges not only how the genres are distinguished from one another, but also how American myth-making shifts. In acknowledging elements of revisionism within the Classic Western, the myth-making of America's historical and cultural development shifts, and the spotlight from white authors expands to include the marginalized in socio-cultural America. Armando José Prats states that:

...[T]he mythological alterations of historical events... influence the national character, and that *the selfsame alterations*, taken as system, structure, and pattern, become not only the major constituents of American culture but also the presumed methodology that articulates it. (3)²³⁰

These 'selfsame alterations' in the rereading of canonical Classic Westerns highlights the resistance to normative values that have always held a presence within American culture. The Classic Western incorporates these revisionist values into the construction of an American cultural myth concerning Westward progression—Manifest Destiny—and the characteristics of the Cowboy as a narrative hero—the figure who exemplifies American Exceptionalism. The 'methodology that articulates' this shift finds its clearest expression from the awareness in racially marginalized, non-normative characters and elements in the Classic Western, anticipating the Revisionist Western by approximately 50 to 60 years.

In this chapter, I will examine representations of African Americans as stereotypes across both film and fiction and the African American authors who addressed these stereotypes in their works. I will focus on the works of two authors: Oscar Micheaux and his 1917 novel *The Homesteader*, and Pauline Hopkins and her 1902 novel *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*.²³¹ The chapter will explore the impact their writing had on not only Classic Westerns at the beginning of the 20th century, but also for African Americans as well. Between both texts exist themes of responses to Jim Crow law,²³² employing Classic Western tropes to

²³⁰ *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*.

²³¹ From this point onward, *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and southwest* will be referred to as *Winona*.

²³² See Frances L. Edwards and Grayson Bennett Thomson, "The Legal Creation of Raced Space: The Subtle and Ongoing Discrimination Created through Jim Crow Laws," 2010. Edwards and Bennett go on to write that: "During the Jim Crow Era, the legal system set up an environment that, when combined with the creation of certain uses of space within architectural designs and outcomes, produced an incredibly segregated society. Jim Crow Laws defined property rights and restricted the use of architectural space for both White and African Americans. As a result, these laws intentionally, yet subtly, created a kind of "raced space." This segregated use of space ensured that White Americans were treated in a superior manner not only in their neighborhoods, but also in schools, restaurants, and a myriad of places in their communities. This in turn created persistent and pervasive discrimination against African

challenge racist ideology and subordination from white, hegemonic figures. The texts also explore how African Americans can find some form of upward social mobility against racialized class oppression. Both Hopkins and Micheaux also confront the concept of miscegenation in the socio-cultural fabric of America, presenting it as a means for positive social change and a stronger American character through the lens of double-consciousness found in both texts.²³³ Finally, both authors' works explicitly attempt to inspire other African Americans to reinvent self-identity and their standard of living, similar in many ways to the efforts of canonical Classic Westerns, further bringing their works into the folds of the Classic Western.

4.1.1 Representations of African Americans: Stereotypes in Film and Fiction

The Smithsonian's review of African Americans Cowboys in the West reads that "though African-American cowboys don't play a part in the popular narrative, historians estimate that one in four cowboys were black."²³⁴ This difference in representation and reality is notable for the transformative impact the Classic Western has on interpreting and seeing the American West as a region, who populated it, and what characteristics were tied to their identity. According to the Smithsonian, the Classic Western—which romanticizes a transformation in American culture and history as the nation spread westward—excluded them from this narrative *and* from the potential for positive representation.

As I have discussed in Chapters One and Two, the westward movement of whites from the South was correlated with a socio-cultural distancing from the Civil War and the historical problems of both loss of the war and slavery. The absence of African Americans from the Western in this context makes sense, as it was the white male from the South who sought to redefine his identity and role in society, and the removal of the African American made this simpler.

However, African Americans made use of the Western in similar ways, going even further to critique socio-cultural hierarchies which subordinated the other on a basis of race, gender, and class. In addition, in looking at film, we see how African American's presence was often

Americans. Although the courts finally struck down Jim Crow Laws (*Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, 349 U.S. 294 (1954)), the physical consequences of the Jim Crow Era endure throughout American society.

²³³ For more on double-consciousness by W.E.B Du Bois, see below in sub-chapter 4.2.2. Also see Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* / Paul Gilroy.

²³⁴ Katie Nodjimbadem, writing for the Smithsonian. "The Lesser-Known History of African-American Cowboys". Retrieved 17.07.2017.

diminished. As a marketing strategy focused on racial purity and assuaging white's concerns over the fear of African Americans and miscegenation, Hollywood adopted the Hays Office Code throughout the thirties, which entailed prohibiting scenes and subjects which suggested miscegenation in all productions by way of self-censorship.²³⁵ Miscegenation, in this context, became one of the more fearful elements of African Americans to white audiences, as it represented not only a betrayal of white supremacy, but a reciprocation to the idea that African Americans deserved equal standing as human beings. As a concept, this similarly flew into the face of Jim Crow laws, which in turn would then demand an elevation in class of African Americans from beneath whites into one that was egalitarian in nature.

Thus, African American representation was left with the stereotypes and racist caricatures popular at the turn of the century to appease white audiences: the loyal slave, the 'mammy', and the 'brute Negro', to name but a few.²³⁶ The loyal slave was accepting of his role beneath whites, eager and happy to serve with no desire to develop or improve his life. The 'mammy' was similarly content with her station in life and to being at the beck and call of her white masters: she was dedicated to the white family, especially to the children.²³⁷ Finally, the 'brute Negro' was viewed as a figure who had an uncontrollable sexual appetite and threatened the virtues of white women. He also represented a fear of physical violence from African American males, depicted as too dull to deal with complex situations with anything other than violence. As Marvin Jones states, "In the context of the black male, myth is confused with fact, and the stereotypes are received as true: the

²³⁵ Black, Gregory D. *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies*.

²³⁶ I do not intend to suggest that these are the most prolific stereotypes of African Americans in American culture, nor do I wish to suggest that these are the majority of those stereotypes. The literature on slavery and African Americans in the broader American body of film and fiction is vast and I do not attempt to survey it here. My interest here lies in providing examples for the types of stereotypes that Pauline Hopkins and Oscar Micheaux operated against which are relevant—even directly addressed—in their works. For more information on slave literature and other works by African Americans, see Orland Patterson's 1982 *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, as well as his *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries*. It should be noted, however, that Patterson does have some disconcerting views concerning gender in slavery which have not aged well. Nevertheless, I find his classic cross-cultural analysis of chattel slavery as one of several forms within a global context useful for a broader, contextual insight.

²³⁷ K. Sue Jewell adds that "Historically, the mass media in the United States have portrayed the African American woman in a stereotypic fashion, projecting characteristics of mammy that suggest submissiveness towards her owner (during slavery) or her employer (following emancipation). Moreover, she displays aggressiveness in her relations with other African Americans, particularly males. Other attributes that the mammy possesses include physical features that in Western culture are associated with masculinity. Her comportment connotes satisfaction and contentment with her station in life, wherein she is consigned to performing domestic duties" (38). Jewell, K. Sue. *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of US Social Policy*.

notion that black males really do share a dangerous tendency to violence, or mayhem, or crime has become ‘common sense’ (3).²³⁸

These negative representations and stereotypes have defined what Toni Morrison calls the ‘Africanist persona’, which is “the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learnings about these people” (Qtd. in Delamotte, Eugenia 18).²³⁹ This ‘Africanist persona’ is the culmination of racial prejudice seeking to justify segregation and subordination in African Americans through their portrayal in film and fiction. At the turn of the century, this depiction was one of the core representations of African Americans in American culture, and the stereotypes it employed encouraged their further use.²⁴⁰

The theme of representation, *how* African Americans are depicted in literature and film, is a core component in working against stereotypes and in establishing a new socio-cultural identity in America which does not devalue heritage or race. As Ed Guerrero notes in *Framing Blackness*, “The turbulent power of race is evinced by the variety of ways in which the images and historical experiences of African Americans and other people of color are symbolically figured” (41). While representations of African Americans in Classic Westerns were minimal,²⁴¹ the abundance of

²³⁸ Jones, Marvin. *Race, Sex, and Suspicion: The Myth of the Black Male* for more information. Marvin also goes on to say that: “The black male is peculiarly a target of violence and/ or social control.... This targeting of black males is a symptom of a virus in our collective thinking.... The virus holds that the stereotypes are true—those black males really are beasts. As Edward Said has pointed out, denigrating images of the native are the foundation for violence against him. When racist images are accepted as common sense, this virus is no longer a defect of a few terminals but a defect in the mainframe of American culture itself” (6).

²³⁹ Delamotte, Eugenia. “White Terror, Black Dreams: Gothic constructions of Race in the Nineteenth Century.” pp. 17-31. Eugenia is notably quoting Toni Morrison’s 1993 *Playing In the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.

²⁴⁰ This further use would sometimes be employed in satire, even by abolitionists, to point out the racist flaws in ideologies which encouraged the mistreatment and subjugation of African Americans. Glenda Carpió writes about William Wells Brown, a stage performer whose depictions of African Americans was intended to empower them while criticizing those who would dehumanize African Americans. At the same time, these depictions had the risk of enforcing those stereotypes as well: “Brown animates racial stereotypes, exaggerating their features in order to highlight their theatricality and their status as masks. Although he did so with the ultimate goal of critiquing their use to brand the “complex subject with the seal of reductive caricature and/or bad habit,” he also got at the heart of what is appealing and powerful about them. Stereotypes fascinated Brown. Although they were (and are) too often used to deny the humanity of his brethren. Brown knew that they could also be used as the means to freedom” (33). Carpió, Glenda. *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery*.

²⁴¹ African Americans in popularized canonical Classic Westerns in either film or fiction were relegated to the background and were most often stock figures if they ever appeared. However, because the Western was an attempt to remove itself from the racial conflicts and history of the South, their presence was greatly limited so as not to conflict with this idea. John Ford’s 1960 *Sergeant Rutledge* is a notable exception, as it attempts to use the law of the West to reveal a transcendence in the region beyond racism and stereotyping while simultaneously depicting these elements of racism as society. However, Rutledge, an African American cavalry soldier who is being tried for a murder a white man is revealed to have committed, says little in the film and relies on his white comrade’s courtroom defense to save him.

African Americans in the West signifies a strong shift in the socio-cultural fabric of the West.²⁴² Blake Allmendinger writes that:

In the nineteenth century, for example, African Americans in the West were a diverse group of people. They were slaves, ex-slaves, and freedmen and -women. They lived in segregated towns and farming communities, with whites, and among indigenous tribes. Some had pure African blood. Others had white antecedents, Spanish and Mexican ancestors, and relationships to Native Americans. They pioneered the Great Plains, crossed the southwestern desert, and discovered routes through the Rockies. (XV)²⁴³

The mistaken belief that African Americans were simply absent from the West on both a physical and even cultural level has been made by their minimal focus in the cultural production of film and fiction of the West, producing a belief in an African American absence. The very basic truth of African American representation in the Western is that the literature of African Americans writing about the Classic Western genre is that their works are largely understudied given the assumption that *only* white male authors dominated the genre. However, there *is* a literary and film library by African Americans writing in the West, and their contributions resist the exclusionary practices used when defining a canon of Classic Western fiction.²⁴⁴

Hollywood's representations of African Americans on the big screen have been repeated by white attitudes towards the questions of race since the very start of the motion picture industry and even to today. The result is that these images, which do 'frame blackness' according to stereotypes, have very real consequences for African Americans. This includes how they are perceived in American society and culture and in the foreign cultures Hollywood exports its products to. These representations defined the social stations and actions of African Americans as

²⁴²Although specific to Texas, Alwyn Barr's 1996 *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995* offers some insight into the broader range of African American experiences in the American West.

²⁴³ *Imagining the African American*.

²⁴⁴ The contributions that African American men and women made to the western frontier ranges to all walks of life in the West, including work as miners, homesteaders, town builders, entrepreneurs, and as ordinary, civic-minded citizens. See Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway's 2001 *African Americans on the Western Frontier*. Billington and Hardaway write in their introduction to the collection that "During the last half of the nineteenth century, several thousand African Americans moved to the American western frontier. Before the Civil War, some went west to California as slaves of gold miners and to Utah as slaves of Mormons. Later, free black men joined the U.S. Army and served in frontier outposts while others were hired on as cowboys on western ranches and cattle trails. Once Reconstruction ended in the South, discrimination and segregation caused more African Americans to seek better opportunities elsewhere where prejudice was less evident."

inhuman and servile, and justification for the very real creation of raced-space(s) where whites would be treated better than non-whites.²⁴⁵

This understudied portion of the literary Western's history merits analysis, representing an overlooked yet vital voice to the challenge of white heteronormative masculine hegemony and racial oppression. In the face of African American socio-cultural subordination in the United States of America, the writing of authors such as Hopkins and Micheaux subvert the tools which place them into the position of the subaltern. They write about what the West truly meant to them and how the mythic elements of the Western, such as American Exceptionalism, could be applied to African Americans as well. Hopkins and Micheaux's work demonstrates positive portrayals of African American characters, showing how these figures translate into positive socio-cultural representations and change in America through the American West and, in turn, the Classic Western.

Such novels, including Oscar Micheaux's novel *The Homesteader* and the racially driven, gendered melodrama *Winona* by Pauline Hopkins, were published at a time when accounts of African Americans in the region were rare. They may not represent all African American literature, much less African American representation in the Western, but for their uniqueness in writing controversial Westerns emphasizing resistance to white, male-oriented hegemonies and normative social orders, they deserve analysis. Their resistance against the stereotypes and subordinating socio-cultural normative processes of the United States' film and fiction concerning African Americans marks a clear critique of these systems of racial oppression.

4.1.2 The Western to the African American Author

How the West is imagined and presented, much less dealt with and employed, by African American writers varies in great degrees. Many saw the West as an uncivilized territory, dangerous not only for the threat of Native Americans (real or imagined notwithstanding) but for the potential lawlessness of whites. Other African American writers saw differently, viewing the West as a

²⁴⁵ As these representations define white understanding of what it means to be black, it becomes necessary to not only understand African American responses to these stereotypes, but from whence these stereotypes came. As an example, D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, a nearly three-hour long feature by one of Hollywood's earliest filmmakers, defines the overt depiction of systematic racism in American culture. In addition, these representations encouraged a belief in the very real oppression of Jim Crow laws, segregating African Americans to 'raced spaces' which placed whites in a social hierarchy above African Americans. Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness, the African American Image in Film*.

cultivated farm or a rural community,²⁴⁶ ripe with the potential for new beginnings and an alluring prospect for those who had been plagued with discrimination and racialized violence.²⁴⁷ What the Western does afford marginalized authors is lending some of its most iconic themes: the idea that regeneration, redemption, and reinvention are possible even in the face of a racially based unrest and social disorder.²⁴⁸

The question of whether or not the West offers opportunity for African Americans is contentious, given the grand narrative of the Western's white, heteronormative male narratives feeding on the Myth of Conquest, that is, the subjugation of racialized minority characters. African Americans have crossed America from the Southeast and into the Western region, establishing along the way segregated townships and farming cooperatives as well as experimental racial utopias.²⁴⁹ Others rejected this idea, finding the West to be a site ill-suited to success and prosperity either due to racial tensions or, like many others, lack of good land worth farming.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Aside from Oscar Micheaux, Henry Lewis Suggs points out that there were several African American figures who shared the belief that agriculture in the West was a potential means for the elevation of African Americans. Suggs writes about one such figure, Reverend John C. Coleman, an official in the African American Methodist Episcopal Church and the president of the Northwestern Homestead Movement, "championed agriculture because this was the best strategy to help [black] homesteaders obtain a 'permanent footing' and an 'independent existence'" (297-99). Suggs also adds that, "whereas in 1870 there were only 94 African Americans out of 13,000 people in South Dakota Territory, ten years later there were almost 400 more." See Suggs, Henry Lewis. "The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Transplantation of Culture on the Great Plains of South Dakota, 1865-1985."

²⁴⁷ More often than not, the West found its most realistic formation for African Americans as a city, though even this had the potential to be more dangerous than the early frontier, though many who do live in urban settings see it more positively. For example, Jewell Parker Rhodes sets her historical novel *Magic City* in Tulsa in 1921, during one of the largest race riots of the twentieth century. In *Twilight: Los Angeles*, Anna Deavere Smith dramatizes the "uprising" that happened in 1992 in Los Angeles.

²⁴⁸ To continue with the reference to literature in the urban West, *Magic City* concludes with the hero's decision to build a new Tulsa out of the ashes. *Twilight* refers to that moment right before darkness, to a time of hope, not despair. These themes are similarly extended to the works of Micheaux and Hopkins, as I will discuss further on in the chapter.

²⁴⁹ Authors like Toni Morrison's 1997 *Paradise*, Pearl Cleage's 2006 *Baby Brother's Blues*, and Octavia Butler's 1993 *Parable of the Sower* critique the idea of these racial utopias, pointing out that there were often imperfect, impractical, or conceptually flawed.

²⁵⁰ This is a sentiment that was actually shared by many regardless of race, as the Homestead Act encouraged a production of farming land despite the land being sincerely poor for it. According to the Library of Congress: "Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on May 20, 1862, the Homestead Act encouraged Western migration by providing settlers 160 acres of public land. In exchange, homesteaders paid a small filing fee and were required to complete five years of continuous residence before receiving ownership of the land. After six months of residency, homesteaders also had the option of purchasing the land from the government for \$1.25 per acre. The Homestead Act led to the distribution of 80 million acres of public land by 1900" (Web). Some, like James P. Beckwourth, managed to find a decent life for themselves in the West. Beckwourth left St. Louis at an early age and spent most of the rest of his life in the Rocky Mountains, in the Southwest, and in the Sierra Nevada, working in a variety of jobs as a fur trader, scout, and self-employed businessman between 1848 and 1864. See Beckwourth, James P. *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth: Mountaineer, Scout, and Pioneer and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians*.

In examining the two African American authors whose works employed the Western in subversive ways, the actual experience African Americans had in writing of West establishes their inspiration for writing within the Western genre. Oscar Micheaux's own attempts at reinvention and finding himself in the West were an entirely mixed lot: he lost his farm in South Dakota, became disillusioned, and went back to Chicago.²⁵¹ Generally, other African Americans had mixed emotions about the West, having grown up there but wishing to have little to do with it later on: Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, and Taylor Gordon were raised in Kansas, Utah, and Montana, respectively. They left the West in order to pursue artistic careers in New York, writing about their experiences growing up in the West with memories ranging from nostalgia to disappointment. For many African American men, the West held little significance, whereas urban areas back East demanded more attention. The appeal of the Classic Western seemed lost on African American men, despite their actual historic prevalence in the region.

As for African American women, while not originally well known in the region for their literary works, they have become increasingly visible in western American literature,²⁵² particularly following the rise of awareness in minority literature following the 1960's and 70's. Examples of this include Pearl Cleage's 1992 *Flyin' West*, and the Exoduster migration that occurred in the late 1870's. African American women were core figures in Cleage's dramatic fiction works, whose history she had taken as inspiration despite African American women being often ignored by historians. Toni Morrison was also inspired to write *Paradise* (1997) after reading about a forgotten chapter in African American history: the founding of African American townships on the western frontier.²⁵³ Yet while these more contemporary authors near the end of the 20th century have made use of these histories, few examples of African American women writing in and about the West at the beginning of the 20th Century are compared to these later authors for their own accomplishments.

Both Micheaux and Hopkins, having published around the turn of the century, presented the issue of representation for African Americans upon the American West as an integral part of their narratives, core to the concerns of both authors. Pauline Hopkins, whose novel *Winona* was

²⁵¹ Though he did produce 43 feature length films, write 7 novels, and have an all-black film screened in white theaters, an astounding accomplishment by any standard.

²⁵² This is to say, not Westerns as I have been defining them, but rather in the general fiction from the region outside of the Classic and Revisionist Western genres.

²⁵³ Of interesting note to this dissertation is that her novel also includes a group of mysterious women who challenge a patriarchal African American rural community, subverting male hegemonic figures.

published the same year as Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, ran alongside what is now considered the start of the popular Western genre. The second of these authors, Oscar Micheaux, wrote *The Homesteader* in 1917 following his pseudo-autobiography titled *The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer* published in 1913.

These authors tackled race, gender, and issues of class in their novels through the themes of Jim Crow law and its threat to African Americans, miscegenation and non-normative relationships, and in attempting to motivate other African Americans to find the virtues of what the Western offered: opportunity, reinvention, and freedom. Though their views ultimately differed on the potential of the West to accomplish these ideals, they both denounced racism and the institution of slavery, believing that African Americans could never achieve independence and equality with systems of oppression binding them beneath white hegemony.

For these authors, the frontier represented a possibility for establishing a better life for African Americans. For Micheaux's John Baptiste in *The Homesteader*, the frontier allowed African Americans to grow beyond their urban settings in the South and East and find an opportunity to stand out through the efforts of their own labor. In *Winona*, Hopkins situates Winona within the struggle of establishing free and slave states following the civil war, fighting for the state of Kansas to be one that is free when it joins the Union.

Micheaux's novel suggests that, though African Americans are tempted into wrong by the environment in the East and South, and that there are African Americans who do embody the stereotypes he wishes to distance Baptiste from, the West is a site of possibility and has the potential to move beyond the racially driven socio-cultural class divisions of America. Hopkin's novel suggests that America's socio-cultural practices can be improved concerning the treatment of African Americans by whites. Her novel encourages the belief that there is potential for egalitarianism between the various cultural groups divided by perceptions of race, gender and class differences. The example of citizens in a new frontier state being allowed to vote against slavery makes this positive change a reality for African Americans to be recognized as equals to whites in her text, and she employs that historical shift as a form of hope for her own literary work.

Both authors find flaws in the Classic Western genre and the potential it offers. Micheaux represents those flaws in Reverend McCarthy's arrogance and baseless pride, and Hopkins in the lack of faith that the United States would ever be able to afford African Americans true equality, even upon the frontier. Both authors wrote at the turn of the century during a time of historical

reassessment and change and signified that optimism in their novels amidst their criticism of racial, gendered, and class-based injustices. Their texts deal with the very real concerns about whether or not African Americans would be able to find a future for themselves, making use of and subverting the Western's ideals to question and critique the typical and simple narrative of the white, heteronormative male conquest going westward. Of these two texts, Micheaux's narrative follows the Classic Western most closely, similar even to Wister's *The Virginian*, and so of the two texts to be analyzed, his will be looked at first.

4.2.0 Oscar Micheaux: Expanding the Classic Western

In many ways, Oscar Micheaux was the epitome of the Western success story: a self-made man, his ventures as a novelist, film-maker, homesteader, and pioneer of the West were only overshadowed by his ability to promote himself and his work. While it is true that his experience as a homesteader in 1904 (which covered nearly 500 acres of land) eventually met with disaster due to poor weather, it did provide him with material to work with as the basis for his career as an artist. Micheaux's life in the West was not without disappointments or failure, but these experiences fueled his creative literature and film-making to incorporate the Western genre as a focal point for much of his works.

The first three works of Micheaux's all contain within them 'autobiographical' accounts of his time on the frontier, the first of which, *The Conquest* (1913) is the most non-fictional of the three. Micheaux did successfully homestead among white neighbors and began to write stories prior to his failing due to weather, and he also had an interracial romance that eventually ended due to the prejudice against mixed-race couples and the public fear of miscegenation. He was also married to an African-American Chicagoan, something which comes up in his third book *The Homesteader*, and like in the book the two ultimately split as well.²⁵⁴ He eventually gave up homesteading entirely to focus on his writing, finishing six other books about the period and the region of the West as well.

Despite the racist and atrocious 1911 film *The Birth of a Nation* by D.W. Griffith, the film had the unintended effect of inspiring African American's like Micheaux to take up film-making. For all of its racist stereotypes, *The Birth of a Nation* demonstrated to Micheaux how a film could

²⁵⁴ Biography.com, Editors. "Oscar Micheaux Biography." The Biography.com website. Accessed: October 5th, 2016.

be used to tell a complex narrative which wove together strands just as well as a novel could.²⁵⁵ This led to Micheaux's making of the 1919 film *The Homesteader*,²⁵⁶ the first full-length feature film written, produced and directed by an African American which also starred an African American cast, becoming a commercial success when it grossed over \$5,000.²⁵⁷

Micheaux would go on to produce another 44 films, convincing some of the best African American actors and actresses between 1919 and 1948 to star in movies whose African American audiences were thrilled to see. His work would go on to take controversial subjects in the African American community, including but not limited to interracial romance, skin color hypocrisy and corruption within society. More importantly, his films in the 1920's and 1930's work as means of subversion for the narratives presented in Hollywood of African Americans, contrasting the stereotypes of African Americans as lazy, ignorant and sexually aggressive.

According to Blake Allmendinger in *Imagining the African American West*, criticism of Micheaux's works are numerous, despite the advances he made for African Americans in the film industry. Donald Bogle argues that Micheaux's films were "technically inferior to Hollywood products" because they were made "in less time, with less money, and often with amateur casts and improvised crews" (114-6). Bogle also emphasizes some of the problematic production elements of Micheaux's work, claiming that, in the end, his films "reflected the interests and outlooks of the black bourgeoisie," depicting "a fantasy world where blacks were just as affluent, just as educated, just as 'cultured,' just as well-mannered—in short, just as white" (114-6)—as their Hollywood counterparts.²⁵⁸

Joseph Young, writing one of the first analyses of Micheaux's works, criticizes Micheaux's writing for what he sees as poorly written and shallow, featuring an "absence of figurative

²⁵⁵ According to Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence in their book *Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films and His Audiences*, the film *The Birth of a Nation* became an inspiration for Micheaux when in 1918 he was "contacted by the black-owned Lincoln Film Company in Nebraska to adapt his third novel, *The Homesteader*, to film" (7). Interestingly enough, Micheaux made his own movie version of his novel in Chicago, rejecting the offer.

²⁵⁶ The film was released four years after Dwight W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915. According to Henry T. Sampson, "It is believed to be the first feature-length film made with a black cast and crew, for a black audience, and thus the first example of a race movie" (45). Sampson, Henry T. *Blacks in Black and White: A Source Book on Black Films*.

²⁵⁷ Bowser, Pearl and Louise Spence. *Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films and His Audiences*.

²⁵⁸ Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. pp.114–16. For similar critiques of Micheaux's films see Kisch, John and Edward Mapp. *A Separate Cinema: Fifty Years of Black-Cast Posters*. pg. xvii; and Soitos, Stephen F. "Micheaux, Oscar," in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. pg. 495.

imagery.” Young also mistakenly makes the claim that, as a member of the ‘assimilationist school’ and an advocate for the ideologies of Booker T. Washington, Micheaux had fallen into the belief of African American being less than whites, focusing as he did on the representation of African Americans stereotypes. According to Allmendinger, Young similarly criticized Micheaux’s belief in the values of the American Dream being achieved in the West by parroting other white settlers. Young argues that Micheaux argued for “Anglo-Saxon myths, Anglo-Saxon values, and Anglo-Saxon philosophy.”²⁵⁹ Robert Bone goes further, disregarding Micheaux’s intentions and efforts by stating that he “plays white as children play house” (49).²⁶⁰

Despite these criticisms, Oscar Micheaux’s novel *The Homesteader* prefigures many of the themes that would develop throughout the library of his works. Like critics who have called for a reassessment of Micheaux’s cinematic canon,²⁶¹ I would argue that his writings have been simplistically treated and bear reassessment. Contrary to Young and Bone’s analysis, I contest that Micheaux’s work tests the character of the African American upon the frontier, and, more importantly, tests the frontier’s ability to follow through on the transformative ideals it promised to white, heteronormative male figures, reassessing the actual figure of the American Exceptionalist. It is in *The Homesteader* that the themes of racial discrimination via Jim Crow laws and the fear of miscegenation would meet with the forces of the mythological West, promising a land of freedom and opportunity, and, most importantly, positive reinvention of representations for African Americans.

4.2.1 Oscar Micheaux’s *The Homesteader*: Subverting the Classic Western Myth and Cowboy

The Homesteader opens with its leading Cowboy protagonist, Jean Baptiste, pushing through a dangerous blizzard upon South Dakota’s frontier. Our introduction to Baptiste tells us that he has “just passed twenty-two-and [is] vigorous, strong, healthy and courageous,” possessed of an “indefatigable will” and “firm determination” (22-24). The backdrop of the storm transforms the West into “one endless, unbroken sheet of white frost and ice,” extending the foreboding winter

²⁵⁹ Young, Joseph. *Black Novelist as White Racist: The Myth of Black Inferiority in the Novels of Oscar Micheaux*. pp. 10, ix.

²⁶⁰ Bone, Robert. *The Negro Novel in America*. pg. 49.

²⁶¹ These include such authors as Blake Allmendinger’s *Imagining the African American West*.

landscape description into an allegorical representation of Baptiste's socio-cultural position in the Classic Western setting. Baptiste's journey follows the arc of many other's traveling to the frontier, including both the Virginian and Shane: his hope of finding financial opportunity through hard work. Having left the black communities of the East, Baptiste travels to a West that is overwhelmingly white, and it presents itself immediately as an obstacle in the form of inclement weather. (38)

Baptiste's struggle against the blizzard at the beginning of the novel reflects a standard trope in the Western given depth through Baptiste's race, where the protagonist pushes through the savage and—in this case—white frontier as a solitary African American figure. Baptiste's action also serve as a metaphor for the socio-cultural environment for the African American “in this land where others than those of the race to which he belonged were the sole inhabitants” (68). To add to this metaphor, Baptiste is traveling through the storm with two wagons filled with coal, representing Baptiste's symbolic desires to serve as inspiration and leader to other African Americans looking Eastward for the promises of the Western to their white counterparts.²⁶² To the whites for whom he brings the coal, Baptiste represents the positive potential African Americans mean for the frontier and American society. They say to him, “That coal to everybody was a godsend, yet think of the risk you took” (65). As another townsman observes, “That Baptiste is some fellow” (52).²⁶³

Baptiste makes a note of his neighbors, mentally telling the readers that on the frontier there are a plethora of Euro-Americans already taking part in their own American Dream: “Germans from Germany” and “Swedes from Sweden” and a slew of others all homesteading together on the frontier, “but of his race he was the only one” (64). Baptiste's construction of a solid and struggling figure working against the isolation of the socio-cultural West—made manifest in the blizzard—shows Micheaux's desire to push “resolutely forward”, at times even

²⁶² That the coal is representative of African Americans can be read in a few ways, either positive (they provide much needed energy and survival in the West) or negative (they are to be used by others), but I believe that the metaphor here runs only so deep: they are, in short, reflective of Baptiste's burden of inspiring other African Americans to follow his lead. See 4.2.4 for more on the symbolic significance of the coal.

²⁶³ A comparable example from Booker T. Washington's 1901 *Up From Slavery* involves Washington's decision to teach the trade of brick-making at the Tuskegee Institute. Washington comments, “The individual who can do something that the world wants done will, in the end, make his way regardless of his race. One man may go into a community prepared to supply the people there with an analysis of Greek sentences. The community may not at that time be prepared for, or feel the need of, Greek analysis, but it may feel its need of bricks and houses and wagons” (91). It at once speaks of the practical contribution such a figure provides to a community, as well as the subtle education and improvement of that community that might not always be self-evident.

going “directly against” the “fine grainy missiles that cut the face” (21). Baptiste’s lonely labors depict his noble efforts to become a role model for other African Americans and to demonstrate that, while difficult, opportunity and a chance at the American Dream did exist for African Americans. Thus, his narrative is not only a struggle for African Americans against dominant white socio-cultural America, but also for the potential the American Dream can afford all people.

Given his own role as an African American author in the West writing a Classic Western, the image of Baptiste as the African American Cowboy finds correlation to Micheaux’s own position and experience. Micheaux’s work from the onset destabilizes the racial homogeneity of the Classic Western.²⁶⁴ In this regard, then, it is interesting to see how Micheaux portrays the African American experience through a genre believed to be associated with advancing an ideology of white superiority and imperialism.²⁶⁵

Be that as it may, it is entirely fair to point out that Micheaux writes a Western novel which does follow the ideology of the Classic Western’s rhetoric.²⁶⁶ *The Homesteader* has at the core of its story an idea of conquest, the frontier being the site for a complete transformation into an agricultural paradise, emphasizing the freedom for improving one’s station in life. “Jean Baptiste had come West,” Micheaux writes, “and staked his lot and future there, doing his part toward the building of that little empire out there in the hollow of God’s hand” (107). Micheaux capitalizes on this frontier element of the Classic Western and appropriates American Western myth to empower African American identity—Contrary to Young’s reading, Micheaux believes not in a

²⁶⁴ See Chapter One and Two for more on the racial homogeneity of the Classic Western. The genre was, after all, generally associated with white male characters, generally reserved for the white hegemonic male and the normative social castes they encourage. That Micheaux is writing at all in this setting works on one layer as a means of destabilizing the norm, subverting expectations of the western with a counter-narrative of African American success.

²⁶⁵ As an example of the white supremacist ideology of the Western, Barbara Will notes the “xenophobic and racist views put forth” in an 1895 essay “The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher,” by Owen Wister, author of the popular and influential Western, *The Virginian* (1902) (309). For Will, the essay explicitly states the racial philosophies that underlie the Western genre. Quoting from the essay, Will argues that Wister “glorifies the triumph of the racially pure, ‘untamed Saxon’ cowboy over the “encroaching alien vermin, that turn our cities to Babels and our citizenship to a hybrid farce” (Will 309). For Wister, the East is the place of hybridity, a racially mixed “Babel” that horrifies the pure Anglo Saxon who fantasizes an American West where the white Cowboy naturally rises to the top and triumphs over all others. While Will’s reading of the text is fairly damning for Wister, I contend that Wister’s own attempts at subverting the Western as it was finds measure in the Virginian’s own stance on Native Americans, and that while it is true that those coming to the West from the East rarely succeed in the novel, it is not strictly racially based, nor is the Virginian himself the instigator for racist ideology, often condemning it. In addition, the inclusion of Micheaux and Hopkin’s works into the Classic Western genre expand and complicate the idea that it was a genre laid out only for white men.

²⁶⁶ Micheaux was apparently familiar enough with novels such as *The Virginian* to make a comparison with *The Homesteader*, being potentially revelatory in examining the way he revised the narrative to contour to African American identity and concerns. *Writing Himself into History*. pg. 9.

strictly white form of socio-cultural improvement upon the frontier, but the opportunity for African Americans as well to establish themselves in just the same fashion. In American Western myth, the frontier served as the site of transforming the self and reinventing identity. For Baptiste, and by extension other African Americans, the frontier is “the place for young manhood,” where with “indefatigable will,” a “firm determination,” and a “great desire to make good” they could share in the transformation of both the self and the nation toward positive change (24).²⁶⁷

As in many of the Westerns written by white authors, Jean Baptiste’s narrative ignores the plight of Native Americans who faced loss of land so that white Euro-Americans could prosper. Micheaux shares in this through Baptiste, foregoing the cost of Native American life and land so that African Americans could see an improvement in socio-cultural American. These acts are, for the pioneer and homesteader moving westward, definitive elements of Manifest Destiny and the very Myth of Conquest that transforms ‘savage’ land into civilization. In *The Homesteader*, Micheaux neither condemns nor critiques the white, heteronormative systems of dominance inherent to Manifest Destiny. Instead, Micheaux shares in the fruit of these actions, giving Baptiste a goal and a reward for his efforts. While this is problematic on the one hand for Micheaux’s complicit partaking in the subordination of Native Americans, Baptiste’s narrative does subvert Classic Western’s by providing marginalized characters—characters such as Baptiste who would have been on the other end of conquest—an equal opportunity in the West, including the African American in the frontier’s promise for success should the individual be diligent and exceptional in quality.

4.2.2 Racial Uplift and Double-Consciousness in *The Homesteader*

The Homesteader, as a text that subverts expectations of Classic Westerns, namely through its African American Cowboy lead, carefully revises the Western through this introduction and focus on African Americans as the primary cast of characters. Micheaux’s own experiences as an African American in the West serves as a lens through which he views the Western, responding

²⁶⁷ Minor characters in the novel make occasional jokes about our hero’s “French name,” referring to him as John the Baptist or as St. Jean Baptiste. The choice of name also points to the history of African American participation in westward expansion, to Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, the pioneer settler (originally from Haiti) who established the first permanent settlement in what is now Chicago. Bowser and Spence, *Writing Himself into History*.

thus to the white, male hegemonic cultural beliefs of the turn of the century.²⁶⁸ As Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence note, Micheaux believed in “Booker T. Washington’s ideal of pulling oneself up by one’s own bootstraps,” a belief which resonated with the ethos of the western frontier and the mythic values already being inscribed into the region. In addition to this, Bowser and Spencer argue that Micheaux’s intent behind the creation of Baptiste stems from his belief that African Americans “needed models, heroes, to mold public opinion and for the elevation of public sentiment” (19-21). Thus, Micheaux employs Baptiste as a Cowboy in a setting whose mythic placement in American literature situated him alongside other famous Cowboy figures in the Classic Western, tying his character to the positive signs and icons that the Cowboy signified.²⁶⁹

Micheaux was not blind to this fact either, and writes Baptiste from the dual perspective of both a Cowboy figure *and* an African American, producing a double-consciousness within his work that seeks to wed the two identities together. W. E. B. Du Bois discusses the concept of double-consciousness—a term which bears great weight for Micheaux and Hopkins both—first in his article for the *Atlantic Monthly* titled “Strivings of the Negro People”.²⁷⁰ Du Bois states that:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn’t bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being

²⁶⁸ The writing and philosophies of W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington contribute to this, both of whom Micheaux was familiar with. In point of fact, Micheaux’s novel *The Conquest* is dedicated to Washington, providing the basis for *The Homesteader*.

²⁶⁹ See Chapter One and Two for more on how the Cowboy functioned as a mythic figure representing Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism, as well as an ideal form of masculinity, and the successful evolution of the American character upon the frontier.

²⁷⁰ The article was later changed to his chapter “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folks*.

cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (2)²⁷¹

The context here for Baptiste's character is unique to this study, for Baptiste experiences this double-consciousness as both an African American male and as protagonist of a Classic Western set on the frontier. His character represents the struggles of the African American in the socio-cultural American West taken from a broader American history, and applies the positive elements of change and individualism that is associated with the Cowboy to serve as a positive icon for African Americans. In this way Micheaux applies racial uplift ideology to the Classic Western.

The prevalence of racial uplift ideology in *The Homesteader* pushes for the self-improvement of African Americans rather than by protesting or attempting to change social situations, imitating white middle-class America, as it were. As Michael K. Johnson states in *Hoo-Doo Cowboys*, "The Homesteader makes an argument generally in line with early 20th-century racial uplift ideology. Rather than protesting against or attempting to change the social environment, racial uplift advocates believed that African Americans should change themselves" (56). Micheaux's belief in the value of racial uplift ideology can in part be summed up by Kevin Gaines' assessment that "black elites hoped their support for the spread of civilization and the interests of the American nation would topple racial barriers and bolster their claims to citizenship and respectability" (345).²⁷² So too does Baptiste share in this belief, and as the African American Cowboy exemplifies, he embodies the struggle to represent these ideals of racial uplift.

As an ideology, racial uplift finds strength surprisingly well in the Western's prerogative toward the individual and the individual's responsibility for oneself, though in *The Homesteader* there is a strong example of subversion as this extends to the community rather than the individual. By incorporating this element into his Western, Micheaux makes use of Western narrative themes and forms a Classic Western focused on issues relevant for African Americans but also white readers, encouraging the betterment of African Americans and minority characters. For Micheaux, Baptiste's actions prove that African Americans are strong contributions as equal members to American society, and that hard work can accomplish more for "the Negro race than all the

²⁷¹ *The Souls of Black Folks*.

²⁷² Gaines, Kevin. "Assimilationist Minstrelsy as Racial Uplift Ideology: James D. Corrothers's Literary Quest for Black Leadership." pp. 341–369.

protestations of a world of agitators” (132).²⁷³ Save for a few minor incidents of racism, the white people of the frontier accept Baptiste for who he is, and see in him a strong individual who supports the broader socio-cultural fabric of the West regardless of racial difference.

This is a sentiment that is shared by Micheaux’s protagonist Jean Baptiste, whose comments on racial uplift reveal that he sees himself as a positive representative symbol for other African Americans: “If I could actually succeed, it would mean so much to the credit of a multitude of others. Others who need the example” (109).²⁷⁴ Micheaux centers much of Baptiste’s trials and tribulations around the socio-cultural improvement of African Americans, hoping to demonstrate through the character that a positive role model for African Americans could similarly be employed through the Classic Western.²⁷⁵ Baptiste serves through good examples and the encouragement for relocation to the West as a means for African American opportunity to share in the advantages of their white counter-parts, where they could all take part in the spirit of reinvention and prosperity promised to those who would dare the frontier.

One of Baptiste’s central struggles in the middle portions of the novel focus on Micheaux’s own attempts to negotiate the white, heteronormative narrative of male hegemony with the aspirations and experience of African Americans. However, Baptiste’s intense focus on serving as a symbol of positive representation to other African Americans via racial uplift corners him in a blind loyalty to other African Americans whose actions hamper his success on the frontier, and in turn the potential for racial uplift to be successful. Micheaux, it would seem at first glance, is somewhat confused in his portrayal of Baptiste just as Baptiste is confused over his relationship to Agnes Stewart.²⁷⁶ The problem in the belief of the frontier’s heteronormative, white-male centric narrative is that its promises of freedom, conquest, empire, and transformation *seem* to be only available to African American men if they thoroughly assimilate the whiteness of the Classic

²⁷³ This is similarly in line with Wister’s *The Virginian*, wherein hard work and self-improvement were heralded as the true means for improving society and its flaws.

²⁷⁴ While Micheaux does focus a lot of his attention onto Baptiste’s personal problems, it is important to emphasize that the resolution of these issues extends into the resolution of problems Micheaux felt to be plaguing African American representation. As a student studying at Hampton Institute, Booker T. Washington comments, “The great and prevailing idea that seemed to take possession of every one was to prepare himself to lift up the people at his home. No one seemed to think of himself” (36). Washington, while encouraging individual success in *Up From Slavery*, emphasizes (as does Micheaux) that individual actions contribute to the collective good of “lift[ing] up the people at his home.”

²⁷⁵ Booker T. Washington’s own views on racial uplift were also a source of inspiration for Micheaux’s subversion and entry into the Classic Western.

²⁷⁶ See below concerning his confusion over loving the seemingly white (though mixed race) Agnes Stewart and his assumption that, as an African American man, he is expected to marry an African American woman.

Western. This, then, results in Baptiste assuming he will be abandoning a sense of responsibility to other African Americans should he go through with his settlement on the frontier and love with Agnes Stewart.²⁷⁷ Dan Moos argues that Micheaux chooses a “pioneer over [a] racial identity” and “subordinates almost all issues of race to those of a progressive and civilizing frontier” (358, 360).²⁷⁸

It is the argument of this dissertation, however, that *The Homesteader* engages a direct address concerning the potential attainment of the Classic Western’s mythic promises for African Americans while maintaining loyalty to African American communities. Baptiste adapts that loyalty for the realization of truly progressive values, and to this end encompasses the space of being a Classic Western with clearly revisionist elements. Contrary to Moos’ stance, Micheaux does not subordinate racial issues, but instead chooses to highlight the conflict that results when Baptiste’s attempts to represent both an African American hero and a Classic Western Cowboy. When considered through a reading that analyzes *The Homesteader* for its subversion of normative Western narratives and characterizations of archetypal characters, the text can be seen as a generic hybrid that is part Western, part racial uplift saga, rife with contradictions, doubles, and doppelgangers.

Micheaux adapts the central structuring opposition of the Classic Western—that the frontier is a cultural site of reinvention of the self and for the testing of one’s self against another culture, often depicted as a wilderness—to articulate Baptiste’s sense of double-consciousness, the desires to maintain and, at the same time, to distance himself from his racial identity and community. Baptiste is then attempting to remain connected to the African American East and at the same time to establish himself in the world of the white Western frontier as an inspirational figure to African Americans in the East. The blending of frontier conquest and racial uplift to a successful end sometimes lead the novel to veer into confusing twists and turns that can, at times, be contradictory.

As an example, the treatment of interracial romance in the novel is held up in a positive light *only* under the condition that it is miscegenated.²⁷⁹ The revelation that Agnes Stewart,

²⁷⁷ As it was with Molly rescuing the Virginian after he had been attacked by ‘Indians’, so too does Agnes meet and rescue Baptiste from the lethal blizzard.

²⁷⁸ Moos, Dan. “Reclaiming the Frontier: Oscar Micheaux as Black Tumerian.” pp. 357-81.

²⁷⁹ To further context for both Micheaux and Hopkins’ interest in showing a positive interracial relationship and strong miscegenated characters who are intended to reflect positive representation, the standard depiction of race mixing

Baptiste's love interest, is of mixed-race and *not* strictly white allows for a positive resolution concerning miscegenation and Baptiste's love to succeed. This also has the side effect of rebuking a false patriarchal authority as seen in Reverend McCarthy following Baptiste's failed marriage to the African American Orlean McCarthy. The Reverend McCarthy, who represents an older generation of masculine hegemony, is seen as the primary obstacle and antagonist in the novel, and like *Red River*'s Dunson, must be replaced with a younger and more progressive couple that moves beyond simple racial pairings but encourages interracial love: Baptiste and Agnes.

Baptiste's doubling results from the combination of his two identities: as an African American and as a Cowboy. Various forms of conflict and dichotomies demonstrate that doubling over the course of the novel: Agnes' mixed-race heritage, the racial dynamic between Baptiste and his white neighbors, the distinction made by Baptiste between 'true' men and women and those who are 'unmanly' and 'unwomanly', the West's freedom as opposed to the presence of Jim Crow laws in the East, and African Americans in the West and the East. This doubling also finds form in the gendering of certain values as either manly or unmanly: for Baptiste, the book celebrates his practicality, determination, and property ownership as clearly masculine, in line with the Cowboy of the Classic Western. Those qualities which are unmanly are condemned in Reverend McCarthy, including his weakness, frivolity, and vice. Thus, Baptiste serves as a positive foil to McCarthy's negative representation. The comparison serves to highlight successful racial uplift in Baptiste's success by the novel's end.

Micheaux's use of gender in the novel is an attempt to naturalize positive and negative characteristics as manly or unmanly—Baptiste and Reverend McCarthy—and womanly or unwomanly—Agnes and Orlean. Baptiste's identity as a young, strong male is invariably tied to the future of the West as a region, leaving behind the old, 'womanish' Reverend McCarthy in the East. This naturalization proves victorious and the values Baptiste espouses take the forefront of the novel, simultaneously attuning themselves to the grand narrative of the Western's male hegemony while contesting its racialized, heteronormative attitudes. Because the American frontier signifies a removal from the urban, racially driven industrial spaces of the East, the West is for Micheaux as well as for Baptist a region removed from a history that has fostered Jim Crow laws and socio-cultural, economic oppression. To this end, Baptiste has removed himself from a

depicted this process through rape and sexual assault, producing a popular fiction of interracial relationships being based on such abuse.

region brimming with intolerance and the suppression of African Americans, and in so doing has overcome these obstacles to find his own success and happiness with Agnes on the frontier.

4.2.3 Regional Differences for the African American Cowboy in *The Homesteader*: Communities and Miscegenation

In the myth of the West, no longer bound by the constraints of civilization, the individual returns to a natural, almost Edenic state of existence—the West, through the labors of the individual, can transform the individual into something new and prosperous. Baptiste’s movement westward as an African American Cowboy seeking to share in the transformative properties of the frontier signal an attempt to negotiate a history of oppression toward an ideal of egalitarianism, wherein *all* people have the potential to succeed and live together in a social multicultural region.²⁸⁰ Ultimately, Baptiste’s desire for western freedom, to be a “man like any other man”, is Micheaux’s employment of the Classic Western to present a representation of African American manhood which is unencumbered by race restrictions or class distinctions.

Micheaux’s West in *The Homesteader* offers the African American male the possibility of full participation in a social system where individual quality will be recognized and rewarded, and whose success will then inspire and motivate: racial uplifting. The novel juxtaposes this to the East, which is represented in the Reverend McCarthy’s poor work ethic, oppressive patriarchy, and disdain for Baptiste’s desire for upward social mobility and, by extension, his belief in the potential of African Americans for self-improvement. This representation of Baptiste as a positive western figure becomes a response to what Marvin Jones states concerning the representation of African American men: “the notion that black males really do share a dangerous tendency to violence, or mayhem, or crime”, providing a positive image for socio-cultural change in the American West.²⁸¹

Of particular note is the romance between Agnes Stewart and Jean Baptiste, believed to be an interracial relationship impossible for either at the start that eventually reveals Agnes’ mixed-race origins and proves to both—and the reader—the success and possibility of miscegenation. Their romance symbolizes a removal of racial hierarchies and the equal union of individuals

²⁸⁰ Namely, Micheaux’s movement to the West is a rejection of the binds of segregation, anti-black violence, Jim Crow laws, and the fear of miscegenation for the opportunity to redefine African American’s future.

²⁸¹ *Race, Sex, and Suspicion: The Myth of the Black Male*.

regardless of race on the frontier. To Micheaux, such a progressive movement in mixed-race relations is only possible once the prejudices of eastern civilization have been removed, especially those elements from racialized socio-cultural hegemonic forces which needlessly oppress, such as Jim Crow laws.

The Homesteader, broken up into four ‘epochs’, concludes its first section in much the way one would expect a Classic Western to: what was once presented as a hostile, white landscape threatening Baptiste’s success in the West is now conquered, developed into a productive agricultural paradise. Baptiste and Agnes declare their love for one another in this agricultural garden of the West, amid an “enchanted garden” where “harvest birds twittered” and where Baptiste’s “lips found hers, and all else was forgotten” (139). In the West where nature rules over custom, “He was as a man toward the maid now” (138), content in his accomplishments and the station that he has earned in life.

However, for the African American, the West cannot be so easily won, nor can its transformation be so easily done. Agnes’ “halfwitted brothers”, representatives of lingering racial oppression in the West, return from the fields and remind them of the socio-cultural expectations for both African Americans and whites:

It was only then that they seemed to realize what had transpired and upon realization they silently disembraced. What had passed was the most natural thing in the world, true; and to them it had come because it was in them to assert themselves, but now before him rose the Custom of the Country, and its law. (145)

Baptiste’s struggles against the socio-cultural expectations he disavows in the East linger in the West, presented as they are by Agnes’ stupid brothers. Unease concerning mixed-race relationships is not something immediately granted to Baptiste, and so his course through the novel depicts his journey and efforts to make his belief in the possibility of racial harmony a reality. However, Micheaux makes clear that the strongest obstacle to their love is not the socio-cultural West Baptiste has come to, but rather Baptiste’s internalized belief in the racial and social responsibility he has toward other African Americans, telling himself that “he liked his people” (147).

The African American Classic Western Cowboy has concerns that his white neighbors do not like him and that they would rather he be removed despite their appreciation of his contributions to the community. Micheaux shifts the Classic Western’s thematic elements to

advance Baptiste's personal conflict forward, emphasizing his loyalty invested in African American communities back East, the baggage of 'coal' he carries with him to the frontier. The consequences are catastrophic for Baptiste: Baptiste turns to an unhealthy marriage with Chicagoan Orlean McCarthy and, in turn, must confront and attempt to reconcile conflicts with her father Reverend McCarthy. However, both of these characters are detrimental to Baptiste's growth in the West, and in turn come to represent the worst in the African American communities to him, reflecting a regression of positive potential rather than a movement forward.

Reverend McCarthy and his daughters, to varying degrees, serve as counterpoints of negative examples for Micheaux's representation of racial uplift in Baptiste's character. In addition, their comparison to Baptiste extends a regional West/East dichotomy that favors the Western African American man and his potential as a Cowboy on the frontier, seeing the East as lacking the same sort of opportunities. Bowser and Spence observe:

Part of the means by which [Micheaux] built the appearance of success included singling out those of the Race [sic] whom he characterized as immoral, or without ambition and perseverance, and censuring them for impeding the progress of the Race, and therefore holding him back. (25)²⁸²

To much of Baptiste's discontentment, he sees the Eastern African Americans as "progress[ing] rather slowly", though Micheaux makes clear that "He had not yet come fully to appreciate and understand why they remained always so poor" (107), failing to see the full depth of how external and internal socio-cultural factors limit other African Americans in the East. Baptiste also ties this lagging advancement to characters like McCarthy who are representative of the East, Micheaux writing that as a race, "their standard of morals were not so high as it should be" and they were "possessed with certain weaknesses" and "were given still to lustful, undependable habits" (160-61).²⁸³ The reliable, industrious Baptiste notices "that the most difficult task he had ever encountered" was not transforming the frontier into an Agricultural paradise, but rather in "convinc[ing] the average colored man that the Negro race could ever be anything" (107).

²⁸² *Writing Himself Into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films and His Audiences.*

²⁸³ Such behaviors relate to environment and disposition and are not innate racial traits, according to Micheaux's philosophies. He provides examples of white characters who also have "undependable habits" (161). He likewise includes African American characters who embody the qualities he admires. For the most part, these characters are peripheral to the central plot, which focuses on Baptiste's efforts to reform "the average colored man [and woman]" (107).

Inevitably, Baptiste singles out Reverend McCarthy and his daughters as examples of negative representatives for African Americans, finding them to embody all of the core problems of greed, laziness, deception, and inclinations toward violence that he sees African Americans having. If the ‘Negro race could ever be anything’, then, as Baptiste demonstrates as the positive representation of African American men—representing charity, industriousness, loyalty and restraint—then it is to be done in the West.

4.2.4 Defining the Paragon of Racial Uplift through the African American Cowboy

There is a comparison made throughout the novel between other African Americans and the very frontier itself, an extension of the dividing binary of the West / East divide. Baptiste sees African Americans as full of potential but similarly unrefined, looking for the figures who could symbolize success and growth. “His race needed examples,” Baptiste muses to himself, “they needed instances of successes to overcome the effect of ignorance and an animal viciousness that was prevalent among them” (109). Much of the novel’s contention ultimately comes from Baptiste’s desire to serve as a figure of inspiration and motivation to “the average colored man,” finding setbacks and refusals to be elevated. In turn, Baptiste’s struggle in the novel revolves around his resistance to the indulgences of laziness, corruptions, and “undependable habits” he finds embodied in the repugnant Reverend McCarthy. The novel underpins his confrontations with these temptations as obstacles for the African American Cowboy to overcome.

In the usual method of the Classic Western, *The Homesteader* establishes a dichotomy in location between the East and West to reflect the values and qualities that it wishes to either promote or denigrate.²⁸⁴ In *The Homesteader*, however, traditional comparisons are reoriented toward the issue of race, as the West then symbolizes an escape to freedom from the prejudice of and racial oppression typified by Jim Crow laws in the East. In the context of an African American Cowboy positing racial uplift ideology, these are the stereotypes Baptiste wishes to resist and challenge. Micheaux writes that Baptiste:

²⁸⁴ Examples of this in *The Homesteader*, as Johnson states, include dichotomies “between South Dakota / Chicago; white people / African American people; freedom and opportunity / vice and poverty; integration / segregation; practicality / frivolity; Jean Baptiste / the McCarthy family; Agnes Stewart / Orlean McCarthy; manly and womanly virtue / unmanliness and unwomanliness” (54).

...had virtually run away from those parts wherein he had first seen the light of day, to escape the effect of dull indolence; the penurious evil that seemed to have gripped the populace, especially a great portion of his race. In the years Jean Baptiste had spent in the West, he had been able to follow, unhampered, his convictions. (269)

Be that as it may, Baptiste's ties to the African American communities of America ultimately prevent him from leaving them behind, and so his marrying Orlean is an attempt to compromise his hopes with the loyalty he has to those in the East.

Reexamining the introduction of the novel, wherein Baptiste is striving to carry through a blizzard two wagons "loaded with coal, which towered above his head and shoulders," presents the coal as symbolic of African Americans back East. Baptiste's efforts to bring African Americans westward toward opportunity is met with resistance by 'the burden of the coal', and also to the "towering" weight of racist attitudes from both whites and African Americans that he must struggle against (21). The coal is a metaphor for the struggle of racial uplift—the collective weight of those African Americans whose "ignorance" hinder Baptiste's successful establishment of a positive African American Cowboy representative, relocated within the socio-cultural West. It is notable that the value of the coal is doubled, for it is both positive for the frontier community of South Dakota and its burden upon Baptiste is negative. The coal does weight him down, but it is also a necessary burden and this issue is one that is carried throughout the novel.

In this way Micheaux is able to subvert the Western in a way which allows him to present a geographic representation of Du Bois' double-consciousness.²⁸⁵ While Micheaux represents and understands the opportunities the West provides for characters like Baptiste, Baptiste nevertheless retains an idea of 'race loyalty' to African American communities, refusing to allow himself to become entirely subsumed into the white world of the snow storm that threatens him at the novel's beginning. Because of this Baptiste judges negatively the example of an African American man who "had taken a white wife" and "decided to claim himself as otherwise than he was," as someone of "Mexican" rather than African descent (146). "Even to merely claim being something else,"

²⁸⁵ To this end, "The African American", writes Du Bois, "ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (*The Souls of Black Folk* 5). For a discussion of twoness in Micheaux's films, see J. Ronald Green's *Straight Lick: The Cinema of Oscar Micheaux*. Green argues that Micheaux's films have a "non-assimilative style" that reflects rather than glosses over "the turmoil of [the] struggle" of double-consciousness (49). Twoness in Micheaux's films is symbolized by the tension created by the desire both to emulate Hollywood films (with their high production values) and to reject the "glossy illusionism" of those films in favor of what Green calls an "aesthetics of moderation," a rougher but intentionally less spectacular style of film making (48, 29).

Micheaux writes, “was a sort of compromise” which Baptiste rejects (146). Baptiste wishes for the future of African Americans that they can “be both a Negro and an American” (5).²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, bringing these two identities together remains the central crux of the novel.

For Micheaux and for Baptiste, South Dakota is the site of the assimilated but elevated American, whereas Chicago remains the “Darktown proper,” the very “center of the Negro life” (147-48). In this regard, as it is in many Westerns, physical movements illustrate the protagonist’s development: for Baptiste, it is his effort to move beyond being pulled apart by the double-consciousness he feels between the communities in South Dakota and Chicago—the solitary racial figure in the West and the sense of racial belonging in the East. At this point Baptiste leaves Agnes and marries the Chicago-born African American woman Orlean McCarthy, a union that represents an attempt at joining both the East and the West together to resolve the conflict of the double-consciousness. To this end, Baptiste, failing to inspire African Americans morally as a Cowboy, goes through with a marriage that he ultimately dislikes and that threatens to ruin him.

By bringing the timid Orlean to South Dakota, Baptiste acts out Micheaux’s desires to continue the uplift of the African American character, believing that the frontier would provide a change in even the least likely of characters. Baptiste is thus driven by a desire to succeed that is framed by the white narrative of the successful Cowboy upon the frontier,²⁸⁷ defined also as conquest and empire building. Baptiste is however strained beyond his ability to negotiate these allegiances as attempts to incorporate interracial socio-cultural harmony with racial solidarity and responsibility. To this end, Bowser and Spence make the argument that the novel’s largest fault lies in “challeng[ing] white definitions of race without actually changing the terms... [or] demanding new definitions of Race from within Black America” (26). Coming to terms with the double-consciousness present in the novel means extending the potential for reinvention on the frontier to figures who embody what Baptiste sees as the failings of African Americans, such as Reverend McCarthy, without having to compromise his identity as an African American Cowboy.

²⁸⁶ Gerald Early comments that Du Bois “saw blacks as being caught, Hamlet-like, between the issue of” living as “an assimilated American” or “an unassimilated Negro” (xx). Early, Gerald. Review of *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*. pp. 58-62.

²⁸⁷ *The Virginian* is an apt novel to foil *The Homesteader* against as I have previously asserted, as both feature West / East divides, a protagonist seeking to establish himself through hard labor and industry, and a marriage plot which underscores the protagonist ultimate success in the West. If anything, Baptiste’s character is a more compelling version of the Virginian, and is confronted not only with broader concerns of race and class in the United States, but also must examine his own views and failings so as to succeed in the end.

Ultimately, Baptiste's greatest failing is in his inability to successfully change the African Americans in *The Homesteader* who serve as negative stereotypes.

The largest flaw in Micheaux's novel, or at least in Baptiste's character, then, is in the invested focus on the influence of environment in determining character without a clear example of someone who, in coming from the East aside from Baptiste, similarly changes their own beliefs and practices. To this end, the novel tacitly encourages the belief in the exceptional nature of its African American Cowboy in his ability to succeed on the frontier regardless of the struggles he has concerning his racial identity, but does not suggest that this potential is there for those like the McCarthy's. Put another way, looking at *The Virginian*, there is no unnamed narrator who, although bumbling, follows the Virginian and develops into a character that shares in the Cowboy's values. For all the subversive elements the novel presents, it problematically views the situation of African Americans in urban environments as ineffective and the products of detrimental upbringing. In the context of Baptiste's experience in Chicago, the efforts of African Americans seem misguided when, as Micheaux argues through Baptiste, it would be better to tow the line of white expectations for African Americans.

Reverend McCarthy, Orlean's father, ultimately represents the negative qualities of the African American that the African American Cowboy must distance himself and his race from: he is the embodiment of vanity, deceit and hypocrisy, seeking to take advantage of Baptiste's present success as a homesteader. Reverend McCarthy's demands, however, focus on having Baptiste praise him, representing a form of betrayal to the Cowboy that Baptiste has reinvented himself into upon the frontier, as well as his own sense of independent masculinity. Baptiste refuses to capitulate, and because of this is harassed by both McCarthy and the other daughter Ethel, both of whom represent not only the worst in what Baptiste sees in the African American, but also in the gendered view of men and women.

Drought leads Baptiste's homestead to fail and his relationship with Orlean to worsen after their child is stillborn. Orlean finds it too difficult to stay in the West, ultimately too weak in her convictions—a point Micheaux parallels to her mother—and so returns to her father in Chicago. Baptiste wanders the West and eventually, at his lowest point, returns to Chicago where he confronts what he sees to be the worst in African Americans. He eventually chronicles his life in a memoir, reclaims his wealth and returns to Orlean and her father. Orlean is driven insane by her father's treatment of her and her marriage and thus kills Reverend McCarthy, herself being killed

in the process in his last moments of life. It is here that the novel resolves the mistake Baptiste made in trying to compromise his newly found Cowboy-self from the frontier, and as such, he returns to Agnes Stewart and the frontier, successful now in his agricultural endeavors. The novel ends with his successful courting of Agnes, now revealed to be miscegenated herself, the symbolic harmonious union of both African American communities and the white West, whereupon one such as Baptiste could reinvent himself anew. In this way, the novel ends supporting the love of the mixed-race characters despite Baptiste's own hesitation before. They find success with the marriage, rising to the middle-class to be free and entrepreneurial upon the frontier, beat-for-beat beside the Virginian.

4.2.5 Race, Gender, and Class in *The Homesteader*: the African American Cowboy's Confrontation with Violence

The Homesteader offers a variety of observations and insight into the racial setting of the West from Baptiste's perspective, subverting the white, heteronormative male hegemonic narrative of the Western with a narrative that emphasizes concerns over being torn between freedom and oppression, reinvention and loyalty to a community, as well as criticism against the Jim Crow laws and the fear of miscegenation. Throughout this, Micheaux projects his desire to follow racial uplift ideology onto Baptiste, representing him as a man who would motivate and inspire African American communities in the East to make use of the Classic Western's iconography for self-improvement. Of particular note though is Micheaux's use of masculinity in the novel, and how he naturalizes gender to depict characteristics in people he prefers and dislikes.

Gail Bederman notes that ideas concerning white superiority over African Americans and non-whites were often connected to certain beliefs about gender roles in the late 19th and early 20th Century.²⁸⁸ The concept of true manhood and true womanhood that developed from the Victorian concept of separate spheres translates into the domestic and private for women, and the public and workplace-oriented for men. Representations of true womanhood found characterization in piety, purity, maternity, submissiveness, virtue, and domesticity, whereas for men this involved having a strong masculine character exemplified by self-control and self-restraint.

²⁸⁸ Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization*.

Particularly in the Classic Western but generally in America at the turn of the 20th century, it was thought that all men were capable of passionate and potentially violent natures that had to be kept in check. Thus, it is the ability to exert control over these urges that was seen to be specific to white men, hence the stereotypes of African American men and Baptiste's own concern over his ability to remain emotionally in control. In following with this popular, racist belief, African Americans were incapable of self-restraint, integrity, and were prone toward sexual indulgences. These values conflicted heavily with the idea of what constituted true manliness and womanliness, values which Micheaux emphasizes in his comparison between Baptiste and Reverend McCarthy, but also Agnes, Ethel, and Orlean.²⁸⁹ Thus, Baptiste is 'more manly' in the binary of male characters than Reverend McCarthy, who indulges in 'womanly' narcissism, violence, and a sexual appetite. Taken further, Reverend McCarthy's death at the hands of Orlean and his following murder of her mark him as a figure operating within a 'womanly' sphere, unfit to be confronted by the more 'manly' Baptiste.

Claudia Tate makes the argument that African American authors in the early 20th century often focused their texts in some way toward accusations of unmanly and unwomanly sexual behavior, and that changing this "was crucial to black people's changing their subjugated social status" (10).²⁹⁰ Because these positive qualities in people were racialized at the turn of the century, authors like Micheaux turned to dominant conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity to prove that African Americans deserved equal treatment and civil rights. By embodying masculine normative behaviors and expectations for whites, Micheaux believed that Baptiste would become the positive African American Cowboy representative to both African Americans and whites.

In this context, Baptiste resisting his true love for Agnes Stewart demonstrates a form of civilized self-control, as he does not fall for his passionate urges. According to Johnson, in *The Conquest* Micheaux uses similar characteristics in his precursor to Baptiste, the autobiographical protagonist Oscar Devereaux, by "creating a contrast between his hero's 'manly' behavior and the 'unmanly' behavior of other black men" (238).²⁹¹ Interestingly, following the need to throw off the binds of patriarchal authority, both antagonists in *The Conquest* and *The Homesteader* are the character's father-in-laws, men who represent the 'unmanliness' which holds back the elevation

²⁸⁹ Ibid. See especially the discussions of African American prize fighter Jack Johnson (1-10, 20-23, 41-42) and of Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching campaign (45-78).

²⁹⁰ Tate, Claudia. *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century*.

²⁹¹ Johnson, Michael K. *Hoo-Doo Cowboys and Bronze Buckaroos: Conceptions of the African American West*.

of African Americans.²⁹² When compared to other Revisionist Westerns, figures like the Reverend McCarthy represent outdated models of thinking that are oppressive and damaging, and are thus intended to be usurped by a younger, more progressive generation. Baptiste succeeds in usurping the patriarchal McCarthy's, but at the cost of all of his daughters perishing along with him.

The Reverend McCarthy's opposition to Baptiste's self-restraint and modesty can be found in Baptiste's view of him, seeing him as "the rock of unreason," and someone who was "by disposition, environment and cultivation, narrow, impractical, hypocritical, envious and spiteful" (209, 228). Herein lies the conflict for Baptiste as the African American Cowboy and symbol of racial uplift for African American males: McCarthy is the despised and stereotyped African American man, and Baptiste as *the African American Cowboy* must rise above him. The smallness of McCarthy's ego demands that Baptiste and others, including his daughter, provide him a false sense of relevancy and importance. Orlean tells Baptiste that "If you would get along with papa, then praise him—you understand, flatter him a little. Make him think he's a king" (210). "Not only was he the father of two illegitimate children," Baptiste discovers, "but he had taken another man's wife to become so—and all this while he was one of the most influential men in the church" (311). Reverend McCarthy's reflection as a hegemonic figure is tied to both the institutions of the church and the family, yet he demonstrates a clear inability to control his passions—his temper, his sexual desires, his need for dominance. These weaknesses mark him as an 'unmanly' figure when compared to Baptiste and thus everything that Baptiste is opposed to.

McCarthy's negative representation of African American men is matched only by his daughters' failing to meet Baptiste's standards for femininity. Ethel, who is the eldest, is a "disagreeable person, ostentatious, pompous, and hard to get along with" (175), and Ethel shares in her father's "evil temper" (176). Of note is that other women in the novel despise her, though not for her masculine traits, but rather for her own lack of control over them. The polar opposite of Ethel lies Orlean, who is instead represented as too feminine. Agnes, then, represents an ideal figure of femininity and womanhood, and is thus the ideal for the African American Cowboy.

²⁹² Both McCarthy and McCraline are based on Micheaux's actual father-in-law, an Elder in the African Methodist Church, N. J. McCracken. For a discussion of the relationship between events in Micheaux's life and his recreation of those events in his artistic work, see Epps-Taylor, Betti Carol Van. *Oscar Micheaux, A Biography: Dakota Homesteader, Author, Pioneer Film Maker*. It is worth pointing out that *The Conquest* and *The Homesteader*, while sharing numerous plot elements that are quite different in nature, don't really share much in common.

Orlean goes beyond the accepted expectation Baptiste has for timidity and subservience to any male figure in the novel, not least of which is the Reverend McCarthy, and is thus complicit in his increased struggles on the frontier. “Orlean isn’t a woman,” laments Baptiste, “and that is what I’ve been trying to make her.” Baptiste acknowledges the poisonous influence Reverend McCarthy had on her, stating that “She has never been a woman—wasn’t reared so to be” (297). However, Baptiste does see potential in her though she does not have “the force of will that he desired,” acknowledging that unlike her sister and father, “she was not wicked” (182). A correlation can also be made for Orlean and land, if Baptiste is the West and McCarthy the East: she is the undeveloped frontier in need of work and becomes the closest attempt by Micheaux to address his stated fault of reinvention for characters who are not Baptiste. Yet, her demise is foreshadowed by the corrupting presence of Reverend McCarthy’s lack of control, or rather, his ‘unmanliness’, and so too would Reverend McCarthy also influence the West and the potential for African Americans there should he hold sway over Baptiste through Orlean.

The reinventive nature of the West demonstrates itself when Orlean is removed from the East and, in turn, her father: “Since her marriage her health on the whole had improved wonderfully. The petty aches and pains of which she complained formerly had gradually disappeared, and the western air had brought health and vigor to her” (259-60). Though Baptiste is only temporarily successful, his challenge to transform Orlean works on the pretext of making Orlean a ‘true woman’, a process that is made difficult “by a stream of letters from Chicago, giving volumes of advice” (227). Letters from her sister Ethel, filled with the ‘unwomanly’ “condemnation of motherhood,” encourage Orlean to try (but fail) to abort her unborn child who nevertheless perishes (229). Reverend McCarthy’s coming to the homestead complicates her loyalty over “subservience to her father, who insisted upon it, and obedience and loyalty to her husband who had a right and naturally expected it” (242). Following her return and the later reinvention of Baptiste, she sees her father’s poison for what it is and is driven mad, leading to the murder-suicide that ultimately frees Baptiste from the East.

For the Cowboy, the final shootout is a violent confrontation between the protagonist and the antagonist over land, women, or to prevent the villain from expanding a form of control over the people of the frontier. “The most salient fact about the Western,” Tompkins comments, is that “it is a narrative of male violence” (28).²⁹³ The Classic Western often resorts to a narrative that

²⁹³ *West of Everything*.

justifies the Cowboy's violent actions,²⁹⁴ typically done in the interest of conquest and expansion, sometimes in purging negative elements from the newly forming socio-cultural West, arguing that such actions are necessary. For John Baptiste, however, this climactic showdown never materializes despite the animosity McCarthy and him share for one another and for how neatly they both fill these archetypal roles. Rather, Baptiste's true trial comes when his self-control over his anger is tested, defining whether he is truly 'manly', or self-indulgent and 'unmanly' like McCarthy.

Not that Baptiste isn't influenced in part by his own anger. Anger is the driving force for his desire to transform representations of himself and his race, originating from Mischeaux's own mistreatment and the broader oppression of African Americans through Jim Crow laws. Baptiste's fury is born from the restrictions placed upon him by the "half-witted" customs and laws of white society. Baptiste places the blame for these stereotypes of African Americans squarely onto Reverend McCarthy, whose uncontrollable flaws negatively impact the lives of other African Americans, such as Baptiste. McCarthy represents the stereotypes associated with a gendered, racialized naturalization of an 'unmanly' African American, and in turn his fate demonstrates the consequences of what those injustices can produce. In the end, his destructive influence and death validate Baptiste's beliefs and representation as a positive African American Cowboy pushing for harmonious racial equality, upward class movement, and ideals concerning gendered expectations.

4.2.6 Transforming the Violent Cowboy into an Icon of Positive Resilience: Confrontation and the Role of the Beaten Cowboy in *The Homesteader*

In *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (1996), Lee Clark Mitchell argues that the resiliency of the Cowboy as he wounded and brought nearly to death is just as integral to the Western narrative as the final gunfights and climactic showdowns.²⁹⁵ The Classic Westerns reveal

²⁹⁴ The Cowboy, of course, represents most typically white, heteronormative male hegemony's interests. At times, they argue that the only way for a man to remain a man is through an act of murder. Early Westerns focused their narratives on the concern that masculinity had been threatened, that white American men had become too civilized, that too many years of manly restraint had atrophied male passion and feminized white manhood. The conflict and the violence became narrative standards and were attempts to reassert these values. On another level, the violence is a symbolic confrontation between the ideologies each figure represents, the protagonist often being a figure for the freedom and determinism inherent upon the Western's frontier, whereas the villain represents older values of authority and oppression from the East; the new world and the old, whereupon the wilderness serves as a setting to test the values, practices, and beliefs of the new.

²⁹⁵ Wister uses just such a scene when the Virginian is attacked by 'Indians' and Molly nurses him back to health, an event which occupies far more of the book's interest than his showdown with Trampas. Blondie in *The Good, the Bad,*

an “almost obsessive recurrence of scenes of men being beaten or knifed and whipped, propped up, knocked down, kicked in the side, punched in the face, or otherwise lacerated, clubbed, battered, and tortured into unconsciousness” (169). Because it is an event that the Cowboy must overcome and a physical wounding, the act of suffering injuries allows the audience to “see men recover, regaining their strength and resources in the process of once again making themselves into men” (174). The Cowboy’s rejuvenation from physical and psychological harm is an empowering experience intended to further demonstrate a masculinity that is tough but also unbreakable.

For the purpose of *The Homesteader*, Baptiste’s resiliency is extended not only to physical punishment, but also to the emotional, including but not limited to his financial ruin after a drought, the loss of his child, the difficult marriage he finds himself in with Orlean, and his experiences with Reverend McCarthy. In the context of resiliency to these beatings of both the physical and emotional, Baptiste stands apart from other Classic Western heroes for the sheer number of times he is beaten. Baptiste is beaten unconscious in the first epoch of the book alone, first by the winter storm and again when he is kicked in the head from a horse. Agnes Stewart provides what Mitchell calls a “feminine presence”, which he deems is a necessary “catalyst” for the Cowboy’s rejuvenation. Mitchell argues that the “restorative female ‘gaze’ at the male body” works toward civilizing the Cowboy’s faults, “ensuring that the hero will recover both physical health and manly self-control” (178-79). For Baptiste, Agnes’ treatment of him provides a rejuvenation of his ‘manly’ character, simultaneously giving him the potential to serve as an African American Cowboy representation for racial uplift.

Baptiste’s mother also beats him into unconsciousness as a child, marking her as an uncivilizing feminine figure juxtaposed to Agnes. Baptiste’s response is to go further into a wilderness where “something evil” lives, marking the beginning of his flights into the wilderness and confrontation with the ‘beast’ that is his own rage. When Reverend McCarthy takes Orlean from South Dakota he assuages Baptiste’s ideas of the family and his role as a man, injuring his status as a positive African American representative. The act injures Baptiste psychologically as

and the Ugly similarly experiences physical torture and exertion at the hands of Tuco as he is led across a desert. A more contemporary example would be Django’s torture in Candyland in the 2012 *Django Unchained*. In any case, the act is prominent in the Western and has been, and continues to be, a core component to its narrative.

well, driving him to go East unless he “lose his mental balance unless he journey to Chicago and see his wife” (287).

Micheaux writes that “in the days that followed the real Jean Baptiste died and another came to live in his place. And that one was a hollow-cheeked, unhappy, nervous, apprehensive creature” (316). Baptiste is kept at bay by Reverend McCarthy, secluding her to the home and in turn driving Baptiste away, until “all the manhood in him crept out” (347). At his lowest point Baptiste falls sway to the indulgences he has stood opposed to throughout the novel, “stud[ying] the various forms of vice about” which includes listening to the popular ragtime music as he drinks (348). In this way Micheaux subverts the Classic Western’s convention of physical conflict serving as the climax of the narrative, for Baptiste’s true test as the African American Cowboy is in dealing with the absence of a civilizing feminine presence, in this case Orlean, though later in Agnes. As a result of McCarthy’s interference, Baptiste becomes unbalanced and his actions increasingly unmanly, highlighting the risk to his representative intents for racial uplift. Marriage, thus, symbolizes a union of the double-consciousness that is beneficial and positive, and the dissolution of that marriage means that Baptiste must find another means of resolving “unreconciled strivings,” demanding that he draw from the Cowboy’s reservoirs of resiliency to establish his manhood.²⁹⁶

Baptiste’s ultimate test comes in contemplating McCarthy’s murder, “the sight of one who has wronged him might cause him for a moment to forget all his good intentions and manly resolutions” (312). Yet he recognizes that giving into the violent urges he has would be a loss of the hard-earned masculinity that he has striven to establish, a loss which neither Baptiste nor the ideology of racial uplift can allow. Baptiste’s belief that killing Reverend McCarthy would acquiesce to the expectations of white stereotypes for African Americans demands his resiliency by being the victor through the terms that he defines. To do otherwise would defeat Baptiste’s ideals for racial uplift.

Baptiste’s subversion of expectations in ways that the Cowboy is resilient and how he approaches conflict transform the genre of the Classic Western toward revisionism, showing as an example a more progressive approach to conflict and resolution. The Classic Western without this

²⁹⁶ Like the Cowboy of other Classic Westerns, Baptiste is similarly armed. However, Baptiste never draws on these weapons or utilizes them in a violent manner against other people, breaking away from characters such as Lassiter, even embodying the spirit of Shane before Shane had such a message to tell.

element of anticipating the Revisionist Western would conflict with the goals of racial uplift, and so Micheaux subverts the formula and creates a narrative against white expectations of African Americans and Western structure *within* the Classic Western. Whereas the Western would have its white, heteronormative male hero define and reaffirm his masculinity through violence, Micheaux argues that the African American Cowboy should prove his masculinity in the directly opposite way: with a demonstration of his self-control in refraining from violence, regardless of how justifiable it may seem.

Baptiste's relationship with McCarthy ultimately demonstrates an alternative to direct confrontation and violence, with Baptiste being the victor for restraining himself for the sake of racial uplift. Yet Baptiste does present a violent side where his anger is indulged, and that is in a wilderness setting where he is free of social observation: first when he kills an animal after McCarthy berates him, and secondly in the transformation of that wilderness into a homestead. However, even the confrontation with the beast is a reflection of Baptiste's internalized, monstrous rage being confronted and subdued.²⁹⁷

As with the Virginian, Shane, and Lassiter, Baptiste's experience in the woods translates into a spiritual and internalized conflict regarding his attempts to validate his own masculinity within the context of racialized turn-of-the-century models. The successful subduing of the beast means he is free to reinvent himself and to elevate his race upon the frontier, making possible an equal footing with his white neighbors while simultaneously serving as the representation of a 'true man' to African American communities in the East: the African American Cowboy.

For Baptiste, he successfully confronts McCarthy and remains in control, and his departure sees Orlean driven insane by her father and pushed to deliver the physical violence typical of the Cowboy. Orlean, who was 'too feminine', is empowered by taking on the role of delivering 'justice' to her father, denigrating further McCarthy's own 'unmanly' character. Baptiste is rewarded for upholding his image of the positive African American Cowboy with the successful negotiation of his own double-consciousness. Upon returning to South Dakota, Baptiste discovers that Agnes Stewart is miscegenated, embodying the perfect union of Baptiste's desires and racial

²⁹⁷ However, the violent attack on the beast is also a release of anger, and cannot strictly be read as an attempt at control. This violence is contradictory to the novel's approach toward racial uplift ideology, and so Micheaux later demonstrates Baptiste's growth and resiliency in Chicago with Reverend McCarthy. Still, both scenes in the novel play off of one another, and enforce the racial, gender-based elevation of Baptiste through hard work and the development of self-control to prosperity and success in the West.

ties to communities in the East. The West has provided him with a future that fulfills racial uplift ideology and allows him to be a representative for African American male success on the frontier through the figure of the Cowboy.

By marrying Agnes, Baptiste shifts from his Cowboy ways and becomes a successful homesteader on the frontier much the same as the Virginian did, and has found a feminine companion who complements his own ‘manly’ ambitions so that they may start a family together. Together, their success and prosperity on the frontier as a mixed-race, African American couple subverts the standards of the Classic Western and confirms the presence of progressive, revisionist elements in the genre. Micheaux creates a narrative intended to at once oppose the white, heteronormative male hegemony in the Classic Western narrative, and that will also inspire and motivate other African Americans through racial uplift with the representation of a positive African American male Cowboy.

4.3.0 Pauline Hopkins: The Origins of the Western’s Earliest African American Female Author

The generation of women authors writing after the Civil War and around the beginning of the 20th Century explored social injustices and the difficulties of African American women, paving the way for broader social discourse and change concerning the rights of women. Their works have largely been overshadowed by their male contemporaries, typically white, and despite their active vocal efforts against systems of oppression in American culture, the works of African American women authors at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th remain relatively underexplored. In the foreword of *Contending Forces* (1900, rereleased 1991), entitled “In Her Own Write”, Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes that these texts have been:

Accessible only in research libraries or in overpriced and poorly edited reprints. Many of these books have never been reprinted at all; in some instances only one or two copies are extant. In these works of fiction, poetry, autobiography, biography, essay, and journalism resides the mind of nineteenth century Afro-American woman (xvi-xvii).

Around the 1970’s, following civil rights movements and various reevaluations throughout academia, literary critics began to explore the works of African American women before the first world war. A small but impressive group of scholars, including Claudia Tate, Hazel Carby, Jane

Campbell, Elizabeth Ammons, and Richard Yarborough, have brought these authors back into focus with their research. Of these turn of the Century authors, Pauline Hopkins stands out for the sheer breadth of her work and her involvement in various literary genres. Hopkins' works include over thirty articles, three serialized novels, one monograph, several speeches, and the novel *Contending Forces*.

These researchers made aware Pauline Hopkins as an author at the turn of the century, and contributed to the restoration of other female authors. Hanna Wallinger states that readers were "discovering them to be exceptional, extraordinary, and noteworthy, but also lonely and isolated voices in the white dominated movements of realism, naturalism, and local color writing" (193).²⁹⁸ Furthermore, Gates declares the relevance of this "rebirth": "In addition to resurrecting the works of black women authors, it is our hope that this set will facilitate the resurrection of the Afro-American woman's literary tradition itself by unearthing its nineteenth-century roots" (xvii). The majority of these women's stories emphasized race, gender, and class.²⁹⁹ As the prominent African American feminist educator, activist, and orator Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) declares that: "Only the black woman can say 'where and when I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me'" (63).³⁰⁰ So too with Hopkins work does the 'Negro race' enter into the Classic Western.³⁰¹

Authors such as Hopkins gave voice to socio-cultural concerns for issues concerning the oppression of various intersecting racial, gendered, and class-based identities, even at the risk of harm to themselves and other African American communities. It is because of this that their contributions redefine our understanding of the Western literary genre at the end of the 19th

²⁹⁸ Wallinger, Hanna. "African American women writers, 1865-1910". The "rediscovery" is indebted to the Oxford University Press, which in collaboration with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, have published thirty volumes of these fascinating works, each of which includes an introduction by an expert in the field.

²⁹⁹ According to Hanna Wallinger, "the 'rebirth' brought by the research unites an admirable group of African American writers and intellectuals made up by Frances Ellen atkins Harper, Gertrude Mossell, Anna Julia Cooper, Victoria Earle Mathews, Fannie Barrier Williams, Mary Church Terrell, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, Katherine Davis Chapman Tillman, Amelia E. Johnson, Gertrude Dorsey Brown, Ruth E. Todd, and Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson, who were activist intellectuals and pursued careers as club women, orators, race leaders, editors, teachers, society leaders, and professional women" (195).

³⁰⁰ Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*.

³⁰¹ The contributions of female African American writers to the discussions of African American literature tackled topics that were both delicate and necessary for the time they were published, dealing with the history of slavery and the experiences they had, to the potential futures of African Americans in the developing and expanding country. These female African American authors created powerful heroines and heroes, subverting a variety of genres and literatures popular at the time, not least of the emerging Classic Western.

Century and the beginning of the 20th. According to Hanna Wallinger, regarding the importance of these African American women:

They contribute significantly to the discourse about race; they reinterpreted the slave past with revisionist accounts of either the superior endurance and suffering or the heroism and rebellion of former slaves; they help to build up an audience in sympathy with the cause of African Americans and are united in their rejection of lynching and other forms of violence; they further the feeling of loyalty among their people; they demonstrate the values of familial love, labor, education, and community work, [...] they serve as inspiration for future generations of female artists; and they pioneer black feminist studies (203).³⁰²

Of these women, Hopkins' lifelong work for the civil rights and equal treatment of African Americans remains vibrant for her reimagining and subversion of emerging genres, particularly the Classic Western and its connotative significance for American development. Through her works, Hopkins clarifies the ways in which she was completely engaged with the idea of a literature made by African American women *for* African American women on the issues of race, gender, and class.

In 1902, Hopkins discussed the role of African American women in society and African American communities, highlighting how race added further stress onto women. Despite this, she optimistically writes:

‘Why is the present bright? Because, for the first time, we stand face to face, as a race, with life as it is. Because we are at the parting of the ways and must choose true morality, true spirituality and the firm basis of all prosperity in races or nations – honest toil in field and shop, doing away with all superficial assumptions in education and business’ (Hopkins quoted in Wallinger, 137-8).

Hopkins' own involvement with issues of civil rights emerged through the supportive background of her upbringing. Her father, a veteran of the Civil War named William A. Hopkins, was a “kindly man who was protective and indulgent of both Sarah [Pauline Hopkins' mother] and her daughter”, which lead to a secure and stable upbringing in her life afterward.³⁰³ Hopkins' career as an author and activist began after the family moved to Massachusetts, according to Nellie McKay, where an

³⁰² “African American women writers, 1865-1910”.

³⁰³ Brown, Lois. *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution*. pg. 46.

array of like-minded abolitionists and educators encouraged her interests.³⁰⁴ These figures served as informative inspirations for Hopkins' own career, nurturing her creativity and political mindedness.

A pivotal moment in Hopkins' career as an activist was her joining the *Colored American Magazine*, the first twentieth-century African American journal owned and published by African Americans.³⁰⁵ It would be here that Hopkins would cement her career as an author, and here that she would publish *Winona* in 1902, the same year that Owen Wister would publish his own *The Virginian*. In ways that Hopkins could not have predicted and in ways which have been severely undervalued, Hopkins' drastically transformed the breadth of the Classic Western to incorporate revisionist perspectives and elements.

The founders of the *Colored American Magazine* wished to produce a periodical that would appeal not only to a northern black elite but that "would encourage the flowering of any black talent that had been suppressed by a lack of encouragement and opportunity to be published" (xxxiii).³⁰⁶ In its first issue, published in May 1900, the "Race Journal" announced that it would "develop and intensify the bonds of that racial brotherhood, which alone can enable a people, to assert their racial rights as men, and demand their privileges as citizens."³⁰⁷ Hopkins' first short story, "The Mystery Within Us" was published in the flagship issue of the magazine.³⁰⁸ She would

³⁰⁴ Hopkins' interest in race as the focal point of her works did not develop by accident or even by chance. Hopkins was the great-grandniece of the New Hampshire African American poet and political activist James Whitfield, linking Hopkins directly to the 19th Century African American activist abolitionists, churchmen, and educators, Nathaniel and Thomas Paul. McKay, Nelly. Introduction in *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*. pg. 2.

³⁰⁵ For Hopkins, the potential of a powerful public platform to serve as the voice of African Americans fascinated her, and she quickly rose through the ranks of its members to become a member for the board of directors, a shareholder, and a creditor of the new journal. Notably, Hopkins was the only woman on the staff at the start of the magazine. It would be her work and writing that would fill a hefty portion of the magazine's literary and historical issues over the next four years. Information concerning the *Colored American Magazine* comes from George H. Junne's comprehensive bibliography on African American works in the Canada, Mexico, and the West. Junne, George H. *Blacks in the American West and Beyond--America, Canada, and Mexico: A Selectively Annotated Bibliography*.

³⁰⁶ Carby, Hazel. *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*.

³⁰⁷ Cited by Blake Allmendinger in *Imagining the African American West*, in his discussion of "Editorial and Publishers' Announcements," *Colored American Magazine* 1 (May 1900): pg. 60.

³⁰⁸ By 1900, Pauline Hopkins had her first novel, *Contending Forces: a Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* published. She published in the magazine four extra stories and serialized three novels: *Hagar's Daughter: A Story of Southern Caste Prejudice* (1901-2), *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* (1902-3), and *Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self* (1902-3). Regarding Hopkins's publications between 1900 and 1905, Professor Richard Yarborough, in the introduction of *Contending Forces* (1988), compares Hopkins works to various successful African American authors, including Charles Chesnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Sutton Griggs, both for her emphasis on racial issues at the time and for her quality of writing. Moreover, Yarborough, discussing women's publications, declares that Pauline Hopkins was "the single most productive black woman writer at the turn of the century" (xxviii).

continue to contribute these short stories and portions of longer narratives to the magazine, and it was here that she first published *Winona* with just such an intention.³⁰⁹

One of the main focuses of Hopkins' work, beyond race, gender, and class, was her interest in history, focusing her essays as well on the events, people, and items of interest relevant to African American readers. McKay argues that Hopkins' political and philosophical positions later influenced black revisionist history, and that Hopkins was "fully aware of the necessity of the revision of the traditional American history" (5). In addition to this, McKay also states that Hopkins was:

...adamant that African Americans themselves had to take responsibility for the making of new histories that included the lives and deeds of black people. For, she claimed, history was less about great events than the actions of individuals, an idea that makes biography an important element of history. (6)

As the editor of the journal, Hopkins position was one that few African American women had attained. Although her influence on the magazine's political editorial was great, she had little interest in her personal power.³¹⁰ Rather, Hopkins was focused on advancing a publication that she felt would impact African Americans and present positive change and opportunity. Concerning her goals, McKay writes:

One of her primary goals for CAM (*Colored American Magazine*) was that it should inspire the creation of an African American art and literature that would demonstrate the talents and skills of the group and prove to the rest of the world that black people, only recently released from slavery, were already as culturally advanced as others groups (5).

In following with the ideology of racial uplift that Micheaux prescribed to, Hopkins saw journalism and writing as a means of improving the lives and ambitions of African Americans, looking to establish in her writing positive representations that African Americans could find inspiration

³⁰⁹ These include "Talma Gordon" and "George Washington, A Christmas Story." It is interesting to say that Hopkins did not always sign her name to her work in the *Colored American Magazine*; several of her works were credited to Sarah A. Allen, who was her mother's maiden name (McKay, 4).

³¹⁰ For accounts of the early years of the *Colored American Magazine* and the various positions Hopkins held at the journal, see Johnson, Abby Arthur and Ronald Maberry Johnson. *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of Afro-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century*. pp. 1–5; Bullock, Penelope L. *The Afro-American Periodical Press, 1838–1909*. pp. 65–68, 106–18; Daniel, Walter C. *Black Journals of the United States*. pp. 123–26; and Carby, Hazel V. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. pp. 125–27.

from. With this in mind, journals like the *Colored American Magazine* served as potent tools used by African Americans, like Hopkins, in order to fight against and resist the racism of whites and systems such as Jim Crow which worked to subjugate African Americans and, in particular, African American women.

Hopkins' belief in the influencing power of mass circulation's ability to improve the livelihood of African Americans was great and found fertile ground in the Western genre. Hopkins' works directly confront a society that condoned lynchings, Jim Crow laws, and general oppression of African Americans, informing readers about African American heritage, their struggles, and to help them learn to value themselves. The political leaning of her work eventually earned her the ire of other African Americans at the *Colored American Magazine*, who were concerned with her unwillingness to compromise. When the management of *Colored American Magazine* changed, her fiction no longer was published there and she was forced out of the journal.

Hopkins' use of the journal as a means of delivering her views on socio-cultural, racial issues at the beginning of the 20th Century found expression in a variety of settings in her works.³¹¹ Most interesting though, to the purpose of this dissertation, is her foray into the Classic Western with *Winona*, and the way in which she subverts traditional white, male, heteronormative narratives and hegemonies. Instead, Hopkins provides commentary on the problematic nature inherent to the frontier ideology so many others have espoused, and through her narrative she both transforms the definition of the frontier—recontextualizing it to the perspective of African Americans—and empowers African American women. Issues of race, gender, and class find a voice in her novel as she deals with the topic of Jim Crow laws, miscegenation, slavery, the transformation of states into either freed or slave states, and the very premise of the West's ability to provide a site of freedom and reinvention for both whites and African Americans alike.

³¹¹ Regarding the importance of journalism for African Americans, see Melina Abdullah's chapter "The Emergence of Black Feminist Leadership Model" in *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions*. See also Gloria Wade-Gayles' "Black Women Journalists in the South, 1880-1905", which points out that African American women made use of such journals as the *Colored American Magazine* as a means for the social and political empowerment of African Americans, and for African women in particular. Wade-Gayles discusses three important reasons for considering journalism as a relevant tool for authors such as Hopkins: 1) exposure and access to writing opportunities, 2) the relatively high political and social impact of written words, and 3) the relatively minimal risk that accompanied this form of activism (333). Hazel Carby, in *The magazine novels of Pauline Hopkins*, adds that from Hopkins' point of view, the *Colored American Magazine* enabled her and others to produce an atmosphere for "a black renaissance in Boston" (xxxix).

4.3.1 The Narrative arc of Pauline Hopkins' *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*

When it comes to the Classic Western, authors apply their own impression of place into the establishment of their setting, similar as to how there are a multitude of ways for interpreting racial experience. In *Winona*, Hopkins presents a frontier set in the Kansas territory around the middle of the 19th Century, and her work may be one of the most subversive Classic Westerns in existence. The central crux of the novel revolves around the African American and abolitionist characters fighting to have Kansas enter the Union as a free state. Along the way, Winona and her brother Judah join John Brown's brigade to fight slavers along the borders of the states and frontier. The novel, which is a mixture of Western, Romance, Sensationalist adventure, and even the detective story, follows the narrative of Judah, the orphaned son of an escaped slave, and Winona, his quadroon stepsister, as they are captured by slavers and eventually freed with the help of John Brown. Prior to this, they live near Lake Erie with the Native American Seneca, White Eagle, who is Winona's true father and Judah's step-father.

However, by the end the reader learns that White Eagle is not a Seneca but rather the rightful heir to the Carlingford estate in England, making Winona the new heiress. When he is killed mysteriously, an abolitionist by the name of Ebenezer Maybee and a young British lawyer, Warren Maxwell, befriend Winona and Judah. Out of sympathy Maxwell, enlisted for the sole purpose of finding the heir to the Carlingford estate, decides to bring the children back to England with him, but is called to Virginia before he is able to. With Maxwell absent, Bill Thomson and Colonel Titus capture the children and force them into slavery on Thomson's own plantation in Missouri.³¹² Maxwell discovers both Winona and Judah as slaves on Titus' plantation after Maxwell is misled to believe that Titus is, improbably, an indirect heir to the Carlingford fortune, creating a dynamic conflict between Winona and Titus concerning heritage and their respective socio-cultural positions in society.

When Winona and Judah are about to be sold, Maybee, Maxwell, and a few accomplices rescue them, and Judah and Winona together work on an escape to meet with John Brown in Kansas. Maxwell is shot by Thomson soon after the escape, barely avoiding being burned at the

³¹² This is an incidence wherein Hopkins makes use of her knowledge of history, as both of them use the backing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 to wrongfully capture the two children. It serves as commentary not only against the problematic laws that were in place which oppressed African Americans, but also that it was corrupt to begin with and hardly enforced. Pinsker, Matthew. "Fugitive Slave Acts."

stake by a proslavery lynch mob. Maxwell is saved by Titus only to be arrested, and, after a mockery of a trial, Maxwell is condemned to death. Maxwell falls ill while awaiting his execution, and through a plan that Winona and the other abolitionists enact, he is treated by Allen Pinks, who is really Winona in disguise as a man. When Maxwell is better, Winona flees the plantation with him. Following this, the battle against the slavers comes and Judah causes Thomson to fall off a cliff after revealing that White Eagle is the missing heir to the Carlingford fortune. Winona, Maxwell, and Judah go to England, where Winona marries Maxwell and inherits her family fortune, with Judah being knighted for his efforts against slavers and slavery.

4.3.2 Recontextualizing the Frontier: Civilization and Savagery from the North South Divide

By tying the fates of Winona and Judah to the Native American Seneca tribe, Hopkins emphasizes the shared plight of both African Americans and Native Americans in the face of Manifest Destiny. Their diasporic experiences and the very real threat of cultural and racial genocide has put both groups into a position where assimilation and subordination may be forced onto them. Although the Seneca, as Hopkins describes it, “embraced Christianity” and adopted “the arts of civilized life,” they “still clung to their tribal dress of buckskin, beads, feathers, blankets and moccasins, thereby adding picturesqueness of detail to... the busy streets of the lively American city” (287-88). The potential for interracial harmony, hinted at by the White Eagle’s miscegenated daughter Winona and adopted son Judah, is reinforced by “picturesque” differences that hint at a spiritual commonality and progressive egalitarianism, subverting stereotypes of intrinsic racial stereotypes and characteristics.

Winona also contextualizes the frontier upon different geographical locations at different times, looking north and south as one form of a frontier. In this way, Hopkins places the frontier within the historical situation of the slave states and the freed states, viewing Canada (notably not the United States) as a potential frontier for African Americans that offers all of the aspirations the West offers to white, heteronormative males. On the border of Canada and the United States, Hopkins writes in *Winona* that “Anglo-Saxons, Indians, and Negroes” coexisted such that the rest of the world might “stand aghast and try in vain to find the dividing line supposed to be a natural barrier between the whites and the dark-skinned race” (287). Hopkins presents this northern frontier as a site of optimistic egalitarianism for peoples of all races. The mistaken fear of

miscegenation is, as Hopkins would have us see, in truth a utopian reality for those willing to move away from the racism of Jim Crow laws.

As a type of harmonious frontier setting, Hopkins establishes the efforts of environment—both physical and cultural—on socio-cultural production. She uses *Winona* to rail against the racial hierarchies of Jim Crow laws and evolutionary theorists: “The African race and its descendants are divergent and undeveloped, ethnically considered, yet stand in close relationship to other races on the broad, indisputable plane of a common origin and a common brotherhood” (461).³¹³ As such, Colonel Titus and Bill Thomson come to this paradise and bring darkness to it, figures who represent “the sluggishness of the cold materialist” and thus represent for Hopkins the challenge to racial uplift and socio-cultural egalitarianism on the frontier of the American nation (463). Symbolically, even ironically, they are introduced to the novel after shooting an eagle out of the sky, a representation for the death of American values and liberties at the hand of violent, white males pushing hegemonic systems of oppression onto non-whites.

Hopkins’ choice for this frontier to be set in both on the Canadian border and along Kansas highlights the division between freedom and oppression in the context of opposition to slavery and civil rights. The territory served as a political battleground since the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854,³¹⁴ serving as the backdrop for the novel, an idea Hopkins believed her readers to be keenly aware of. Along this Kansas frontier, Abolitionists like John Brown are engaging in a violent conflict against slavers, people who are analogous to the rustler in Wister’s *The Virginian* and later Westerns. The conflict brings Winona, her brother, and Maxwell into the struggle between freed African Americans and Abolitionists, and the slavers. Although the Exodusters would later imagine Kansas as a type of biblical promised land,³¹⁵ the territory prior to

³¹³ In the recently published collection of essays on Hopkins, Elizabeth Ammons’ “Afterword: *Winona*, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century” argues that in *Winona* Hopkins creates a “new origins myth for North America that renounces European cultural values in favor of Indian and African American ones.... *Winona* radically rewrites the primary, romantic, American myth of our great (white) ‘founding fathers,’ making their representative in this fiction an opponent of white authority” (216). Hopkins’ renunciation of “European cultural values,” however, is selective. As I have mentioned, tribe members “embrace Christianity” and “the arts of civilized life,” which suggests their commitment to racial uplift. Ammons, Elizabeth. “Afterword: *Winona*, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century,” *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*.

³¹⁴ According to “The Kansas-Nebraska Act”, “The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed by the U.S. Congress on May 30, 1854. It allowed people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves whether or not to allow slavery within their borders. The Act served to repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820 which prohibited slavery north of latitude 36°30’.” Philip, Gavin. “The Kansas-Nebraska Act.”

³¹⁵ Exodusters is a name given to African Americans who migrated from states along the Mississippi River to Kansas in the late nineteenth century, as part of the Exoduster Movement or Exodus of 1879. It was the first general migration

the transformation into statehood was notoriously hostile toward African Americans and other minorities, a reality that Hopkins capitalizes on in her novel.

For both Winona and Hopkins, the allegiance of states following their inclusion into the Union had little real impact, and thus the frontier's value shifted. The larger, more real concern for both author and character was whether or not the state would actually be a 'free' state for all people regardless of race, class, or gender. In this regard, there are other ways in which *Winona* subverts the Classic Western to offer a counter-narrative to Manifest Destiny and the opportunities of the West.³¹⁶

The novel dramatizes the conflict between "civilization" and "savagery"—contextualizing this as a conflict between the forces of freedom and the proponents of slavery upon the Kansas frontier. Although the ratification of Kansas as a free state works toward the establishment of civilization, the ratification may establish it as a place of 'savagery' should it persist in racial oppression. *Winona* justifies westward expansion by tying geophysical conquest with political freedom and opportunity, but specifically to the end of a harmonious socio-cultural outcome for whites, African Americans and Native Americans. Thus, each conflict is a representation of clashing geopolitical values, with the North and South taking on the roles of civilization and frontier wilderness as typically seen in the Classic Western.³¹⁷

4.3.3 The Cowboy in *Winona*: Transforming the Rustler and Cowboy via a Gendered, Racialized Context

The conflict of Abolitionists and slavers echoes the Western's own conflicts concerning Cowboys and rustlers, with rustler's in this context being transformed to represent the very figures who would push the Cowboy Westward. By transforming the villains from such novels as Wister's *The Virginian* into the proponents of slavery, Hopkins is subverting Classic Western tropes to form a counter-narrative to the expansion and conquest of the frontier at the expense of both Native

of African Americans following the Civil War. Painter, Nell Irvin. *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*.

³¹⁶ "Afterword: *Winona*, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century." pp. 216-8.

³¹⁷ Historically, many white residents opposed the introduction of slavery, though not because of any moral sense of right and wrong. They simply did not want African Americans in Kansas. At one constitutional gathering concerning Kansas becoming a state, legislators and delegates "simultaneously demanded the prohibition of slavery" and "the exclusion of free Negroes." The state's poor records on equal rights extended from the 19th Century to well into the 20th, and became ripe for commentary and criticism, of which Hopkins provided. Berwanger, Eugene H. *The Frontier against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy*. pg. 5.

Americans and African Americans alike. In *Winona*, the true villains of the Classic Western are the white, heteronormative male hegemony pushing systemic racism and oppression onto African Americans, Native Americans, and other minority groups. The Cowboys, then, are those who resist these oppressive systems and struggle for those who are marginalized, and Winona, as the African American female protagonist is the definitive Cowboy of the novel.

Most obvious in *Winona*'s subversion of the Classic Western and anticipation of the Revisionist Western, at least in reading the novel now, is the titular character's role in the novel. Winona, as the driving force for positive change upon the frontier, is tasked with removing those corrupting elements of the developing nation as it expands, seen most clearly in her fight against the slavers. This marks Winona as a Cowboy figure, even though Winona is herself entirely non-normative in the definition of that character: she is simultaneously a woman and she is mixed-race, being of both white and African American descent. Winona therefore stands in stark contrast to a character like the Virginian or Lassiter and challenges our preconception of the Cowboy figure of the early 20th Century. Winona fulfills many of the same roles as they do, symbolizing individuality, skill, mobility, adaptability, dedication to her work, and a form of righteousness that she expresses through her resistance to the slavers. In her ability to navigate her identity and to successfully incorporate these values into Winona, Hopkins produces an arguably more successful Cowboy than either Wister or Grey, for rather than accede or flee the socio-cultural demands based on her race and gender, Winona challenges these expectations and norms.

Winona's role as the female African American Cowboy is contextualized by Hopkins' reaction to the failure of racial and gendered equality as seen in the state of Kansas. Prior to the novel's publication in *Colored American Magazine*, an article titled "Kansas versus New Jersey" was released by the magazine discussing racial bias and lynching after criminal cases in Kansas. Contrary to the whites who were merely sentenced to prison when found guilty, African Americans often found themselves sentenced for execution, either by lynching or being burned at the stake.³¹⁸ Hopkins' familiarity with the history and the politics which allowed for such horrors informed her that the free state had failed to fulfill its promise as a racial utopia. There was little hope in

³¹⁸ "Kansas versus New Jersey," *Colored American Magazine*. Issue 2, February 1901: pp. 314–15. This includes various forms of lynch mob executions intended to cause the most suffering on their victims, not least of which was burning African Americans alive. Burning at the stake was a most heinous act, epitomizing the barbarism that African Americans were treated with by lynch mobs and the like.

Hopkins' view of establishing a positive development for the United States upon that frontier would be in vain.

Hopkins' decision to have Winona leave Kansas and the United States altogether serves as a shift both in the belief that the frontier promises growth for socio-cultural America, but also for the Cowboy's own beliefs in these systems. In the end, if Winona and her brother had stayed in the West, instead of moving to England, they would have continued to face persecution, and so she heads to where she believes opportunity and equality have a better chance of prospering.

Hopkins' representation of the frontier is one of conflict and instability, notably anything but ideal for civilization, opportunity, freedom, and equality. Through *Winona*, Hopkins subverts the ideals that *The Virginian* promises its white, hegemonic male audiences about what they could have expected out of the frontier, leaving the reader unsettled by the volatility of the early West. For the African American female Cowboy, the fictional Western frontier is not a site of opportunity and reinvention, but a place where kidnappings, rescues, hidings, abductions, border crossings, ambushes, and raids occur.

Despite her mobility, Winona's freedom is constantly challenged—whether she is chased by her enemies, or her virtue is assaulted, or that she fears for her future, there is always danger without the hope of overcoming it. As *Winona* follows its Cowboy across the states, from the North to the South, from Missouri to Kansas, and finally from the United States to England, Winona's true aim is to find a place where African Americans can experience a form of peace and progressive socio-cultural and racial equality. With Winona's journey to England, however, Hopkins has forsaken the Classic Western from the onset of the genre's establishment as a premise for the equal treatment of African Americans and other minorities.

Neither are offered true equality to the white, male-oriented hegemony that operates within the United States in the context of *Winona*, and so Winona leaves. Given the *Colored American Magazine*'s mission to foster representations of African American identity, there is the notable problem that the Cowboy figure of *Winona* is seemingly silent and, save for a few instances, passive throughout the novel. Elizabeth Ammons makes an association between Hopkins' writing and the "imperial plot" of the Western dime novel, which valorizes "white territorial and cultural expansion and dominance" (215-6). Ammons claims that *Winona* features the standard white male

and “an incredibly virtuous but almost invisible heroine,” contending that the novel “becomes trapped in self-contradiction.”³¹⁹

To this end, it is true that Maxwell is a predominant figure in the novel, encouraging Winona along much of the way. However, contrary to Ammons’ reading of the novel, I would argue that Hopkins subverts the conventions of the Classic Western to critique the heteronormative, white male-centric narrative: Winona’s silence is not unlike the silence of Lassiter, and her passivity is overshadowed by those moments where she does act, similar to both the *Virginian* and *Shane*. Hopkins employs the same Classic Western elements to be found in later novels for the purpose of racial uplift and positive representation for racial, gendered, and class encouragement. As a novel that is both Classic Western and revisionist in nature, *Winona* effectively subverts said ‘white territorial and cultural expansion and dominance’ by directly opposing them as they are contextualized in the novel (via the slavers) and then departs Eastward when the West no longer offers the promise of a safe, free future.³²⁰ As a Cowboy, then, she establishes her own individuality against the normative expectations of American socio-cultural ideas concerning the West and its promise of the American Dream, achieving what neither the *Virginian* nor *Lassiter* nor *Shane* could in resisting these expectations. In this way, Winona’s actions speak far louder than words.

4.3.4 Intersections of Race, Gender, and Class in *Winona*

For its anticipation of Revisionist Westerns, *Winona* does mire itself in a problematic relationship concerning gender and the role Hopkins has given her titular protagonist. Over the course of the book Winona grows to be reliant on Maxwell and Brown, ultimately needing Maxwell for his ability to decree her birthright and to take her away from America. “Poor child! Poor little thing!” he tells her upon their first meeting after White Eagle dies. “Heaven must have sent me here at this awful moment” (308). Maxwell thus becomes her informal guardian and

³¹⁹ “Afterword: *Winona*, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century,” pp. 215–16. Claudia Tate also compares *Winona* with the formula Western in *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine’s Text at the Turn of the Century*. pg. 200.

³²⁰ In the context of the novel then, England is for *Winona* as Surprise Valley was to *Riders of the Purple Sage* and the Honeymoon Island was to *The Virginian*. These places become emblematic of the ideal paradise the protagonists imagine the frontier to promise its American Cowboy figures. This promise is fascinating then for Winona, as her paradise lies entirely outside of the United States.

eventual love interest (311); Hopkins presents Maxwell as a white man who rescues her and her brother, at least in part, from slavery (336).

In the context of their romance, Maxwell is troublingly attracted to her because of her clinging and “childish” qualities (355). Going a step further, she is enslaved on a farm in Missouri, utterly reliant on Maxwell whenever Brown does not demand her submissiveness. For all of Brown’s egalitarian philosophies toward race, Hopkins demonstrates to the reader that his values are Janus-faced and entirely misogynistic: he treats women like second-class citizens. The women in his “patriarchal care” (373) “listened but did not intrude their opinions” while the men of the group are strategizing for war (380).³²¹

Winona’s role in rescuing the sick Maxwell from the prison that Thomson has thrown him in, stands out as a moment where Winona gains agency and marks a clear empowerment toward women. That is, Winona disguises herself as a man to conduct the rescue. By proving that she has “the pluck of a man” (348),³²² when she dresses as “Allen Pinks,” Winona appropriates masculinity for the purpose of subverting its patriarchal hegemony and their systems of racial oppression. Winona’s use of cross-dressing in the novel is effective not only in establishing her as capable, but also in questioning the actual role of masculinity in the Cowboy’s effectiveness as a protagonist, demonstrating that it is simply a guise which she can don when convenient. This also marks a shift in Winona’s character in the novel, for at this point she emerges as the Cowboy figure, taking on a central role to those around her by challenging their conceptions of not only her race, but of her gender and class in society.

³²¹ “If there is a single distinguishing feature of the literature of black women,” according to Mary Helen Washington, it is the fact that their writing records “the thoughts, words, feelings, and deeds of black women” (xxi). Washington, Mary Helen. *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women, 1860–1960*. Claudia Tate discusses the way in which Hopkins silences “the discourse of female agency” (*Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 208); Elizabeth Ammons also notes that many of Hopkins’s women “suffer terrible silencing” (78). Ammons, Elizabeth. *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century*; and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, who writes about the marriage plot as a narrative pattern that “muffles the main female character” (5). DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*. While this is perhaps the easiest reading of *Winona*, I would like to argue that it favors only a particular voice of white men, that is, the one that is sympathetic to the needs of African Americans and African American women, and the one that furthers freedom and equality amongst the races. It is also worth pointing out that the intention of Winona as a character is to inspire—as she does for Maxwell and as Hopkins wishes for her own readers—a socio-cultural change in national thought toward African Americans. Thus, while I do agree that her role gives way to male autonomy and minimizes her own authority, I would argue that reading *Winona* as purely privileging white men is faulty, not taking into account the broader themes and subversive elements at work in the novel.

³²² Surprisingly, female cross-dressing was not an uncommon occurrence in the region during this time. For more on the subject see Schlatter, Evelyn A. “Drag’s a Life: Women, Gender, and Cross-Dressing in the Nineteenth-Century West.” pp. 334–53.

Maxwell's sickness stems from the terrible scenes of abuse he has seen of the African Americans imprisoned alongside of him. This includes, ambiguously, the potential sight of sodomy, an offense to Maxwell's own masculinity, stating "the shameful outrage, so denounced in the Scriptures, and which must not be described in the interests of decency" (385). In a scene that pushes *Winona* almost to a point ahead of its time, Winona nurses Maxwell back to health and kisses him when she is disguised as 'Pinks,' (388), talking to him in a voice that is as "soft and low as a woman's" (389). Only after Maxwell escapes with Winona and begins to question his feelings for 'Pinks' does Winona tear down the veil and reveal who she really is, an act which comforts the doubting Maxwell (392).³²³

While one could mistakenly interpret the Western as being conservative in nature, yet the experimentation and resistance to normative structures in the Genre continue to stand out. In the case of *Winona*, Michael K. Johnson believes that "Hopkins attempts to rethink constructions of both masculinity and femininity, and she represents the American West as a place where the potential for... gender equity exists" (99).³²⁴ Although Winona changes her identity and shows a capacity for being effective in the abolitionists' efforts, they push her away from their activities, relegating her again to forced submissiveness despite her effectiveness. She is thus chaste in her approach to Maxwell for the time being, and operates behind the scenes of the abolitionist camp.³²⁵ Thus, like Baptiste, Winona depicts a socially positive representative figure intended to inspire.

Winona's time as subordinate in the narrative is reconciled with the understanding that Hopkins' personal aims were to inspire and motivate African Americans and white readers to resist the normative processes of the socio-cultural South and, in turn, the developing West. Hopkins portrays the region as an unsettled land where social change and radical political action *do* take place, though not always to the desired, utopian outcome that was promised. To expound upon

³²³ Were Maxwell the protagonist of *Winona*, his temporary attraction to 'Pinks' could be read as a queering of the Western Cowboy, subverting further the white, heteronormative narrative of masculine hegemony. However, not only does Winona better fit this role of Cowboy, relegating Maxwell to something more akin to the archetypal 'damsel in distress', but Hopkins also goes on to normalize this queering by revealing Winona's identity. Winona fulfills the romantic convention of the time, and in the end, decides to marry the heterosexual Maxwell. The anxiety Hopkins seems to have over a male figure who is queer in any capacity is exposed as well in Winona's reaction to the kiss, and so the moment passes.

³²⁴ Johnson adds, however, that while "rigid gender roles" do collapse, they do so only temporarily. Johnson, Michael K. *Black Masculinity and the Frontier Myth in American Literature*. pg. 129.

³²⁵ Mary Helen Washington argues that female African American writers created chaste heroines in order to counter the perception that African American women were sexually loose (*Invented Lives*, 73). Similarly, cross-dressing enables Winona to manifest her attraction to Maxwell while at the same time representing it as a platonic same-sex affection. What "queers" the relationship is the focus on how Maxwell feels about being kissed by a "man."

that, in *Winona*, the frontier remains a racist and sexist terrain based heavily on one's class, and her narrative against such a terrain—employing the same literary narrative others would use to reinforce these ideas—works to criticize and subvert the idealization of the American West as it operates within the context of a heteronormative narrative catering to white male hegemony over women, African Americans, and other marginalized groups.

4.3.5 Miscegenation and Religious Institutions: Positive Socio-Cultural Unions and the Role of Religion in *Winona* toward Racial Uplift

While there is some validity to the idea that Winona is relegated to the background for much of the novel, there is a context to this role that empowers her representation in the novel. As a mulatta character, Winona represents the strength of an African American woman's ability to influence others into powerful political movement, and she is the product of what can happen when miscegenation and interracial relationships are not made taboo but rather embraced. Winona, as an African American female Cowboy much like the Cowboy in Wister and Gray's novels, becomes a powerful icon in the novel for positive change and is thus intended to be a role model. Hopkins' own inspiration for the character likely comes from Frances Harper's Iola Leroy, serving as a model mulatta character with her independence, Christian virtue, and commitment to racial uplift, as also seen in Micheaux's own works.³²⁶

Like Iola Leroy, Winona begins the novel not knowing that she is mixed-race, as well as not knowing the sort of prejudice she would face for that. As mulattas, the suffering of both characters in the face of such systemic racism propagated by heteronormative, white sociocultural constructs grants them an intrinsic moral and theological authority of which they call upon to criticize racist and misogynistic forms of oppression.³²⁷ Both authors believed that Christianity's moral ideologies provided the only hope for national recovery from the atrocities of slavery and, in turn, white, male hegemony—"the Law of Liberty was the Law of God"—and their female protagonists, most notably the Cowboy Winona, represented that law.

³²⁶ Harper, Frances Ellen Watkins. *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted*.

³²⁷ One of the more predominant elements of Hopkins works was the inclusion of her Christian faith into her characters, contextualizing good and evil in both Christian and racial frameworks that, as they do in *Winona*, overlap with dimensions of gender and class.

Hopkins' use of Christianity is also subverted to fit the perspective of African American women writing about a frontier experience. Christianity tended to favor empowering men over women and is itself rife with patriarchal constructs and hegemonic systems. In Hopkins case, however, it is the interpretation of the moral and ethical messages in the Bible that inform her construction of such characters as Winona, as well as her own beliefs in Christianity's ability to push white American away from Jim Crow laws, racism, and an oppression of minorities. At the same time, Hopkins also tied religion to racial uplift ideologies, and thus good practitioners of the religion would inspire others to better themselves in American society. Ultimately, she represents an expanded version of Oscar Micheaux's beliefs, emphasizing both vocal protest and action as well as removals of stereotypes in African Americans, contextualizing it as a religiously righteous movement that favored progressive egalitarianism over the racism of white patriarchal figures.

Hopkins commended Harper's take on John Brown's resistance to slavery two months prior to *Winona*'s publication, marking his Abolitionist efforts irrevocably a religiously righteous mission: "When the John Brown episode was agitating the nation, no one was more deeply affected than Mrs. Harper. To John Brown's wife she sent a letter saying: 'May God, our God, sustain you in the hour of trial...'" (368). Hopkins emphasized the "morals and general improvement" to newly freedwomen, stating that she was one "working and preaching as did the Master, for the love of humanity" (368).³²⁸ However, unlike Leroy, Winona extends this religious tie to racial empowerment and interracial bonding. Like Micheaux, Hopkins bucked the fear of miscegenation and subverted heteronormative definitions of love and relationships, finding in her protagonist's marriage to Maxwell a paragon of socio-cultural racial equality.³²⁹

Maxwell's development over the course of the novel toward these religious and racial views defines his own commitment to Winona's beliefs and aspirations for the people of America. Maxwell's trust in Winona as a representation of an idealized socio-cultural America extends to his belief in John Brown's fundamental ethic: "He hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth" (405, 374). Maxwell believes that "the heart" determines character, rather than the skin, and so for Hopkins the 'blood' is a unifying element transcending race and its associated socio-cultural

³²⁸ "Famous Women of the Negro Race: Club Life Among Colored Women." *Colored American Magazine* Aug. 1902: pp. 273-83.

³²⁹ Naturally, the whole relationship was criticized by one angry white subscriber who proclaimed to Hopkins in a letter, "The stories of these tragic mixed loves will not commend themselves to your white readers and will not elevate the colored readers. See Conduct, Cornelia A. Letter. "Editorial and Publishers' Announcements." *Colored American Magazine* Mar. 1903: pp. 398-99.

conflicts. As such, their relationship rejects the dominant history of miscegenation in the white heteronormative narratives at the end of the 19th Century going into the 20th.

However, both Hopkins and Micheaux grapple with a history of how interracial relationships were seen in America, going so far as to involve the question of rape and white men's abuse of African American women and non-white women. Judah's bitterness toward Maxwell stems from such history, for "He knew the worth of a white man's love for a woman of mixed blood; how it swept its scorching heat over a white young life, leaving it nothing but charred embers and burnt-out ashes" (357-58).

Interestingly, Judah lacks a romance of his own in the novel, denying him the same sort of partnered pairing that Venters and Bess find in one another in *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Judah exclaims, "It's this cursed slavery that's to blame" believing that Maxwell is only attracted to Winona for reasons associated to abusing her. Judah's ability to find peace only comes from his acceptance of Maxwell and Winona's love for one another, and as such he travels with them both back to England and is knighted for his ability to overcome his anger.³³⁰

Hopkins emphasis on religion as a means for racial uplift find reasoning in the presence of Jim Crow laws, which for her characterized everything 'evil' in the developing nation, presenting a falsehood about its progress. For Hopkins and for the characters in *Winona*, the state imposes a secularized order based in racist, white hegemonic heteronormative systems that find form in Jim Crow legislation. Hopkins then seeks to supersede these laws with ones she holds in higher esteem, the concept of Divine Law. Hopkins presents the argument in *Winona* that one must go above racially based systems of oppression to higher powers that appeal to the spirit of the characters rather than their skin. Because Hopkins is rightly projecting 19th and 20th Century racist violence onto slavery, the "demonic" or "evil" is defined as an oppressive, antagonistic relationship between the races which, through Divine Law, is understood as "unnatural."

By making slavery, racism, and the grand narratives which encourage these worldviews evil, Hopkins not only informs her readers that slavery is the representation of "evil", it is also a

³³⁰ This is very similar to Baptiste's own struggles with indulging in passions that would further encourage negative stereotypes. Hopkins takes this a step further with Judah, however. In consideration of Judah, as the major African American male character, the Biblical origins his name—signifying a tribe, region, and individual—coincide with Hopkins desire to inspire others, making use of her religious knowledge in the context of racial uplift ideology. To add: When Jacob blesses his sons, he foretells Judah's future as tribal leader: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee" Gen. 49: 8). Hence, like Winona, Judah is intended to serve as an example to other African Americans.

class-based worldview built on a false racially-based hierarchy. This latter point is in direct opposition to the harmonious interracial utopia established at the beginning of the novel, where distinctions of one's class and their ability to fall beneath others due to gender or race did not exist. In contrast to the world beyond this, for Winona, this "evil", which established one's class via their race and again by their gender, was used as a system of oppression for the aim of empowering white heteronormative males. By tying this to religion, Hopkins is giving an alternative.³³¹ Thus, "evil" characters are inevitably tied to "evil" legal or social codes.

4.3.6 Restraint and the Representation of Inspirational, Positive African American Figures toward Racial Uplift

The growth of Hopkins' stance concerning her theological views on race and gender stems from her belief in the role that women's clubs had,³³² groups of African American women who encouraged resistance: "We believe it to be the club woman's task to 'little by little turn the desire of the world from things of the flesh to things of the spirit. She must make the world want to do things that raise it higher and higher'" (121).³³³ Hopkins' involvement in these clubs and through her own writing make clear her hope to inspire African American women while addressing issues of race, class, and gender in her works. Hopkins envisions "new avenues of work and an outlet for thoughts that breathe" for African American women who operate "in the name of God and humanity" (121).³³⁴

Winona's ultimate influence as the female African American Cowboy over the course of the novel is in the way that she inspires others and pushes for broader socio-cultural change, drawing Maxwell, Judah, and Brown to her. Winona is not merely subordinated, but rather tactical, subversive of the Western's typical violent male protagonist. Maxwell is only rescued because of her clever thinking. Rather than remain at the camp to tend to widows and orphans, Winona takes direct action. As with Baptiste, Winona sneaks into the wilderness and prays, finding as all

³³¹ See James H. Cone's 1969 *Black Theology and Black Power* for a broader discussion of black empowering visions of eschatology.

³³² Hopkins was vice-president of the Women's Auxiliary to the Young Men's Congressional Club and a member of the Woman's Era Club of Boston, to which she read portions of her first novel, *Contending Forces* (1900). Founded by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin in 1893, the Woman's Era Club was composed of approximately 100 women who worked on committees devoted to literature, civics, philanthropy, domestic science, and race work. See Cash, Floris Loretta Barnett. "Womanhood and Protest: The Club Movement Among Black Women, 1892-1922." pg. 79.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

Cowboys do insight and a spiritual exploration that is crucial to the Cowboy's success.³³⁵ She prayed: "Help me to help save him!", tying in both the wilderness element of the Western to that of the divine, an act which convinces Brown to agree to her plan. (380)

Hopkins, as an unmarried African American woman who was also a writer, editor, and lecturer, was well aware of what people called her while she wrote: man-hating, unwomanly or manly, a traitor to her race or sex—comments typical to women writing. As a means of attempting to stop such insults, as well as any attacks on the intelligence, chastity, and quality of African American women in general, Hopkins ensures that Winona is not only ideal but pure. If Winona is to be a symbol for the improvement of African American women, much the same as Baptiste was intended to serve as an example for African American men, then she must represent Hopkins' ideal view of womanhood.³³⁶ These privileges include the glorification of piety and purity—long denied to African American women.³³⁷

Claudia Tate, writing in *Domestic Allegories*, points out that *Winona* is unique amongst African American women's fiction of the time for, rather than centering on either the family or the domestic sphere in Winona's life, it is actively involved in the public sphere of male characters. Rather than "displac[ing] the text of female development," the romance she shares with Maxwell is furthered by Winona's role as a race leader (203), strengthening her icon in their interracial harmony. Because Hopkins emphasizes that Winona is a "true woman," that is, an object of desire, as well as a savvy tactician, and that she inspires and mobilizes men effectively and with purpose, Winona encompasses the full range of positive African American representation that Hopkins imagined.

Winona's "development" as the female African American Cowboy is seen with the strategic way she claims or relinquishes a "true woman" identity: while a slave, she is the educated and beautiful woman threatened and faced with the very real threat of sexual violence; later she is able to present herself as an African American man so as to aid the suffering Maxwell in prison.

³³⁵ The Virginian, Lassiter, and Shane all directly espouse this practice and belief strongly in the spiritual potency that the wilderness has on the healthy development and success of the individual on the frontier. Of note, it is only the Cowboy who ever successfully does this, rendering both Baptiste and Winona as a part of these canonical figures.

³³⁶ Carby, Hazel. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. pg. 32.

³³⁷ Claudia Tate reinforces this notion, writing about how African American women authors were able to claim a subjectivity previously denied to them. These can be seen in the post-Reconstruction novels which focused on the marriage plot, domesticity, civility, and middle-class prosperity, all of which allowed African American women some form of agency. Tate, Claudia. "Allegories of Black Female Desire; or, Rereading Nineteenth-Century Sentimental Narratives of Black Female Authority." pg. 106.

Finally, when she takes up arms against the advancing slavers, Winona shifts her identity from a “true woman” to a “true abolitionist,” one who is given her authority through divine sanction, directly inspiring the others around her as she enacts and directs the resistance. Finally, she departs America to inherit a fortune, establishing her own lineage in a land more accepting of her and Maxwell’s marriage much the same as the Virginian establishes his own lineage in the West.

While Hopkins’ text asserts that “human events are organized, clarified and made meaningful by spiritual realities,” she does so while Winona’s own personal and spiritual struggles have already finished; because her work is to encourage and organize others as inspiration, she has succeeded (133).³³⁸ In opposition to the sentimentalism found in white women’s literature of the time, Hopkins’ believed in the obligation to write about personal and socially lived experience, intersecting as she does race, gender, class, and even religion. Thus, Hopkin’s eschatological view of the world emphasizes a communal sense of liberty and not her own overcoming of sociological woes and prejudice. *Winona* is meant to inspire, and so it does.

But her extent of positive representation goes beyond her titular character, presenting Judah as well as a role model for racial uplift. Like Baptiste, Judah’s anger and internalized urges form the basis of his conflict, and by confronting these he also asserts his own ‘manliness’ as pure and noble, and the recognition of that is the progress Hopkins strives for. In *Winona*, progress is understood as egalitarian management, encouraging the skills of others rather than suppressing them. As an example, both Bill Thomson and Colonel Titus are represented as “evil” for their failure to recognize Judah’s talents when they were more interested in asserting the dominance of white male hegemony over his marginalized status.

On the plantation, Thomson makes a wager that he can break a wild horse, or as he calls it, “a perfect demon” (321). Defeated, Judah comes forward to demonstrate his own control over ‘the beast’. Judah, “a living statue of a mighty Vulcan,” successfully tames the wild horse in a display of restraint and command. Judah’s overcoming of the “beast”—notably done with the “hypnotic eye... practiced among all the Indian tribes of the West”—is an overt rebuttal by Hopkins against such popular racist views as Charles Carroll’s in *The Negro a Beast* (1900), which depicts African Americans as a type of literal ape, treating the idea of miscegenation as the most terrible of evils.

George Fredrickson correctly argues that, in representing the “Negro as Beast”, where he is salacious and naturally inclined toward violence, that this would translate into an escalating

³³⁸ Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*.

negativity on African Americans, eventually evolving to the point of mob violence and lynching.³³⁹ The reality of such a consequence is both Baptiste and Judah's fear, and so both Mischeaux and Hopkins directly address this representation of African Americans. In Hopkins' example, however, the true "beast" is neither Judah nor the horse, but rather Thomson, whose decides to whip Judah so as to "teach him his place." The departure from the harmonious state of the Seneca to the plantation produces a clear change in Judah's attitude: "every stroke of the merciless lash was engraved on his heart in bleeding stripes that called for vengeance" (327-8)—demonstrating at once the origins of Judah's own struggles with his rage and the condemnation of Thomson's viciousness. Judah runs the risk of becoming just such a beast that he had tamed should he give in to violent revenge. As such, Judah, like Baptiste, needs the guiding hand of a woman such as Winona to be a feminine counterpart, someone who can prevent him from succumbing to "primitive" acts of violence.

Yet the role of violence in the novel is not nearly as criticized as it is in *The Homesteader*. When Judah shoots Thomson toward the end of the novel, Winona criticizes his action as merely vengeance on a personal level, something without broader meaning. She does prevent Judah from finishing Thomson, crying out to Judah that "You shall not! You make yourself as vile as the vilest of them — our enemies" (422), thus rescuing the man who had enslaved and raped her. Winona's rape and general mistreatment also align her with Baptiste's representation of a strong Cowboy character coming back from serious injury, demonstrating a quality of toughness rather than vulnerability. Winona takes on a similar elevation as to Baptiste, bringing Judah as well to a moral level above those who would give in to temptation and oppression, despite the atrocities they had committed.³⁴⁰

Hopkins shows that restraint works to counter the stereotypes of African American men engaging in violent revenge should they come to power, and at the same time she demonstrates that Winona is the true leader and is thus the Cowboy figure championing the weak. By claiming a moral authority with her forgiveness, Winona transcends the other characters' in the novel and

³³⁹ Fredrickson, George M. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*.

³⁴⁰ That said, Thomson's own awful actions over the course of *Winona* vastly outweigh anything Reverend McCarthy does in the course of *The Homesteader*. To that end, Winona elevates herself beyond even Baptiste for her act of forgiveness for the one who had so wronged her, relying not on convenience to remove the representation of all that the author depicts as deplorable.

becomes an ideal to strive for amongst African Americans and whites.³⁴¹ However, contradictorily, Winona and Maxwell do *need* to restrain Judah, and act which bluntly shows that he needs this restraint. Hopkins has, perhaps without intending it, justified a certain level of apprehension in African American men.

Judah's desire for revenge and the rage he feels toward those that have oppressed him and the system that has enabled it have difficulty fitting into Hopkin's emotional framework. Additionally, his failure to gain Winona's love causes him to feel as if she has succumbed to prejudices against other African Americans, telling her that "The white man has the advantage in all things. Is it worth while struggling against such forces?" (357). The legacy of this racism suggests to the reader that those with lighter skin never question their own privilege.

As such, Winona follows Maxwell to England to inherit her fortune, seeming to abandon the racial and class struggles of America for a complete elevation, implying perhaps that true progress toward egalitarianism among races, genders, and classes is not to be had in America at all. Hopkins' portrayal of development in the United States is a critique that stands against the idea of Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism entirely. In the end, Judah also rises above his internal conflicts and follows Winona's suit, happily living in England with a refined woman. His past deeds are acknowledged, as when he "entered the service of the Queen ... [h]is daring bravery and matchless courage brought its own reward..." (435).

As the African American female Cowboy, Winona's inspiration for Judah is to guide him into restraint, her influence on Maxwell and Brown is spiritual in nature. Winona encourages them to action so as to drive effective socio-cultural change not only on the frontier of the novel, but in the broader development of America. They progress through a series of spiritual transfigurations that reflect Hopkins' view of racial uplift ideology and the role religious morality and Divine Law can play in subverting white hegemonic systems.³⁴²

³⁴¹ Hopkins's work shares Frederick Douglass' commitment to personal restraint and his sanctioning of violence only when for the greater good of the larger community. As Maggie Sale points out in her analysis of Douglass' short story "The Heroic Slave" (1853), the protagonist, Madison Washington, leads a mutiny aboard a slave ship for "Liberty not malice." Hopkins heralded Douglass as one of the "messengers of God" in her "Famous Men of the Negro Race" in the November 1900 issue of the *Colored American Magazine*. See also Cynthia S. Hamilton's "Models of Agency: Frederick Douglass and 'The Heroic Slave'".

³⁴² Notably, Winona presents this source of inspiration as originating from a personal religious view rather than an institutional perspective. Hopkins expresses her difficulty with organized religion and its ability to push for socio-cultural change: "If Christianity, Mohammedanism, or even Buddhism... did exercise the gentle and humanizing influence that is claimed for them, these horrors would cease now that actual slavery has been banished from our land." She goes on to write that "Until we can find a religion that will give the people individually and practically an

The novel thus concludes with an ambiguous approach to the issue of race and class in the United States, spending much of its time subverting sociocultural systems which prop up oppressive, white male hegemony, but ending on a seeming abandonment of it. One reading, however, would translate this departure from the United States as a form of ascendancy in a theological sense, treating England as a form of heaven wherein equality, riches, and freedom await those who have done well and fought successfully against “evil” upon the frontier. This matches with the similar retreats that other Cowboy characters take in other Classic Westerns, mirroring, for example, Lassiter and Jane’s escape into the paradise that is Surprise Valley. Winona, then, for her upholding of virtuous values and her successful navigation and transcendence of concerns over race, class, and gender, is rewarded for her efforts with her own paradise.

4.4.0 Unifying Oscar Micheaux and Pauline Hopkins with the Western

Both *The Homesteader* and *Winona*’s subversion of Western heteronormative narratives upsets the hierarchy of white masculine positioning in the Classic Western, critiquing the racially driven conquest and the subjugation of African Americans, Native Americans, and women. The subversion of Western standards and white, male heteronormative hegemonic models is complete with both Micheaux and Hopkins’ use of Classic Western tropes, including the use of the wilderness for inspiration, the dividing line between civilization and savagery, the need for a protagonist to rally others against oppressive and dangerous villains, the mobility of the characters, and the strong emphasis on personal transformation and reinvention upon a frontier setting through the Cowboy figure and all that this figure connotes.

Micheaux’s work presents the Cowboy as someone invested in the establishment of positive, productive reinvention upon the frontier. Baptiste’s conflict with Reverend McCarthy employs the Classic Western to establish the transformation of Micheaux’s Cowboy against violent solutions. Additionally, like Hopkins, Micheaux brings the issue of interracial relationships and mixed-race romance as examples of effective positive development for the frontier of the American West, demonstrating an egalitarian approach to the socio-cultural future of both the

impetus to humane and unselfish dealing with each other, look to see outward forms change, but never look to see the spirit which hates and persecutes that which it no longer dare enslave, changed by any other influence than a change of heart and spirit.” (385)

West and the broader American nation. Through his industrious labor Baptiste establishes himself as a role model for racial uplift, and the West is his means toward that end.

Winona predicts revisionist elements and approaches and subverts the Western, critiquing those qualities which are oppressive, wrong, and dangerous. As a novel published at the same time as Wister's *The Virginian*, it turns the conventions Wister creates entirely on their head: *Winona* is a novel with an African American mulatta woman as the leading Cowboy. Hopkins repositions the traditional West / East dichotomy to fit the context of a North / South frontier that features white slavers as the traditional villains of Westerns, rustlers, contextualizing it to the interest of African Americans at the beginning of the 20th Century. Hopkins also refutes the claim of opportunity and success in the West by having her heroine travel East, toward England, seeing the development of America as leaning toward a failure of a truly progressive socio-cultural, racial utopia.

Like Micheaux, Hopkins presents a miscegenated, non-normative relationship as harmonious, the culmination and realization of a truly progressive worldview. Both authors share Schaefer's disavowal of violence as a means toward positive change in the West, criticizing the reliance on it as weakness rather than a strength. Finally, in making use of Divine Law, which was traditionally saddled onto the Western as justification for expansion and the erasure of Native Americans and other minorities, Hopkins calls out the inhumane treatment of African Americans and condemns it on both a personal and a moral level.

As this chapter has shown, while the African American Western literature may not have been a prolific field, the authors who made use of the Western and its themes did so effectively and to the end of subverting many of the systems that encourage white, heteronormative masculinity and hegemony. They empowered African Americans and motivated their readers toward forms of resistance that would echo throughout the early 20th century with positive African American Cowboy figures, both male and female. Authors such as Micheaux and Hopkins resisted the normative processes society encouraged, speaking out against the stereotypes and racism inherent in popular culture at the turn-of-the-century. Though they are often neglected, these texts predate the Revisionist Western movement by approximately 60 years, successfully incorporating revisionist elements into the Classic Western.

Chapter Five: Native American Literature in the late 1800's and early 1900's: Expanding the Classic Western to Survivance Upon the Frontier

5.1.0 Native Americans in the Western(s): "I Still Live"

The origins of Native American literature are at times a confusing, if not frustrating point to try and locate. As Wolfgang Hochbruck poignantly points out in "Mystery Novels to Choctaw Pageant":

Native American literature did not exist before Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*.

This may sound odd since authors of American Indian descent... had published novels and short fiction before Momaday was ever born. However, they hardly received a substantial critical response to their works. (205)³⁴³

The identification of Native American literature is at times both a very understudied field of American literature, and also, paradoxically, one that has garnered the intense focus of academics since late 1960's. With the emergence of a 'Native American Renaissance', attention has been primarily focused on the more contemporary works of Native Americans, sometimes relegating older works under generic 'American Indian' literature without reflection on its association to other genres. However, as Hochbruck adds, older literature has become more readily available, "For Native American literature, therefore, literary history proceeds both ways from *House Made of Dawn*" (206). Yet Momaday's book remains a watershed moment within the psychology of American studies concerning Native American presence, resilience, and survivance, and quite mistakenly so.

Well before the rise of the Native American Renaissance with N. Scott Momaday's 1968 *House Made of Dawn*,³⁴⁴ the Indian Council of New England choose for its 1923 emblem the expression "I still live."³⁴⁵ In keeping with this idea, many Revisionist Western authors focused

³⁴³ Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Mystery Novels to Choctaw Pageant: Todd Downing and Native American Literature(s)." pp. 205-221.

³⁴⁴ Most scholars place the beginning of the Native American Renaissance to Momaday's 1968 *House Made of Dawn*, with some extending the artistic movement to the late 1970's and others all the way to 1997, with nila northSun's book of poems, *A snake in her mouth: poems 1974-96*. However, the idea of the movement has also been heavily criticized, as I will discuss further in this chapter, for its mistaken suggestion that Native Americans *only* truly began to express themselves creatively between this period, and that older works were simply of poorer quality. As I will argue, this was far from the truth, and the periodizing of such a movement reflects only a white audience's awareness of Native American works.

³⁴⁵ Speck, Frank G. "Reflections upon the Past and Present of the Massachusetts Indians." pp. 33-8.

their works on Native American experiences and criticized the Classic Western's misrepresentation of Native Americans as savages and drunkards, as well as the depiction of justified violent conquest against Native Americans. This chapter discusses how Native Americans of the 19th Century actively predated this critique by appropriating the frontier in works that challenged their subordination and served as inspiration for positive representations of Native Americans. The end result, I argue, is the classification of their works as a form of Western, operating upon a cultural frontier while espousing virtues that resonate with the Cowboy of the Western genre. The use of what Gerald Vizenor calls 'survivance' is core to these Native American authors. Survivance, as Vizenor defines it, is "an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry. The practices of survivance create an active presence, more than the instincts of survival, function. or subsistence" (11).³⁴⁶

In aiming to extend the canon of the Western genre, this chapter expands on the definitions of the Western to emphasize authors operating on a cultural frontier, writing from the perspective of Native Americans. The reading I use of these works emphasizes an application of Hopkins' transformation of the frontier into a North / South dichotomy to reflect the perspective of African Americans. For Native Americans, this expansion of the genre shifts the origins of the Western to the early 19th Century, and demonstrates a clear link between the Native American writers of the early 1800's to Revisionist Western authors and the authors of the Native American Renaissance, redefining how the Western is understood and how the Cowboy's identity is portrayed.

The inclusion of Native American literary works into the Classic Western radically shifts arbitrary definitions of the genre and further removes arbitrary divisions between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western. I will explore how these authors, writing within the 19th Century, predate the efforts of Native American fiction during the Revisionist Western in the 1950's and 60's, dubbed 'the Native American Renaissance'. While it is not the intent of this dissertation to suggest that the Native American Renaissance did not exist as it was previously understood, or that the recognition of a sudden growth in Native American cultural production on a literary and later filmic level did not occur, it is my contention that the writing and representation of Native Americans *by* Native Americans was in no way limited to Momaday's watershed moment. Just as the Revisionist Western was anticipated and preempted by the subversive works of authors writing at the end of the 19th Century and beginning of the 20th, so too were Native

³⁴⁶ Vizenor, Gerald. "Aesthetics of Survivance."

American authors of the early 19th Century writing works which would employ similar elements of resilience and survivance as that of the Native American Renaissance.

I will begin my analysis of Native American fiction in the 19th Century with a study on the presence of Native Americans in Classic Westerns. I will focus on their use as the ‘other’ to define for the dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural United States who ‘Americans’ were and, most importantly, what they were not. From there, I discuss the shift in representation during the era of the Revisionist Westerns and the Native American Renaissance, how Native American authors employed their voice toward resilience literature and actions of survivance. To incorporate Native American writing of the early 19th Century alongside canonical Classic Western, I define the frontier in these 19th century texts from a Native American perspective. My study focuses on how these Native American authors wrote against the normative processes of the colonizer’s encroaching progression westward, in the process producing their own form of ‘Westerns’ and Cowboys. I will demonstrate how these works establish the frontier line as a site of cultural confrontation that encourages a positive representation of Native American identity, resistance, survivance, and sovereignty.

I will draw a comparison between the authors of the Native American Renaissance and discuss how those in the 19th Century similarly engaged in their own form of resistance, survivance, and discourse for Native American sovereignty. These authors did not see an apocalyptic ruination of their people by a colonizing force, but instead focused their ideas in resilience writing, emphasizing survivance in the present and future. The authors this chapter focuses on include George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess, who include elements of spirituality, resistance, survivance and sovereignty in their writing; characteristics which define them their own version of the Cowboy. As a figure that connotes individuality, freedom, liberty, self-reliance and reinvention, the Cowboy is seen in these Native American authors who embody the same values and ideals, and thus predate the Cowboy. The Native American as ‘Cowboy’ operates upon a contextualized frontier from the perspective of Native Americans, adapting and subverting the hegemonic practices and tools of the white colonizers.

These three authors witnessed the United States’ insatiable drive for obtaining land by any means, actions that translated into the removal of Native Americans via removal policies which would ensure a complete dispossession of Native American land. In turn, these authors would write into the narrative of westward expansion the vanishing of Native Americans. As the

dominant discourse of the 19th Century questioned Native American origins, so too was it challenging the scale, duration, and even the very legitimacy of Native Americans' presence, connection to, and tenure in America, threatening Native Americans' very existence. Copway, Warren, and Apess grappled with the multifaceted aspects of their personal position and larger identity in the world while simultaneously developing written works and acts that can be understood as acts of resistance, survivance, criticism, and calls for Native American sovereignty.

The slogan "I Still Live" carries an array of resonant voices that demand recognition, asserting a sense of pride in survival, maintaining resolute defiance, and displaying wit in reminding one that, just because one refuses to acknowledge the existence of others does not mean that the other has ceased to exist.³⁴⁷ As Barry O'Connell writes in the introduction to William Apess' reprinted introduction for *On Our Own Ground*, "'We are still here' testifies to qualities in Native American cultures to which little attention or appreciation has been given. These cultures have withstood every kind of assault that a numerically much larger and determined culture could muster for almost 500 years" (lxxvi-lxxvii). The devastations and losses remain beyond count to either Native Americans as well as to Euro-Americans, and have cast a dark cloud over the American culture that has grown in the wake of such cultural confrontation.

But as "I Still Live" testifies, an element of survival persists, or more accurately, survivance, and we see this in the earlier writing of Native Americans just as we do in contemporary literature. The early period of fiction writing for Native Americans in the United States required subversive writing that faithfully emulated the dominant culture's literary styles and content. Native American authors of the 19th Century operated in direct confrontation with the colonizing efforts of the United States of America, Canada, and other nations following the westward push of the frontier. Native Americans have "resisted hopelessness and vanishing" (Vizenor 11), writing their narratives not with their eyes on the past, but with their eyes turned to the future. My research extends and redefines the Western genre to include the 19th Century Native American works which exemplify the values of American Exceptionalism and the virtues of the Cowboy, contextualized from the perspective of the Native American. I critique the too narrow canon that has historically excluded the works of Native Americans, and in turn include the works

³⁴⁷ Makepeace, Anne. *We Still Live Here - Âs Nutayuneân*.

of George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess as authors whose literature and lives operated upon the frontier.³⁴⁸

5.1.1 The Savage Indian in Classic Westerns: Representations of Native Americans as Ignoble, Vanishing, and Noble

Representation of Native Americans placed them traditionally into one of two categories; the noble and ignoble savages.³⁴⁹ Typically, men were either the good brave who would aid the white conquerors in their slaughter of other Natives, or they were the devilish warrior whose world was understood only through violence, and thus could only be dealt with by violence. Examples abound in the Western genre, such as in Louis L'Amour's *Catlow* (1963). Native American women, on the other hand, took on the role of either the obedient and sometimes comical squaw, e.g. 'Look' in John Ford's *The Searchers* or the Native American Princess, exoticized and even eroticized, as in Delmar Dave's 1950 *Broken Arrow* with Sonseeahray. In either case, Native American men and women in literature and film were typecast as an oppositional, savage force incompatible with Euro-American settlement and expansion.³⁵⁰ And although the Native Americans may well have been romanticized in their experience as 'vanishing', they were still portrayed as inferior to the 'civilized'.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ To this end, Native Americans have not merely endured vis-à-vis through genealogy and ancestry; rather, the Native American authors that I look at have carried forward and transformed distinctive cultural practices and repertoires. For this to be the case, Native Americans utilized an endlessly inventive and patient resistance to despair. This required them to have both the faith and the vision to furnish the strength necessary for survivance and the prosperity of their people. The writing of George Copway, William Whipple Warren and William Apess, as a presence in American history and literature, does much to demonstrate these capacities.

³⁴⁹ As Brian Dippie points out in *The Vanishing American*, the phrase 'noble savage', which would later become a part of the dominant culture's vocabulary, first appeared in John Dryden's 1672 play, "The Conquest of Granada". Conceptually, the 'noble savage' was a representation of Native American identity that would most often tie itself to an act of vanishing; succumbing to the onslaught of an encroaching dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural American expansion and, acknowledging their lost place in the natural world, would see 'Indians' vanish along with the wilderness, making way for 'civilization' and whites. The notion of the noble savage is, therefore, what the concept of survivance rails against.

³⁵⁰ As Bernhard Drew states in an overview of various Western programs in the United States: "If anyone is more poorly treated than women [...], it is Native Americans. Until recently, Indians appeared mainly as villains, exceptions being Max Brand's Thunder Moon tales, written in the 1920's for Western Story Magazine" (12). Drew, Bernard A. *Motion Picture Series and Sequels: A Reference Guide*.

³⁵¹ Often, the concept of civilization versus savagery comes up in earlier discourse concerning the colonizing efforts of the dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural Euro-Americans, depicting one group of people (the colonized) as utterly lacking in any form of civilization, culture, or basic humanity. The effect this would have on the colonizers was that it marked for them the hallmarks for everything that the colonizer was not. This placed the colonized into a hierarchy inherently beneath that of the colonizer, leaving the colonizer justified in their efforts as it not only would

The effect was one of ‘othering’,³⁵² the reductive action of labelling and violently persecuting Native Americans as a subordinate social category. This ‘othering’ was compounded further by justification of their colonization, near-total genocide, and confinement to reservations. By othering Native Americans in the literature and myth-making process of American expansion westward, Classic Westerns depict Native Americans as the subaltern, facilitating the exploitation of their labor, of their lands, and of their lives while simultaneously relegating them to the social periphery of the geopolitical enterprise that is colonial imperialism.³⁵³

While it has been argued in this dissertation that Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* serves as the foundation for what would become the formula Classic Western, the presence of Native American characters as a type of bogeyman ‘Indian’ to justify conquest dates further back. Historical depictions of ‘Indians’ as savages can be traced to 1799, with the works of Charles Brockden Brown.³⁵⁴ In *The Early American Novel*, Lillie Loshe states that Brown successfully made use of instances with Native American hostility and, when layered onto the dangers of the wilderness along the frontier, developed the origins of a literary archetype whose socio-cultural stereotypes would echo through the centuries.³⁵⁵ Loshe believed that this representation of Native Americans was appropriate in drawing on the readers’ interest for passionate conflict against hostile, inhumane forces.³⁵⁶

Loshe writes that, in Brown’s work, “these Indians were simply savages, with strength and endurance, and also with the cruelty of wild beasts” (73). In *The Fatal Environment* (1985), Richard Slotkin extends the origins of the ‘Indian savage’ between both James Fenimore Cooper

improve the ‘savages’ station in life, but would better the world while empowering the colonizer. See Michael Ray FitzGerald’s *Native Americans On Network TV: Stereotypes, Myths, and the Good Indian* for more information.

³⁵² See earlier Chapter One footnote 32 on Othering in the Western, and Edward Said’s discussion of it.

³⁵³ As an example of this, Jon Tuska and Vicki Piekarski discuss in *The Frontier Experience* how The Curtis Publishing Company would, between the 1900’s and 1920’s, craft an editorial policy to prohibit humanizing representations of Native American characters. The reasoning for this was simple: it was done so that audiences would not empathize with characters who were culturally and archetypally subordinated into roles which affirmed and extolled the virtues and success of dominant white, heteronormative society and masculinity by means of conquest. See sub-chapter 5.1.2 for more on this.

³⁵⁴ While Brown was the first to make use of ‘Indians’ in the West, he was not the first to write about Native Americans, whereas Philip Freneau would be noted as the first American poet to do so with his 1787 “The Indian Burying Ground”. In either case, it was only until James Fenimore Cooper took to writing them that they become popular. Albert Keiser, writing in *The Indian in American Literature*, similarly credits Brown with his representation of Native Americans as savages threatening whites, stating that he was the “first [to] successfully [utilize] the Indian as fiction material... even if others before him had sensed his literary possibilities” (33). Regardless, Cooper’s construction of both the noble and ignoble savage have had the longest lasting power in American literature.

³⁵⁵ Brown’s *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799) is his most recognized published work, wherein the narrative is driven forward by violent confrontations with savage Native Americans.

³⁵⁶ Loshe, Lillie Deming. *The Early American Novel*.

and Brown. Slotkin credits the role of the Indian in the construction of American culture, and their use as a cultural material that would romanticize and provide justification for conquest:

Few writers [such as Cooper] have so deserved the name of literary pioneer, and few have had his influence on the mythological vocabulary and generic structure of their culture's literature. [Yet, Cooper] was not the first to call for a national literature drawing on American materials and values – Charles Brockden Brown preceded him by a quarter of a century. (81)

The use of these cultural 'materials' in the justification of expansionist rhetoric and myth-making was by the time of Cooper's writing portrayed as a contest between the forces of good and evil. Albert Keiser reiterates this point, stating that these constructions of Native American identity "would go on to shape the formulae for the traditional western of unquestionable good versus evil", adding that authors Brown and Cooper had helped to build "the colonist's conception of the Indian as a murderous savage, whose every action if not closely circumscribed leads to tragedy" (37).³⁵⁷

Yet, for Brown's initial construction of the 'savage Indian', Cooper's remains the figure upon which many of the Classic Westerns evolved their use of Native Americans representations. Brown may be credited with the initial use of the 'savage Indian', but Cooper's construction employed both the savage portrayal of Native Americans and the representation of them as a vanishing, noble race all too accepting of their imminent demise. Fiction popular in the 19th Century by authors such as James Fenimore Cooper encouraged the constructions of Native Americans as 'Indians' of both the violent and the noble variety. In either case, Cooper's work, along with much of the popular fiction that followed his writing, defined the Native American's existence as vanishing. Should Native Americans resist this genocide of both culture and people, then they were defined in fiction as the 'ignoble savage', threatening the white male protagonists and his charges, and so their deaths were necessary, even righteous for the growth of dominant white socio-cultural America.

If the Native Americans submitted, and paid homage to their white 'masters', then they were the 'noble savage', respectable as either a side-kick or lap-dog, but little else. Often, this version of the 'Indian' willingly departed white lands in a romanticized imagination, conceding defeat graciously. In both representations, the Native American was dehumanized to the point of

³⁵⁷ *The Indian in American Literature.*

non-existence; a caricature meant to fit the needs of the dominant culture's conquest and expansion. For this reason, Cooper's works bear a greater examination, as these two representations have stood out throughout the Western genre and have become a focal point of resistance to Native American authors. Specifically, Cooper's 1826 *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* establishes a 'necessary' conquest against Native Americans, and it is this element that perhaps most strongly found its mark in the Classic Western.

5.1.2 James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*: Representations of the 'Indian' and the fear of Miscegenation

James Fenimore Cooper ultimately did not believe that Native Americans were savages, his employment of these stereotypes in his works defined in many ways the future interpretation of Native Americans as either the 'ignoble savage' or the 'noble savage'. Being both Cooper's first and perhaps most famous work, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* brings to the reader the bloodthirsty savage as he is most popularly constructed at the turn of the 20th Century.³⁵⁸ *The Last of the Mohicans* goes a long way in establishing for Wister and others some of the more general constructions of both noble and ignoble savage 'Indians' in the Classic Western. Slotkin discusses Cooper's use of race in his introduction to *The Last of the Mohicans*, arguing that the representation which Cooper gives us is an image already popular in cultural production of dominant white, heteronormative America:

We know that the "Last of the Mohicans" is an elegiac phrase. We may even say that Cooper never loves his Indians so much as when he is watching them disappear, and that for him as for General Sheridan – although with different emphasis – the only good Indians were dead Indians. (xxv)

³⁵⁸ Even if this treatment of the 'Indian' is particularly pronounced in the Western, it is by no means singular to the genre, and as I will argue later, can be traced to a redefining of the frontier as a cultural confrontation which extends back to the origins of puritans arriving in North America. In terms of cultural production, however, Robert Berkhofer has linked it to the beginnings of a national American literature in the early 19th century movement of American Romanticism, in which "[t]he only time the Indian figured prominently in the higher forms of American art and literature occurred between the War of 1812 and the Civil War as a result of two trends: cultural nationalism and romanticism" (86). To this end, Berkhofer argues that even Cooper is operating on devices and cultural representations already in place, as has been argued regarding Brown's own work. Berkhofer, Robert F. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*.

It is impossible to miss the construct of the vanishing Native American in Cooper's iconic title, to which Robert F. Berkhofer associates a melancholic mode of representation for the last member of a dying tribe in American literature.³⁵⁹

These types of representations added to the construction and cultural understanding of the “dying Indian, especially as portrayed by the last living member of a tribe,” and that this was “a staple of American literature.”³⁶⁰ As Berkhofer continues, “[t]he nostalgia and pity aroused by the dying race produced the best romantic sentiments and gave that sense of fleeting time beloved of romantic sensibilities,” adding that “[W]hether Indians were portrayed as bad or as good, they were in romantic eyes a poetical people whose activity took place in a sublime landscape and whose fate aroused sentiment” (88).³⁶¹ Native Americans as ‘Indians’ provided the dominant white socio-cultural America with a popular figure whom they could employ as either monstrous villains or sentimentalized figures. Both stereotypes reflect the guilt in white colonizers for their conquest, but also condone the westward expansion of white America as inevitable, brushing off any lasting feelings of guilt. The end effect was the same with either representation: the dehumanizing of Native Americans toward the justified conquest by their colonizers, erasing their identities with representations that better fit the narrative of Manifest Destiny.

The Last of the Mohicans, the second installment to *The Leatherstocking Tales*, employs the use of a white heteronormative male raised by Native Americans to ultimately surpass them in ‘being’ Native Americans. Natty Bumppo (also known as “Deer Slayer”), the white protagonist,

³⁵⁹ *The White Man's Indian*. Berkhofer also draws from the works of Philip Freneau, whose contributions to Romantic primitivism with the poems “The Indian Burying Ground” (1787) and “Noble Savage” anticipates many of the representations that would populate Classic Westerns until the mid-to-late 20th century, equating Native Americans to a form of primitivist humanity. Gaile McGregor, writing in *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden: Notes Toward a Syntactics of Place*, states that “Philip Freneau, often identified as the first American Romantic, provides a striking illustration of the lingering discomfort which even the most ardent proponents of sentimental primitivism were prone, in their unguarded moments, to reveal” (78).

³⁶⁰ The late 1700's into the 1800's saw a growing view of Native Americans as natural beings living in harmony with nature, correlating Native Americans to a pristine wilderness that was inevitably being pushed westward as ‘civilization’ overrode it. Some, like artist George Catlin, believed that Native American culture would not survive, and that their way of life would soon fade away. Known for his painting series, *The Vanishing American*, the piece *Seminolee Indians, Prisoners at Fort Moultrie* (1861/69) being a prime example. Catlin based his work on the belief that Native American ways of life were doomed. Like his contemporaries, Catlin sought to record every aspect of Native life. Like so many others, he felt ‘white civilization confronting savagery’ would result in the loss of ‘Indian noble virtues’, leaving behind only savage vices. These perceived shortcomings coupled with white vices, would certainly seal the Native Americans’ demise. Adding to the stigma already entrenching a true ‘Indian’ identity was the upcoming theory of polygenesis. This theory proposed the idea of race-based variances in racial capacity and gave credence to differences in the conflict of civilization and savagery, and the theory of evolution gave strength to the Vanishing Indian as the loser in the struggle of the fittest.

³⁶¹ *The White Man's Indian*.

and his Native American companion, Chingachgook (also known as John Mohegan), must transport the two daughters of Colonel Munro, Alice and Cora, to a safe destination at Fort William Henry during the French and Indian War.

While Chingachgook is an example of the loyal Native American servant,³⁶² bearing similarities to the ignoble savage who is both loyal and accepting of his people having been colonized, the story still engages with a variety of savage, 'evil Indians'. The first of these is the traitorous Huron, Magua, who agrees to lead Heyward, Gamut, and the Munro sisters to Fort William Henry. However, soon after their departure Magua makes clear his sinister nature and the plot of guiding the unsuspecting and innocent whites into an ambush.

As a force of evil, Magua is defined as villainous and even malevolent in nature after he flees into the woods, having had his plans revealed by both Natty Bumppo and his companions. Chingachgook 'naturally' falls in line with the white, heteronormative policies of Natty, and is thus deemed as 'good' when compared to Magua. Magua attacks under the cover of dark, kidnapping all the party but Bumppo, the injured Gamut, and Chingachgook. Here, the evil Magua threatens the most heinous of crimes to the colonizer's narrative: the threat of forced interracial intercourse. The sexual violation of a white woman with one who is seen as subordinate within the socio-cultural hierarchy of a white, heteronormative America.³⁶³ Magua threatens to slaughter all of them unless the white and innocent Cora will submit to him and become his 'squaw'.

It is the loyal 'noble' Chingachgook who confronts Magua at the behest of the terrified whites, defeating Magua in a bloody fight. However, Magua portrayed as a coward, feigns death so as to get away from Chingachgook and the others. When juxtaposed to the noble figures of Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook, Magua's representation of the novel leaves the reader despising his evil, reprehensible ways. Magua affirms—albeit unwillingly—the idea that Native Americans who do not conform to the status quo of the socio-cultural American frontier can only be dealt with by extermination and removal. The novel ends with Magua's rightful death and

³⁶² One of the most famous examples of this figure is seen in *The Lone Ranger*, with Tonto serving the Lone Ranger in all acts and deeds, even to the detriment of his own people. There are echoes between this Native servant figure and the noble savage, and yet again with the African American servant to a white master. Both Native Americans and African Americans in this context serve as examples of figures subordinated in a hierarchy beneath dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural figures, most often masculine, that employ a racial view of expansion and culture to justify not only their actions and place in the world, but the place of all other cultures and races beneath them.

³⁶³ See Chapter Four for more on miscegenation and why it was such a central theme to African American and other marginalized authors' fictions. Namely, though, it is because positive representations of mixed race figures and interracial relationships counter-argue these stereotypes of violent sexual assault on whites by 'savage' racial minorities.

Chingachgook's subservience to Natty Bumppo and the other whites as justified by another Native American, Tamenund, who prophesizes that "the pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red-men has not yet come again..." (384). The colonization process here is replete with both victory over the savage Indian and the acceptance of the noble savage for his people's vanishing from the American continent.

The rise of such examples of Native Americans as 'Indians' is seen again and again in Classic Westerns: the Virginian's own run-in with Indians who nearly kill him, the works of L'Amour such as *Catlow* and *Shalako*, and further on with Western films, such as *Northwest Passage* and *The Searchers*.³⁶⁴ To this end, the negative stereotyping of Native Americans as 'savage Indians' (both ignoble and noble) has been an inherent and almost inseparable element in the Western, beginning as early as the late 18th century until approximately the middle of the 20th Century. Contemporary examples include the two 'Indians' in the 2016 *The Magnificent Seven* remake, Red Harvest and Denali, both of whom are exaggerated warriors—one fallen from grace, selling his murderous ways to the highest bidder, the other honoring the white settlers. When Native Americans were not used as representations of savagery or romanticized into happily consenting to their own people's demise, they were pushed into marginal roles in both literature and film, either serving as stock background figures or flat antagonists.

Additionally, the fear of miscegenation, as seen in Magua's threat to take Cora as his squaw, was similar to concerns over African American interracial relationships. Zane Grey shocked and angered readers with the race-mixing between the 'Indian' Nophaie and a white woman in his *The Vanishing American* (1925). When Nophaie states that he would prefer to cast off his Native American identity so that he might be changed for the better by a marriage to the whites, Grey positions Native Americans beneath whites, aligning him to the same sort of willful subservience that Chingachgook adheres to. The lingering fear lay not only in the violation of the white woman, but in the fact that the miscegenated children would, in the dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural America, still be seen as 'less than'.

³⁶⁴ Authors like A.B. Guthrie, Jr.'s 1947 *The Big Sky*, Ray Hogan's 1975 *The Doomsday Marshall and the Mountain Man*, Louis L'Amour's 1962 *How the West was Won*, and Luke Short's 1963 *The Some-Day Country* are all examples by authors who published vociferously within the genre, making use of the 'Indian' maiden who was exoticized and eroticized, as well as the savage 'Indian' as a villainous enemy to be overcome along the frontier and within the wilderness should white civilization expand westward to prosper and establish itself as an empire. The list of authors who followed this trend is long, and the use of Native Americans in such a way inherent in the genre, where rarely even to this day can one find a Western of almost any kind without a Native American of some sort in it.

The reaction from the Curtis Publishing Company's readers forced them to declare a halt on providing any potential for depth to Native American characters in their fiction, ensuring that they would remain dehumanized as 'Indians'. According to Jon Tuska and Vicki Piekarski, "all Curtis publications adopted an editorial policy prohibiting authors of Western stories and serials from characterizing Native Americans in their fiction. Indians might be present, but, if they were, they were renegades on the war path or minor characters" (270).³⁶⁵ To the Curtis Publishing Company, and to many other publishers of Classic Western texts, the Native American was only ever a safe character to portray when he was violent or forgettable: that is, when the Native American was an 'Indian'.

The confrontation between savagery and civilizations stands within the Classic Western as both the thematic and metaphorical depiction of cultural understanding for Native Americans, falsely defining who qualified as civilized and who was savage. The Classic Western took this conflict and often focused its narrative on the direct conflict with Native Americans. The outcome for this confrontation was plain: an inevitable extinction of one race so that the colonizer would expand and prosper, fulfilling the narrative of Manifest Destiny for the socio-cultural white USA.

5.2.0 Redefining the Frontier from the Colonized's Perspective

Contrary to what Frederick Jackson Turner³⁶⁶ and Walter Prescott Webb³⁶⁷ deemed to be definitive for the Western frontier's existence—a confrontation between wilderness, that is, natural space without human involvement, and civilization—there is no realistic or historical presence of a division between culture and nature. As Richard White states, "Wilderness—that is, land unaffected by human use—is rarely to be found. There is no obvious frontier except in the sense

³⁶⁵ Tuska, Jon, and Vicki Piekarski. *The Frontier Experience: A Reader's Guide to the Life and Literature of the American West*.

³⁶⁶ See Chapter One and Two on Classic and Revisionist Westerns, as well as Chapter Three, for more information concerning Frederick Jackson Turner and his "Frontier Thesis". In short, to reiterate, Turner saw the frontier as an advancing line of Euro-American civilization making its way westward, experiencing perennial rebirth in terms of character and national identity as they pushed for a form of the Agrarian pastoral.

³⁶⁷ Walter Rundell Jr. writes that in Webb's 1931 book *The Great Plains*, Webb called the settled area of Europe 'the Metropolis' and the rest of the world 'the Great Frontier', claiming that "the Great Plains environment... constitutes a geographic unity whose influences have been so powerful as to put a characteristic mark upon everything that survives within its borders", pointing to the revolver, barbed wire, and the windmill as essential to its settlement. He claims that the 98th meridian constitutes an "institutional fault", with "practically every institution that was carried across it... either broken and remade or else greatly altered". Rundell, Walter, Jr. "Walter Prescott Webb: Product of Environment." pp. 4–28.

that in some places you run out of white people” (29).³⁶⁸ For Native Americans, the frontier and its construction has become emblematic of cultural and racial disregard for their people, driving them along with what was deemed ‘the wilderness’ and ‘savage’ toward the very edge of oblivion.

The concept of the frontier as a construct of white, heteronormative Euro-Americans working toward the colonization of America through means of conquest has been one of the many criticisms launched against Turner and the Frontier Thesis. I do not disagree with this assessment, but I do find it productive to reconsider the frontier from the perspective of cultures confronting one another in ways which were both oppositional and supportive, as was the case with *Winona*. In the case of the American frontier for white Americans, it became a living line moving westward, representing the push against non-whites who did not assimilate into the larger socio-cultural milieu. To this reconsideration of the frontier not as a confrontation of wilderness and civilization, but rather of civilizations, Michael P. Malone states that the influence of New Western Historians such as Patricia Nelson Limerick reveals a “new, multifaceted model for regional study”³⁶⁹ and so the frontier as a construct extends to not just the West to East movement, but South to North and East to West based on the perspective of the authors writing along and about this confrontation.

This model is not singular as were those of Turner and Webb, but follows Malones belief that the frontier “is an amalgam of interrelated factors”. Malone goes on to states that “Westerners were often African Americans and Asian Americans as well as whites and Indians, and even the labels ‘white’ and ‘Indian’ hide the region’s complexity” (155).³⁷⁰ Thus, the ‘frontier experience’ could not only come purely from the perspective of white, heteronormative male figures, as I have demonstrated already in Chapter Four. For Native Americans, their frontier experience held a desire for independence, sovereignty, freedom, liberty and positive representations of survivance while criticizing white colonizing forces pushing them westward. In turn, the Native American advocating for these values against colonialism was embodying the values of the Cowboy *before*

³⁶⁸ “Trashing the Trails.”

³⁶⁹ Malone, Michael P. “Beyond the Last Frontier: Toward A New Approach to Western American History.” pp. 139-160.

³⁷⁰ Malone states further that “‘Indian’ meant many tribes; ‘white people’ included English, Cornish, Welsh, Irish, Portugese, Italian, Greek, French, Flemish, German, Austrian, Polish, Slovenian, Czech” and so on (147). His point that the oversimplification of cultural interaction and experience is well made here, demonstrating that the American West was one of the greatest meeting grounds for various people the world over. It is for this reason that I argue for employing the frontier in the American West not as a singular line between wilderness and civilization, but as a multifaceted, amorphous entity which existed based entirely upon socio-cultural interaction. In the case of this chapter, I focus on it from the context of Native American identity and experience, examining the experience from their perspective while referring to its shared parallels with that of the African American experience.

he was realized in popular fiction, and thus the Native American ‘Cowboy’ complicates previous definitions of the character’s origins.

The assimilation policy between 1887 and 1934 for Native Americans is understood as a colonizing process which positioned white socio-cultural America above marginalized peoples, viewing them as either culturally void or lesser, inevitably vanishing as whites progressed further inland.³⁷¹ The notion of the ‘vanishing Indian’ was a justification for the seizure of Native lands, and demonstrated a clear preference for Euro-American values: agrarian cultures over nomadic tribes and property ownership over communal ownership. Thus, the venture of Manifest Destiny was the transformation of Native American land for that of the colonizer’s own white, Agrarian Garden.³⁷² This practice led to Native American lands being taken and given to individual Native American owners for farming in order to “civilize” the ‘Indian’.³⁷³ In the resistance to their colonizers and the colonizer’s legacy,³⁷⁴ Native Americans such as Copway, Warren and Apess criticized traditional models and archetypes of ‘Indians’ as either the “noble savage” or “the ignoble savage.” These authors used their writing to dispute the construct of Native Americans as “vanishing,” one of the concrete criteria for Vizenor’s survivance, and rather asserted a persistent presence which put them in the position of resisting normative socio-cultural colonialism. In turn,

³⁷¹ Indian policy often, if not always, operated under the assumption that Native Americans were little more than savages while white Euro-Americans represented Civilization. As William H. McNeill discusses in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History Volume 1*, “since the eighteenth century, [civilization, barbarism, and savagery] have played an important role in the human sciences.... These notions have also played a central role in numerous ideologies of empire, exploitation, and genocide... as the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has suggested, that to affirm the distinction between civilization, on the one hand, and barbarism and savagery, on the other, is to take a fateful step into “barbarism” and “savagery,” in the sense of behaving toward Others in the fashion imagined to be characteristic of barbarians and savages” (358).

³⁷² For more on the Agrarian Garden, see Chapter One and Two.

³⁷³ According to Kathryn Braund in her article “‘Civilizing’ Native Peoples: American policies to remake tribal worlds”, “The civilization program promoted commercial agriculture, Christianity, an alteration in the gender-based divisions of labor among Indians, and, most importantly, private ownership of land. Americans hoped that if Indian peoples settled down to farm life, they would have little need of vast hunting territories and would willingly cede this “excess” territory to Americans. The government also encouraged Indians to run up debts to traders and government stores. Indian debts, which outstripped their ability to pay, could then be settled by sale of tribal lands. Meanwhile, American agents used annuity payments as well as donations from Quakers and other religious groups to purchase plows and spinning wheels in their effort to transform the work roles of native men and women. Women, in particular, were key to the plan, which sought to introduce Indians to cloth production to end the dependence of cloth obtained through trade”. (Web).

³⁷⁴ As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffin, and Helen Tiffin state in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1998), colonial discourse “operates on the assumption of the superiority of the colonizer’s culture, history, language, art, political structures, social conventions, and the assertion for the need of the colonized to be ‘raised up’ through colonial contact,” and therefore seeks to replace indigenous history and culture with its own (42). Resilience literature rewrites this history to include indigenous people and perspectives, often in a way that is critical of the “official” history of record.

these authors fought for their individualism, liberty, sovereignty, and basic human rights along a frontier between Native American and Euro-American cultural contact.

5.2.1 Revisionist Westerns and Native American Renaissance: Resiliency Theory and Contextualizing the Native American Author to the Western's Cowboy

Kenneth Lincoln first coined the term 'Native American Renaissance' in his *Native American Renaissance* (1983), intending to use the phrase as a means to organize and categorize an observable growth in the production of literary works by Native Americans in the United States, starting from approximately the late 1960's and continuing, arguably, to this day.³⁷⁵ A. Robert Lee and Alan Velie further describe the movement with their own analysis of Lincoln's work, stating that the phrase 'Native American Renaissance' "quickly gained currency as a term to describe the efflorescence on literary works that followed the publication of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* in 1968" (3).³⁷⁶ For many, the phrase coincides with a notable uptick in the production of Native American literature, coinciding as well with other artistic forms of expression that, generally and in varying degrees, express elements of Vizenor's concept of survivance. As the Revisionist Western was looking to place both Native Americans and Cowboys together in a more critical portrayal which would give credit and recognition to Native American identity, the sudden recognition of Native American authors and works provided a resonant example to point toward.

Suzanne Lundquist defines three core elements of the Native American Renaissance: "Reclamation of heritage through literary expression; Discovery and reevaluation of early texts by Native American authors; and Renewed interest in customary tribal artistic expression (i.e. mythology, ceremonialism, ritual, and the oral tradition of narrative transmission)" (38).³⁷⁷ As I

³⁷⁵ There are various contentions concerning the periodization of this movement, with some tying it to Revisionist Westerns as a branch of that literary movement, and others arguing that it is an ongoing production of literature from an ethnic group in the United States. I would side with the latter, as the onset of the movement has not seen a noticeable decrease in production. To the contrary, Native American authors and artists have continued to produce a library of work which clearly signals their involvement in socio-cultural politics on a literary and artistic level. The continued production of works by old and new Native American authors demonstrates, rather, that this origin for the 'Native American Renaissance' is more a watershed moment in readers and non-natives noticing Native American works, gaining an appreciation for their voice and works. As I will argue and have argued, there is a notable wealth of Native American literature and art predating this 'Renaissance', suggesting that it is more so demonstrative of the hegemon's awareness than a sudden explosion in the literary works of Native Americans.

³⁷⁶ Lee, Robert A. and Alan Velie. "Introduction," *Native American Renaissance: Literary Imagination and Achievement*.

³⁷⁷ Lundquist, Suzanne. *Native American Literatures: An Introduction*.

will argue, Lundquist's definition of these elements extends to the works of Native American authors George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apress, with minor shifts concerning such examples as 'renewed' interests in customary tribal artistic expression, which were persisting rather than finding a revitalization. This in turn renders the Native American Renaissance not as a new movement, but a continuation of older author's efforts and works. Additionally, in tying the Native American Renaissance to the Revisionist Western, so too are these earlier works tied to the Western, albeit their emphasis is defined from the perspective of Native Americans and not whites.

The movement correlated well with the Revisionist Western, which encouraged a time of historical revisionism concerning how the United States understood not only the West as a construct, but its themes, archetypes, connotations, and most importantly, characters. This in turn meant that historians were more willing to look at difficulties in the history of the invasion and colonization of the North American continent.³⁷⁸ Historians who reexamined 18th and 19th Century America, most specifically the expansion of the United States westward, the frontier, and the 'Wild West', made an effort to better represent events and their consequences for Native Americans, Mexican-Americans, African Americans, and other marginalized groups.

Extended even further to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, the work that historians and Native American authors took reflected back onto public interest in Native cultures and within Native American communities themselves. Most commonly referred to as 'The Red Power Movement,' the result of this was to encourage Native Americans toward both activism and raising awareness for the goal of greater sovereignty and their own civil rights.³⁷⁹ This movement encourages an outpouring of resiliency literature which finds its home in Vizenor's survivance.

³⁷⁸ A variety of American Western literary, history, and cultural scholars have approached the shift in interpreting the Western and the West in ways which give new life to the region, and encourage a more multicultural understanding of what exists there as we know it. The leading figure in the school of New Western Historicism, Patricia Limerick Nelson, whose *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (1987) critically reexamines the roles of people pushed to the margins, colonized, and ultimately ravaged by the conquest of America as it expanded westward. Herein lies some of the first widely recognized criticism against Turner and the 'Frontier Thesis'. In addition to this, Richard White's "Trashing the Trails", Gerald Thompson's "Another Look at Frontier/Western Historiography", Peggy Pascoe's "Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads", and Michael P. Malone's "The 'New Western History,' An Assessment" all add to the library of works which reexamine the Western and the West.

³⁷⁹ The Red Power movement was one of the many Civil Rights Movements which occurred in the United States during the Civil Rights Era. The Red Power Movement, also known as the American Indian Movement (AIM), was, on top of raising awareness, pushing for activism and greater sovereignty, dedicated to getting the Federal Government of the United States to return land that was previously owned by the Native Americans. Like the Chicano movement, both it and the Red Power Movement were inexplicably tied to the African American civil rights movement, further

Resiliency literature and theory is most commonly understood through Suniya S. Luthar's definition of "positive adaptation despite adversity".³⁸⁰ The term expands when applied to Native American experiences and history for overcoming trauma and stress on a cultural to personal level. The emphasis here on resiliency literature is to avoid and even eliminate connotations of labeling Native Americans as 'damaged goods' incapable of escaping their status as victims. Along with survivance, resiliency literature demonstrates a positive adaptation toward the individual and the Native American community as they confront the dehumanization of colonial processes.

Osage scholar Robert Warrior discusses in his introduction to *Tribal Secrets* (1995) that the "resiliency and resistant spirit of Native America" is evident in the literature of the Native American Renaissance" (xvi). Despite Warrior's lack of elaboration on this particular comment, he does suggest here that there is a compelling balance between the two. As a form of literature, resilience literature is recognized as a categorization of writing that must be, by its very nature, political and in turn exemplary of survivance.³⁸¹

Despite this, the concept of resilience literature does not have a widespread or recognized form of literary criticism. Nevertheless, scholarly work in the field does exist, with constructs of resilience, as theorized by Janyce Dyer and Kathleen Tusaie in their "Resilience: A Historical Review of the Construct", emphasizes the psychological development of Native Americans that "extends from the 1800's to the present" and focuses on how individuals and communities have adapted, survived, and even thrived despite adversity (3).

Resilience literature considers how artists, in this case authors, have rejected the biased and one-sided histories and ideologies that have been imposed upon them which would later label them as 'damaged'. In turn, this literature criticizes the ideologies and positioning that the hegemon has put upon them, interrogating discourse on both history and cultural representation. In addition, tying both the Native American Renaissance and survivance to resilience literature, the

tying the shared histories of these marginalized groups. For more, see Troy Johnson's 2007 *Red Power: The Native American Civil Rights Movement (Landmark Events in Native American History)*.

³⁸⁰ Luthar, Suniya S. "Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades." pp. 740–795.

³⁸¹ According to John Fleming and Robert J. Ledogar, "Modern resilience studies originated among psychologists and psychiatrists. Researchers interested in psychological and social determinants of health picked up the concept and have gradually extended its use from the domain of mental health to health in general. Early work on resilience was concerned with the individual, but more recently researchers have become interested in resilience as a feature of whole communities." (Web). Fleming, John and Robert J. Ledogar. "Resilience, an Evolving Concept: A Review of Literature Relevant to Aboriginal Research." pp. 7–23. Additionally, Emmy Werner refers to three general usages: "good developmental outcomes despite high risk status; sustained competence under stress; and recovery from trauma". Werner, Emmy E. "Resilience in Development." pp. 81–85.

combination of these ideas emphasizes how marginalized groups—be they Native American, African American, or other—have adopted and adapted concepts from their own cultural backgrounds and the hegemon's while confronting the reality of colonialism.³⁸²

The works of Native American authors who employ resilience in their literature is evidence of how they continued to keep these native cultures alive, refusing to give in to attempts at the erasure of their culture.³⁸³ To state the obvious, the literature of Native Americans writing along this frontier is resilience because it resists the attempts by the hegemon, in this case, white, heteronormative socio-cultural colonial America, to erase or eradicate those historically marginalized cultures. Resilience literature, in particular that which is tied to the Native American Renaissance, questions colonial discourse's ideological assumptions through literary strategies, ranging from narrative structure and character development to thematic elements and motifs coinciding with Native American spiritual and cultural beliefs.³⁸⁴

The literature that was produced during the Native American Literary Renaissance after 1969 made use of its growing popularity and began to experiment with genre and content to better reflect tribal culture. Both Leslie Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* and James Welch's 1986 *Fools Crow* demonstrate an involvement of spiritual belief in the narration, characters, and content over the course of the novels.³⁸⁵ Resilience literature by Native American authors provides alternative

³⁸² As an example of literature from the Native American Renaissance, Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988) serves as resilience literature because it resists this discourse when she depicts an alternative view point on the practice of forced land ownership. Erdrich depicts how it failed and negatively impacted Native people, undermining assumptions of cultural superiority for the hegemon. Between the juxtapositioning of Pauline and Fleur's characterizations, Erdrich demonstrates the racist foundations behind assimilation policy, inevitably politicizing her writing and in turn producing a literature of resilience and survivance. In addition to this, *Tracks* also demonstrates resilience through its incorporation of Chippewa aesthetics and ethics, stating in no uncertain terms the continued life of Native American culture.

³⁸³ Resilience theory offers a more specific form of literary criticism beyond the all-encompassing umbrella of "resistance", though it shares much in common with survivance. Both are used to show how key concepts from Native American oral tradition have continued into the present via Native American literature. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, "resistance" might be thought of as anti-colonial and "resilience / survivance" as pro-cultural, though I will continue to try and be as specific as I can in outlining these.

³⁸⁴ As I have discussed and will discuss further, the early period of fiction writing for Native Americans in the United States required subversive writing that faithfully emulated the dominant culture's literary styles and content. Works like Charles Eastman's 1916 *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* appropriated Western literature genres and themes in order to appeal to a non-Native audience. The subversive nature of this autobiography made his a work of resistance, but not necessarily of resilience. Nevertheless, it contains elements of survivance which categorize it strongly with that of others, serving as an example of texts that predate the Native American Renaissance.

³⁸⁵ That said, non-English or bilingual texts were seldom seen. Examples of authors who made use of Native language and aesthetics include Ofelia Zepeda's 1997 *Jewed 'I-hoi/ Earth Movements* and her 1995 *Ocean Power: Poems from the Desert*. Richard and Nora Marks Dauenhauer also make use of Native language with their writing, as they demonstrate in their 1987 linguistics work *Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature, Volume 1: Haa Shuk', Our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives*.

and original creative writing that reflects personal and tribal backgrounds. From the 19th Century to the 21st, the works of Native American authors contributing resilience literature is significant for establishing survivance and a demonstration of Native American presence that resists victimhood and marginalization. This survivance denotes similar characteristics in their resilience literature against colonizing efforts of the 19th Century by Euro-Americans, aligning Native American authors—in retrospect, when we expand our definition of the Cowboy to include non-white figures—symbolically the Western’s Cowboy protagonist, sharing values of resistance, individuality, strength, and a desire to aid those in need.

5.3.0 Native American Authors of the 19th Century: Anticipating the Native American Renaissance and the Revisionist Western

The anticipation of the later progressive movement of the Native American Renaissance in the work of 19th Century Native American authors brings attention to Native American peoples well before the later Revisionist Western would claim to, and again before the Native American Renaissance would. To this end, the term ‘Native American Renaissance’ has even been disparaged for wrongly neglecting Native American authors and artists prior to the movement’s periodized beginnings. James Ruppert writes:

Scholars hesitate to use the phrase because it might imply that Native writers were not producing significant work before that time, or that these writers sprang up without longstanding community and tribal roots. Indeed, if this was a rebirth, what was the original birth? (173)³⁸⁶

The problematic nature of this periodization for Native American literature which operates against white, heteronormative colonialism is that it neglects the works of authors preceding it, whose own contributions helped pave the way for such a movement. As Rebecca Tillett argues:

While the definition of the recent burgeoning of Native writing as a “renaissance” is highly accurate in its description of the sudden growth in the numbers of Native writers finding publication, it is also profoundly inaccurate in its tendency to obscure the often specifically

³⁸⁶ Ruppert, James. “Fiction: 1968–Present.” in *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*.

political histories of Indian oratory and writings upon which many Native writers are drawing. (85)³⁸⁷

The origins include the creative works of George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess as Native American writers who, like the African American authors previously discussed in this dissertation, wrote subversive literature against the white colonial representation of ‘Indians’ in the United States. These authors criticized the colonizing conquest of expansionist America and wrote along a frontier facing eastward, challenging this westward moving power and the subordination it pushed onto them, all the while using techniques of survivance and resiliency in their writing, operating on spiritual, cultural, and personal levels.

Copway, Warren, and Apess were all similarly concerned and involved in the resistance to Native American removal policies of the 19th Century. Maureen Konkle states that each “left a record of living and thinking at a point of radical change for Native peoples, a change that was difficult enough for people to live through, more difficult still to represent in English” (189).³⁸⁸ Notably, all three of these authors wrote after the Indian Removal Act (1830) had been passed,³⁸⁹ and during the popular rise in discourse concerning the origins of Native Americans, a rhetoric that was made to encourage removal. These authors also wrote during a time when each felt their homes and peoples were facing increasing pressure from the colonizing efforts of the dominant white culture to either transform their identities and cultures to that which the colonizer wished or face removal. Each confronted the issues facing Native American differently, but each did so in a way that attempted to subvert the tools of the dominant culture concerning popular discourse so as to encourage Native American resistance, survivance, and Native American sovereignty.

Each of these authors involved their Native American heritage and people as elements which had always been present in America, making strong and clear arguments that establishes an unquestionable history and peoplehood for Native American community. This in turn works to

³⁸⁷ Tillett, Rebecca. “On the Cutting Edge.”

³⁸⁸ Konkle, Maureen. *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863*.

³⁸⁹ Signed into law by Andrew Jackson. According to the Library of Congress’ online database, this law authorized the president to “grant unsettled lands west of the Mississippi in exchange for Indian lands within existing state borders.” While the article does note that “A few tribes went peacefully,” it is clear that “many resisted the relocation policy”. This lead inevitably to the “Trail of Tears”, the forced removal and march of the Cherokees during the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839, when they were forcibly moved west by the United States government. The database states that “approximately 4,000 Cherokees died on this forced march”. For more on the Trail of Tears, see John Ehle’s 1988 *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* and Anson D. Morses’ “The Political Influence of Andrew Jackson.”

endow that community with an inherent sovereignty that demands the dominant culture to provide respect and protection. All three of these authors asserted not only that their people might live but that they had the *right* to live and with all of their culture unbroken—their language, sacred history, religion, and, perhaps most pressingly, their land, things that had been theirs from time immemorial. By confronting the colonizing efforts upon a cultural frontier which positioned Native Americans against the savage practices of white Euro-Americans, these authors wrote on issues and with values in mind that place them onto a similar elevation of authors as the Western authors of the early 20th Century. Though they differed in perspective and the reasons for *why* they wrote, the nature of their works finds resonance with the connotative values of the Western, and so their inclusion as authors of early Westerns drastically redefines how the Western is to be understood and interpreted.

5.3.1 George Copway and *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bowh (George Copway) a Young Indian Chief of the Ojibwa Nation*

George Copway, an Ojibwe writer and activist,³⁹⁰ is perhaps best known for both his journal *Copway's American Indian* and for his proposed Native American state “Kahgega”, an intended sovereign territory where Native Americans could unite together as a single tribe. The purpose for this was so that Native Americans might prosper into the future—notably located in the West, beyond the frontier's borders.³⁹¹ Copway, who frequently referred to himself as ‘Chief of the Ojibwe’ and their spokesman, saw himself as an exceptional figure—not unlike the Cowboy in his own expressions of American exceptionalism. As an individual Copway was renowned for his journeys as well as for his attempts at reaching the white, heteronormative colonizers in an attempt to instruct them of the Ojibwe's wrongful treatment. Copway naming himself the “chief” of the Ojibwe is first seen in the title of his 1847 autobiography, *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bowh (George Copway) a Young Indian Chief of the Ojibway Nation*. Copway later again refers to himself as such in the expanded 1850 edition, *The Life, Letters, and Speeches*

³⁹⁰ Much of Copway and Warren's texts refer to the Ojibwe as ‘Ojibway’, an older spelling of the tribe's name. For consistency's sake, as Copway also had his own spelling, I will be sticking with the spelling of ‘Ojibwe’.

³⁹¹ As I will discuss, this idea was strictly based upon an Ojibwe construction of Native American identity, and while it did seek the longevity of Native Americans in the face of white, heteronormative socio-cultural colonization, it was also problematic for its suggesting that all Natives shift their own world view to his.

of *Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh, or, G. Copway, Chief of the Ojibway Nation*, both of which are efforts to establish himself as an authority representing the Ojibwe.³⁹²

In Copway's alteration of the title, we see an attempt to appeal to white, heteronormative socio-cultural audiences through the subordinated and stereotypical characterization of the "Indian chief". Copway demonstrates in his renaming of the book that he would have to appeal to the constructs that were employed by white colonists if he was going to subvert these constructs. Copway reflects a self-awareness in his writing, calling himself a "a young Indian chief" in the first 1847 edition and a "Chief of the Ojibway Nation" by the later 1850 edition. While Copway was in reality no chief of the Ojibwe, this naming convention signals the importance of showing himself to be an authoritative figure when he identifies as a "chief", and why being an authority would allow him to reach a larger audience. Copway is thus able to subvert the non-Native public's interest while promoting himself and advocating for a broader Native American community, and he does so through a self-definition as a well-traveled, exceptional individual who has and continues to navigate the cultural frontier of America.

There is a surprisingly similar approach taken by Copway with regards to self-presentation before the white, heteronormative socio-cultural public and the later discourses toward race that W.E.B. Du Bois describes as a form of "double-consciousness" (3).³⁹³ Notably, this operates on the redefined abstract space of the frontier. Du Bois's ideas define figures like Copway—non-white public figures—who demonstrate an awareness of the self as both inside and outside of this socio-cultural conflict. Gerald Vizenor also makes reference to a sense of doubling that Copway employs as he writes about the "simulations" of the Native self—the stereotypes and caricaturized depictions of Indians who are products of the Western imagination but are nevertheless taken as "real" (5-6).³⁹⁴ As a public figure, Copway was what Vizenor describes as a "postindian warrior of survivance", one who comprehends the simulation but arises and subverts it in an attempt to clarify a reality that is focused on his cultural heritage.³⁹⁵ In this way, he finds parallels to the

³⁹² The full title of the book is: *The Life, History, & Travels of Kah-Ge-Ga-Gah-Bowh (George Copway): A Young Indian Chief of the Ojibwa Nation, a Convert to the Christian Faith, and a Missionary to His People For Twelve Years*. There are three different editions of the novel: one in 1847, the reprint in 1850, and a British edition. I will be emphasizing the 1850 edition.

³⁹³ *The Souls of Black Folks*. See Chapter Four for more information on double-consciousness and W.E.B. Du Bois.

³⁹⁴ Vizenor, Gerald. *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*.

³⁹⁵ The sense of Ojibwe tribal specificity is therefore part of Copway's participation in a literary and ethnographic culture where he distinguishes his identity from his perspective. While many saw him as an opportunist who looked for any chance to benefit from the 19th Century interest with Native Americans, or rather, 'Indians', he is not simply the cosmopolite speaking for an idea of what Vizenor would call the indian: a simulation of the popular imagination.

Cowboy, redefined from popular interpretations of the character to reflect the progressive values of the 19th Century.

Considering George Copway's title for his autobiography, *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bowh*,³⁹⁶ and again in his 1851 *Europe, Running Sketches of Men and Places in England, France, Germany, Belgium, and Scotland*, Copway's experience and travels took him far beyond Lake Ontario. Though his writing may make use of the dominant culture's means for narrative, it reaches that same dominant culture, and details in it not only narratives which mesh with the popular writing of the 19th Century, but subverts the popular literature of the era as well. Because Copway alludes to himself as an authority figure, he is able to inject elements of survivance into his work, describing what Vizenor calls 'the Native Humanist'.³⁹⁷ Copway's work invokes spirituality, collective memories of the natural world whose borders with white, heteronormative socio-cultural America define it as an eastward facing frontier. In addition to this, Copway's works encourage a forward-looking optimism for himself and Native Americans, much the same as both Shane and the Virginian saw the future of settlers upon the American Western plains.

In Copway's autobiography, he invokes both an element of spiritualism and one of Native storytelling when he relates the story of how he took part in an Ojibwe coming of age dream ceremony. In this story, the spirit asks Copway: "Is this where you are?" (49). As a question, it resonates with Copway's future travels and his concerns with the pushing back of the frontier westward, associating his identity with place, the natural world. Copway later states that his father likewise received a vision from a spirit of water and wind: "the wind may indicate that you will travel much; the water, which you saw, and the winds, will carry your canoe safely through the waves" (51).

While this also suggests travel for Copway, a characteristic common to Warren and Apess and one that resonates with the Cowboy character, the translation of his Native name indicates that he would push for Native American sovereignty and survivance during such travels. Copway

Although Bernd C. Peyer has described him in *The Tutor'd Mind* as a "transcultural migrant" as well as a "Romantic Cosmopolite," he also notes that Copway's writings were "intrinsically tied to his Southeastern Ojibwe heritage" (224). In this sense, while New York provided a location from which to disseminate his views on Indians, Copway nevertheless continued to speak from his experiences of traditional Ojibwe life in both his Congressional proposal and in *Copway's American Indian*.

³⁹⁶ This, the 1847 edition, will for the remainder of the chapter be shortened to *Life, History*.

³⁹⁷ Vizenor, Gerald. "Aesthetics of Survivance."

translates his Ojibwe name, “Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh,” into “standing firm,” revealing his intention and resolution as a construction that is core to his Native American identity. Taken together, these meanings describes Copway as one who not only travels from his homeland, but in so doing stands critical to the colonizing efforts of the dominant white, heteronormative society, representing himself and his people through their own strength and survivance.

Copway’s early life is depicted as a traditional Ojibwe upbringing, wherein he participated in Ojibwe customs, such as hunting and spiritual practice. In *Life, History*, he writes how he “loved the woods, and the chase” and observes that he was “out early and late in quest of the favors of the Mon-e-doos (spirits)” (8).³⁹⁸ The bond he shares with the natural world is tied to cultural spirituality, and is made clear throughout the breadth of his writing and eventual conversion to Methodism. Copway’s father, who was a medicine man, instructed this practice of religion early in his life, influencing Copway’s adoption of spiritualism into his later religious belief (11). Despite this, both of Copway’s parents converted in 1827, and he found himself drawn into the white world until, in 1830, he complied with his mother’s dying wish and became a Christian. It was at this moment that he took the name George Copway, reflecting the effect that colonialism and religion had on his life (Konkle 191).³⁹⁹

Copway blends a narrative that focuses on religious conversion with elements of survivance from his youthful dream visions. In *Life, History* Copway states that he understands his life like “the mariner on the wide ocean, without a compass, in the dark night...” and that he watches “the heavens for the north star, which his eye having discovered, he makes his way amidst surging seas... till he arrives safely anchored at port” (12). Copway’s reference to the natural world here and later suggests a tie between it and an active presence of Native American identity, noting the stormy conditions but an ultimate destination to which he can ascribe hope to. Fascinatingly, it is a metaphor for Copway which finds similarity to Wister and Grey’s own visions of paradisiacal bubbles in the West, destinations that their own Cowboys strive toward. As Vizenor states in “Aesthetics in Survivance”, the relationship to the natural world is “not a mere romance of nature” but that “Survivance is character by natural reason, not monotheistic creation stories and dominance of nature” (11). Here, Copway suggests just that, and contrary to a mistaken belief in domination over nature, his Native American heritage retains a respect for it.

³⁹⁸ Copway was born in 1818 into the Crane clan of Rice Lake Ojibwe on the western shores of Lake Ontario, Canada.

³⁹⁹ Konkle, Maureen. *Writing Indian Nations*.

His conversion to Christianity was followed later with his own education at the Methodist Mission School at Rice Lake, Ontario. Copway supported the missionaries around Lake Superior Ojibwe between the years of 1834 to 1836. Following Copway's graduation from a labor school in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1839, Copway journeyed along the northern Atlantic coastal states, meeting various intellectuals and whites before traveling back to Rice Lake.⁴⁰⁰ It was here that he met and married Elizabeth Howell, a white woman.⁴⁰¹ Following his return, Copway's activism in writing blossomed, and he began his autobiography.

In Copway's autobiography, a notable criticism of Christianity bleeds through. His style exhibits a sense of irony which anticipates the later Native American Renaissance, pervading his criticism of the dominant, white socio-cultural colonizer:

O white man! why did you not tell us before, that there was a better heaven than that of the Indian's? Did not the blessed Saviour command, "Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?" Reader, almost by the door of your churches, my forefathers perished for the lack of the bread of life, while you have reached out your arms, an extended your means for the relief of those *in distant lands*! O what a thought! Thousands have already perished, and thousands more will yet perish, unless converted to God! The thought of *perishing*! how *insufferable*! O, how *intolerable*! (63-64, my emphasis)

His criticism for the disregard for Native Americans as lesser than those peoples abroad is both a critique of the socio-cultural positioning Native Americans have been pushed into, as well as the dehumanizing way Christianity has treated them. In addition to that, Copway's disdain for the idea of Native Americans vanishing, or rather perishing, is 'intolerable' because it goes against all modes of survivance in which he believes. Copway's writing is counter to the notion of a Native American absence and instead seeks to maintain an active presence on both the personal and socio-cultural level.

⁴⁰⁰ The school that Copway attended was the Ebenezer Manual Labor School.

⁴⁰¹ According to Donald Smith, Copway relied greatly on his wife, Howell—who was in her own right an accomplished writer—for editorial help on all of his projects. Though there is no evidence that she wrote for *Copway's American Indian* in the form of articles attributed to her specifically, Smith suggests she may have recommended the literary passages cited in some of Copway's works. See Smith, "Kahgegagahbowh," pg. 30 n.25. I will refer to this version of Copway's autobiography, which is the first American edition, published in 1847. In addition to the 1850 version mentioned earlier, there is a British edition, *Recollections of a Forest Life* (London: 1850). Smith, Donald. "Kahgegagahbowh: Canada's First Literary Celebrity in the United States." pp. 23-60.

In 1845, Copway would go eastward to the United States and begin a career as a lecturer and writer on ‘Indian affairs’.⁴⁰² To this end, during the late 1840’s and early 1850’s, Copway also managed a heavy public speaking schedule and founded *Copway’s American Indian*.⁴⁰³ During this time his first autobiography was published, *Life, History*, and herein Copway began his career of engaging with the dominant socio-cultural colonizer he was confronted with on a daily basis. With *Life, History*, Copway employs spiritualism, an active sense of presence and relational identity to the natural world, as well as the use of metaphor, to reinforce his belief in the sovereignty and future of Native Americans. Copway’s use of metaphor is a strong indicator to Vizenor of the presence of survivance in a text, stating that “Metaphors create a sense of presence by imagination and natural reason, the very character and practice of survivance” (13).⁴⁰⁴ In the following, Copway writes about not only what has been lost and the threat to his people, but also of the eternalness of the Ojibwe:

I remember the tall trees, and the dark woods – the swamp just by, where the little wren sang so melodiously after the going down of the sun in the west – the current of the broad river Trent – the skipping of the fish, and the noise of the rapids a little above... When I last visited it, nothing but fur poles stuck in the ground, and they were leaning on account of decay. Is this dear spot, made green by the tears of memory, any less enticing and hallowed than the palaces where princes are born? I would much more glory in this birth-place, with the broad canopy of heaven above me, and the giant arms of the forest trees for my shelter, than to be born in palaces of marble, studded with pillars of gold! Nature will be nature still, while palaces shall decay and fall in ruins. Yes, Niagara will be Niagara a

⁴⁰² In the years 1847-1851 following this, Copway published all of his major works: the autobiography, *Life, History* (1847), an account of the oral history of the Ojibwe, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (1850), the expanded version of his autobiography, *The Life, Letters, and Speeches of Kah-ge-gah-Bowh, or G. Copway, a chief of the Ojibwa Nation* (1850), a British edition of his autobiography, a memoir of his traveling experiences called *Running Sketches of Men and Places, in England, France, Germany, Belgium, and Scotland* (1850), an account of his European travels, and his Congressional proposal for an Indian State, *Organization of a New Indian Territory, East of the Missouri River* (1850).

⁴⁰³ In her work on Copway’s autobiography, “Survivance and Fluidity George Copway’s *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-gahah-bowh*,” Cathy Rex observes that the author’s public speaking career along the eastern seaboard allowed him to become “intimately familiar with such famous figures as the ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, historian Francis Parkman, and writers James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whom Copway purportedly inspired to write *The Song of Hiawatha*, a romanticized poem about the Lake Superior Ojibwe. (2) Rex, Cathy. *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. pp. 1-33. It is difficult to judge how influential his meeting these people had been on his own writing, Cooper in particular, whose own pre-Cowboy character shares many idealistic values with his own, though again from the perspective of the white colonizer.

⁴⁰⁴ Vizenor, Gerald. “Aesthetics of Survivance”.

thousand years hence! the [sic] rainbow, a wreath over her brow, shall continue as long as the sun, and the flowing of the river! While the work of art, however impregnable, shall in atoms fall. (17-18)

Copway associates the hallowed nature of both Native American presence with the natural world, stating that even in its damaged state there remains a persistent quality which triumphs over the monuments of white, heteronormative Euro American history and culture. “Nature will be nature still... while the work or art... shall in atoms fall” reinforces this idea, and is a firm rejection of the dominant white, heteronormative attempts to fulfill the ‘vanishing Indian’ construction.

Copway’s own attempts at unifying Native Americans against the threat of destruction is seen later in his attempts to unite the Native Tribes of the Midwest. Though he was not an orator at this particular meeting, Copway writes fervently about the efforts taken to ensure a prosperous future filled with hope for Native Americans, particularly against the forced removal of Native Americans further westward along a shifting, multifaced frontier. Copway writes that the spokesman for the tribes states:

One purpose for which you have been called together, is to devise some plan by which we can live together, and become a happy people, so that our dying fires may not go out [our nation may not become extinct], but may be kindled in one place, which will prove a blessing to our children. (189-191)

In addition to the survivance which is directly discussed here by Native Americans, there is support for Copway’s ‘Kahgega’. Copway endorses the proposed unification of Native American tribes together under a single, sovereign state situated westward, in equal positioning to white, heteronormative socio-cultural America lying in the East. In hoping to lead them to such a paradise, Copway finds shared goals with both Lassiter and the Virginian.

Finally, in *Life, History*, we see Copway’s firm belief in the future of his people and their hope. Copway writes that “If I did not think that there were some who are alive to the interests of my people, and often shed a tear for them; if I did not think that I could discover a gleam of light and hope in the future, ‘I should of all men be most miserable’” (200). This statement confirms his belief in the survivance of Native American people and their existence as a people in the future. As I will now discuss with his later endeavor, *Copway’s American Indian*, Copway continues to

write about not only the future of Native Americans, but also injects a strong critique against the dominant colonizing forces of white heteronormative American for their poor treatment.

5.3.2 Copway's *American Indian* and 'Kahgega': The Proposal for an 'Indian State'

As Donald Smith writes, the first publication of *Copway's American Indian* was at New York in July of 1851, abruptly ending in October of the same year because of too few paying subscribers (43).⁴⁰⁵ The potential for an area of America to be reserved for Native Americans as their own was a core concern for *Copway's American Indian*, as it was to be the means by which Copway promoted the concept of 'Kahgega', a paradise that for Copway which, as I have stated, was comparable to the isolated western paradises of both *The Virginian* and *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Bernd Peyer states that, "when Copway had attempted to propose the idea to Congress in 1850, his ideas then received little to no attention" (254).⁴⁰⁶ Continuing with his attempts at reaching white socio-cultural America, Copway writes in the first issue (July 10, 1851) that the intention of the journal would be to "educate the public about Native Americans", adding that "his work is trying to respond to the inquisitiveness of the Anglo Saxon about Native Americans" (1:1).⁴⁰⁷ He alludes to a site of conflict upon a socio-cultural frontier when he notes that those questions have been "put to us in every part of the country", and that the journal will hopefully satisfy the questions of "our pale-face friends" (1).⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Smith, Donald. "Kahgegahbowh: Canada's First Literary Celebrity in the United States."

⁴⁰⁶ Peyer, Bernd. *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America (Native Americans of the Northeast)*.

⁴⁰⁷ Copway's connections to white authors and ethnographers who proposed their own public ideas about Native Americans suggests that Copway participated in what Pierre Bourdieu describes as a "field of cultural production," a textual site of contest in which ideas about Native Americans and the spaces that they inhabited were constructed. Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*.

⁴⁰⁸ While there are a variety of potential reasons for why Copway would provide information about Native Americans in his journal, the idea that it was to educate potential "pale-face" supporters about the need for Native American sovereignty in the form of 'Kahgega' is perhaps the most obvious. To this end, Copway published in his first issue the "Constitution of the American Christian Association, for Protective Justice to North American Indians" (2). In it, Copway argues that the Association would support the "furtherance of Education and Interest among the Indians" (2). Unlike the *Cherokee Constitution*, which asserted the sovereign rights in their homelands, the 'American Christian Association Constitution' called for the necessary monetary foundation to create a "permanent settlement or settlements large enough to collect them in body or bodies" the "remnant Indian tribes now scattered in the frontiers" (2). These tribes would then be brought together "into a territory or territories, to be set apart for that purpose exclusively for such Indians, and as soon as a state government can be formed in such territory, to secure its admission into the Union, upon such provision as the general government of these United States may direct, or in perfect equality with other States" (2). Given that *Copway's American Indian* was largely a promotional device for 'Kahgega', the journal nevertheless concisely articulates the need for Native Americans to be gathered together in unity in one place and suggested methods for doing so.

Copway's American Indian indicated the author's ambitions as a Native American representative, advocate, and writer just as his attempts to sway Congress represent this.⁴⁰⁹ The publication of his journal is also reflective of his activity in 19th Century print culture. As an example, in the August 16, 1851 issue, Copway published an anonymous newspaper clip.⁴¹⁰ Copway titled the piece "Notices of the Press," highlighting the construction of the 'noble savage' by the dominant white socio-cultural critics of Native American writing:

What startling thoughts this sheet brings up in the mind! It seems but a few years ago that our State was peopled with wild and uncivilized Indians, whose untutored minds were trained only on the battle-field or in the chase, and whose pens were the murderous dagger!(3)

Of note here is the unknown author's discussion of the formerly 'savage' state of the Native Americans, suggesting not only an advancing line of white, heteronormative socio-culture but also the existence of a frontier upon which this happens. The anonymous author states that *Copway's American Indian's* role lies in "preserving" the history of Native people: "Now, one of that race sends to their ancient hunting grounds—but to a different people—a Journal containing their history as a nation that is almost extinct!" (3).⁴¹¹ The writer focuses on the idea of the 'vanishing Indian' imagery, and finishes his ravings alluding to the Native American's 'debt' to industry:

⁴⁰⁹ For more information on Copway's interest in appealing to white readers, see Littlefield, Daniel F. Jr., Parins, James W. *American Indian and Alaska Native Newspapers and Periodicals, 1826-1924*. Beyond attempting to subvert the dominant, white heteronormative socio-cultural hegemon using his own tools, Copway's appeals to white readers are important for understanding the *Copway's American Indian's* history. For this purpose, Copway asked for assistance from the ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who proposed some topics to be addressed (113). In a letter to Copway, Schoolcraft proposed that the journal should contain topics such as the "history, tribal organization and government, religion, manners and customs, intellectual capacities and character of the race, present conditions and future, prospects, as well as a 'General History of the American Tribes'" (113). The *Copway's American Indian* addressed these topics after a fashion, although the content of the paper was rather irregular, and some columns did not appear weekly. The reasons for this range from the financial lacking Copway had in terms of subscribers, to his own activities as a public speaker and missionary. Nevertheless, it cannot be understated the influence of his work.

⁴¹⁰ The newspaper was unidentified, possibly by Copway's hand or some editor later on, so as to avoid any potential legal or physical threats.

⁴¹¹ As suggested by the reviewer's account of the size and subscription of the journal, which he measured to be approximately four pages and to cost over three dollars an issue, it was an ambitious project. *Copway's American Indian* was a four page, six-column weekly that was divided into several sections, each of which treated a different topic related to Indians ("Copway's" Littlefield, Parins pg. 113).

Kah-ge-ga-gah-bowh can contemplate the fact that the modern machinery of the ‘pale face’ bears his newspaper crashing over the graves of his departed fathers! The paper should receive hearty support from the white man, we wish it the most abundant success. (3)

The irony in Copway reprinting this is that the technology Copway is intended to ‘contemplate’ is the printing press, the means by which Copway has engaged in Native American survivance and criticism against the colonizing efforts of dominant white America. It was in this way that Copway could disseminate the histories of his ‘vanishing race’ by employing the tools of Euro-American colonizers against them.

In the August 2, 1851 issue, Copway makes the claim that his publications is both “a paper for the Indian Wigwam” and the “the white man’s parlor” (2). In referring to the domestic spheres of multiple groups, Copway makes clear his intention for who the journal’s readership would be, and thus the people influenced in his activism. Similarly, Copway is suggesting an equivalency in the domestic spheres of for all readers of the journal regardless of race. Comparing Copway’s work to the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which sought a Cherokee public space through rational critical debates about sovereignty, Copway’s journal sought to develop a claim to sovereignty via a construction of Ojibwe spirituality and his own discursive work toward survivance.⁴¹² This space that Copway envisioned was to be known as ‘Kahega’, and was intended to unite the Native American tribes as Ojibwe.

The concept of ‘Kahega’ is one that follows “abstract space”, lacking specifics in location and size and operating on a construct of a frontier line between Native Americans and white, heteronormative America. Ultimately, ‘Kahega’ is a product of a response to the westward expansion of the dominant, white colonizing society’s conquest of Native American people and space, objectifying both. In writing on industrial space and production, Henri Lefebvre states that

⁴¹² The readers of *Copway’s American Indians* were sadly not many. Due to financial issues and a lack of support from white readers, the journal was forced to end its publication following less than a year from its initial release. Interestingly, when Copway suggests that *Copway’s American Indian* was to be a newspaper for the “Wigwam,” there are no available subscription records for the journal, so it is difficult to know whether it circulated among Native America readers or not. It’s rare use of Native American language may have been a cause for few readers there, as only a few promised pieces in the Algonquian language appeared. Sadly, there was not much in the journal to suggest that Copway was focused on gaining a Native American readership. While it remains true that his intentions laid in subversion of dominant white, heteronormative socio-culture for the purpose of pushing for sovereignty, this lack of focus in that direction is a criticism for his direction. To this point, many of the readers for the journal were apparently the many white authors with whom Copway had formed acquaintances, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, William Gilmore Simms and Washington Irving, whose letters appeared in the first issue of the journal (Donald Smith, “Letters” 1).

“abstract space” erases “distinctions” which can be understood as coming from cultural and historical perspectives (49).⁴¹³ Lefebvre notes that it is a “dominant form of space” embodied in the “centres of wealth and power” which “endeavor[s] to mould the spaces [they] dominate” (49). For Copway, the erasure of the distinctions between tribes would be a means for them to come together against the colonizing forces of white socio-cultural America, simultaneously operating against the ‘abstracting’ efforts of the colonizers to remove Native Americans.

These power structures can be found conceptually in the official government documents of Euro-Americans, as well any and all texts that attempt to define Native American space (or territory) and in turn attempts to construct a mode of characterization and representation for Native Americans and other marginalized peoples.⁴¹⁴ This includes the means by which Native Americans support themselves, the language and cultural practices they have available to them, and their rights therein. Often, these constructs were limiting for expression, with “abstract space” and its limitations on self-representation conceived of as an “empty” space. In turn, these spaces would be filled by what Gerald Vizenor calls the ‘indian’ who is a “simulation” of tribal identity, “marked by an absence of the indigenous tribal narratives that ground tribal experience” (15).⁴¹⁵ By banishing ‘Indians’ to an abstract place, their erasure from the frontier of white America was understood as a goal, dehumanizing their presence and identity to a static representation of near-non-existence.

In many ways, Copway’s ‘Kahgega’ is the counterpoint and reversal to this construction, denoting survivance of Native American identity and culture by employing the same approach of abstract space for empowering Native American identity. In much the same way that the Virginian worked to establish white culture in the West, so too does Copway seek to establish a Native American community. Copway’s wish to gather Native Americans together via *Copway’s American Indian* is a “locus of utterance,” wherein Copway “redistributes cultural space” by claiming that both he and the journal are commanding sources concerning Native American language, culture, and history (68).⁴¹⁶ In addition to this and the survivance Copway engages with, *Copway’s American Indian* also presents elements of resistance and resiliency in Native American

⁴¹³ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*.

⁴¹⁴ A notorious example here is the clear and present “Indian Removal Act” of 1830, signed into law by President Andrew Jackson. See Footnote 389.

⁴¹⁵ Vizenor, Gerald. *Fugitive Poses*.

⁴¹⁶ Certeau, Michel de. *Heterologies: Discourses on the Other*.

culture to their removal both physically and culturally. Copway questions the white, heteronormative socio-cultural treatment of Native Americans, directing the readership of *Copway's American Indian* to a Native American perspective on the colonization of North America. In this way, Copway operates as a form of Native American Cowboy via his intent to resist the normative socio-cultural demands of the hegemonic colonizer, criticizing their violent practices. At the same time, Copway is rallying both whites and Native Americans together toward the cause of racial egalitarianism and a reconciliation of values on the frontier.

While there is much to look at throughout *Copway's American Indian*, an editorial piece from August 2, 1851 epitomizes not only Copway's push for 'Kahgega', his survivance writing, and resistance to dominant white culture, but also in the nuanced criticism of colonial processes. Titled "Can Such Things Be" by "J.N.", the piece examines the colonizing process in America from the perspective of an Asian observer writing on the socio-cultural situation and treatment of America's Native Americans. In it, 'J.N.' focuses on an unidentified piece of writing by Edward Everett (2).⁴¹⁷ The possibility that J.N may not be George Copway does exist, though it is just as likely that Copway was using a pseudonym for this exercise. According to Anne Marie Peterson, "While J.N may not be George Copway, the editorialist speaks for Native concerns in ways which give Native Americans a voice, albeit through the distancing device of a "foreign" observer" (52).⁴¹⁸ Regardless, the editorialist, whoever they may be, speaks for Native American concerns in ways which give them a voice, even if it is set apart vis-à-vis the 'foreign' observer.

By presenting Native American issues from the lens of a non-Native, particularly concerning criticism for the colonizing efforts of the dominant white colonial America, we see Copway's capacity for nuance such as can be found in Copway's larger body of writing. Looking at "Can Such Things Be", the reader is detached from Copway's perspective and instead presented with the same ideas but given from outside of America, adding volume to the outcries against colonizing efforts. Through the process of presenting and publishing "Can Such Things Be,"

⁴¹⁷ "Letters". Everett opposed Andrew Jackson's Cherokee removal policies, and because of this Copway had requested he contribute to *Copway's American Indian*. Everett never did contribute a written piece to Copway's journal, but he did ask to be "put in the subscription hat for two copies" (1). Everett, along with Governor of Massachusetts George Briggs and Thomas Ewing, Secretary of the Home Department, had written a letter of introduction to Copway's Organization of a New Indian Territory, and thus Copway's turning to them for additional support in this venture. ("Letters"). Interestingly this, their support suggests that politicians at the time supported Copway's proposal, at least in part.

⁴¹⁸ Peterson, Anne Marie. *The rhetorics of sovereignty: representing Indian territory in nineteenth-century newspapers and journals*.

Copway can criticize while reaffirming this argument as a public speaker in the newspaper and in his daily life.⁴¹⁹

Through J.N., Copway as the editor is positing that Native Americans would be justified in a reversal of applying abstract space to Native Americans and removing them as westward progression dominates Native Americans. This would be the removal of whites, and that Native Americans could “take possession of” the American continent. Interestingly enough, J.N. suggests that this be done along an inverted frontier line, with whites being pushed “into the Pacific,” such as the promise of Manifest Destiny suggested with the removal of Native Americans westward (1). This connotes, as I have mentioned earlier, the alternate perspective of the frontier with Native Americans writing against a cultural force along this dividing line. In so far as the piece allows Copway to be critical of whites, J.N.’s voice is what Cheryl Walker calls “subjugated discourse,” a repositioning of Native Americans into an authoritative voice relative to their white counterparts. Walker writes that this is a form of discourse which is “inevitably vertical, but the placement of entities on the vertical axis is unstable, sometimes presenting Euro-Americans as the superior group and sometimes presenting Indians as deserving the higher position” (17).⁴²⁰

Here, the distancing of the Chinese speaker allows for a criticism of white, heteronormative socio-cultural America, ultimately unifying the “Red/Yellow men” of Asia, and the “Red men” of North America, just as African Americans shared a similar positioning with that of Native Americans. Copway’s publishing of “Can Such Things Be?” chastises the appropriation of Native American lands, criticizes colonial efforts against Native Americans, and suggests a sense of irony in the situation of whites and Native Americans with an inversion of the frontier line.

Even if Copway is not directly stating it as direct criticism, the subjugated mode of addressing unequal power structures of colonialism suggest the role of the journal in articulating a critical voice, and it coincides with much of Copway’s writing found elsewhere, such as in *Life, History*. Copway’s critical voice is vital as Copway’s journal and the concept of ‘Kahgega’ were potential counterarguments to federal removal policies for Native Americans, seeking a unified nation of Native Americans operating in harmony against colonizing efforts.⁴²¹ As such, his writing exemplified Gerald Vizenor’s construction of survivance, resistance, and resiliency while

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Walker, Cheryl. *Indian Nation: Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms*.

⁴²¹ *The rhetorics of sovereignty*.

criticizing dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural hegemony in America, predating the Native American Renaissance and the Revisionist Western with his belief in Native American identity and their future. In this way, Copway embodied the values of the Cowboy before the Cowboy was named as such, contextualizing his desires through the lens of Native Americans operating on a cultural frontier.

5.3.3 William Whipple Warren: Removal Policies and the Question of Origins

Born on May 27, 1825 in La Pointe on Lake Superior, William Whipple Warren was mixed-race between white and Native American. Theresa Schenck writes that, being both the descendent of a Mayflower passenger and the great grandson of Waub-ij-e-jauk, the Chief of the Crane clan of the Chequamegon region, his background was both diverse and historically notable (1).⁴²² Warren's experience growing up involved strong ties to both the Ojibwe tribe to whom he was associated and with a white trading outpost where Ojibwe was also the primary language spoken (7). Like Copway, Warren left home at a young age for schooling, going with his grandfather to New York before returning to Lake Superior in 1841. From here Warren began a series of careers involving Native American representation and communication. These ranged from serving as an interpreter for treaties, acting as the first historian of the Ojibwe people, collecting Native American stories for publication to white readers, and as an advocate for Native American sovereignty and survivance before dying at the young age of 28 from tuberculosis.

In 1842 Warren received his first experience as a cultural broker between whites and Native Americans working as an interpreter. During the signing of the Treaty of 1842 at La Pointe,⁴²³ Warren was asked to serve as the interpreter between the U.S. government and the Ojibwe community.⁴²⁴ This was in part because Alfred Bunson, who was at this time recently tasked as a subagent operating in La Pointe, had missed the treaty negotiations. Bunson spent approximately three weeks in the Warren home, where William had the unfavorable task of serving as his official interpreter for any tribes with complaints concerning the treaty. The most prominent was that the treaty excluded miscegenated Native Americans and that it ultimately encouraged removal.⁴²⁵

⁴²² Theresa Schenck, *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters, and Times of an Ojibwe Leader*.

⁴²³ By this treaty, the Ojibwe ceded extensive tracts of land that are now parts of the states of Wisconsin and Michigan, specifically the latter's Upper Peninsula.

⁴²⁴ This notably included Native Americans with mixed bloods, of which Warren was one, as was Aposs.

⁴²⁵ Schenck. *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters, and Times of an Ojibwe Leader*. pp. 23-4.

Here William would spend the next six years serving as the voice of Native Americans and whites, negotiating mixed-race relations and gaining insight into their unique situation while attempting to improve the situation of Native Americans upon this cultural frontier.

It was around this time that in the newly formed United States that print capitalism was gaining influence, with writers such as Copway and Apress making use of it to subvert dominant, white colonial America so as to provide resistance to Native American removal and support for survivance. Against these texts that were consumed by both the public and policy makers, popular writing focused on questions which concerned the origins of Native Americans. These theories range from tying them to the 'ten lost tribes' of Israel, to Native Americans being the product of another creation myth by the Judeo-Christian God, to Native Americans even being the surviving racial and cultural group following the extinction of another group of earlier Native Americans.⁴²⁶

The dissemination and ease of access that people had to these theories directly influenced 19th century popular sentiments about Native Americans and the subordination of their people via the colonial policies regarding their future. Of note here is the push for a complete removal of Native Americans from white, heteronormative socio-cultural America, pushing the frontier westward while dispossessing Native Americans of their lands.⁴²⁷ As an act, it was vital for the colonization of North American and simultaneously intended the ruination of Native Americans as they were to be torn from their land and homes, removing them of their cultural heritage and spiritual connection to said land.⁴²⁸

Warren was not unaware of this fact, his experience in New York educating him in the persuasive potential for writing. It was during Warren's time as an interpreter that his interest in Ojibwe storytelling and stories began to grow, and he would collect them from elders of the tribes. However, unlike Copway and Apress, Warren's interest was not in fictional writing, but in the

⁴²⁶ See Richard E. Bennet's "'A Nation Now Extinct,'" *American Indian Origin Theories as of 1820: Samuel L. Mitchill, Martin Harris, and the New York Theory*". Bennet traces a history of varying theories on the origins of Native Americans as presumed by white colonials, covering approximately three hundred years of development. Of note is the predominant theory of the lost tribes of Israel. This theory justified Native American removal and forced religious conversion on the ground that the land belonged to Christians anyway, that Native Americans could not be the original owners, and that it was the white, Euro-American Christian duty to reeducate Native Americans concerning their 'religious heritage'. This theory, as Bennet notes, was in decline among most leading scientific observers in the early nineteenth century but remained popular in the discourse of the time.

⁴²⁷ See Susan A. Miller, "Native Historians Write Back: The Indigenous Paradigm in American Indian Historiography." pp. 25–45; Chavis, Ben, and Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson. "Peoplehood: A Model for the Extension of Sovereignty in American Indian Studies." pp. 7–24.

⁴²⁸ Miller, Susan A. "Native America Writes Back: The Origin of the Indigenous Paradigm in Historiography." pp. 9–28, 12.

accumulation and preservation of Native American stories. Warren's interest suggested the survivance of Native Americans following what he understood from his experience as an interpreter to be an inevitable push westward against Native Americans.

Warren began work with Henry Rice following his service as an interpreter for the Treaty of 1847. Rice, both a fur trader with much influence and a vital representative of the United States in various treaty negotiations, brought Warren to Crow Wing on the Mississippi.⁴²⁹ It was at this time that the United States Senate authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to allow Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to supervise ethnological surveys of Native Americans.⁴³⁰ Schoolcraft prepared various census forms, and it was these forms that Rice gave to Warren, who was working with the Mississippi and Pillager bands of Ojibwe. As Schenck states, it was "this work which shifted Warren from storyteller to tribal historian and, one could argue, auto-anthropologist" (65).

Like Copway, Warren was interested in bringing together stories and information about Native Americans and bringing them forward to the public. Schenck notes that Warren went so far as to write Schoolcraft for training in this process, also offering his own services (166–67). Henry Rice took Warren's responses concerning ethnology and submitted them, which were then later published by first the journal *Minnesota Pioneer* and again cited by Copway in *Traditional History* (54).⁴³¹ Warren's efforts as an advocate for Native American survivance and resistance took him, as a voice for Native Americans between them and whites, to be elected in 1851 to the Minnesota State Legislature. While not embodying a direct correlation to the ideals of the Cowboy, Warren did fight for Native American rights and representation as a politician, defining him as an active figure for survivance upon a cultural frontier between Native Americans and whites.⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Henry Mower Rice was a powerful fur trader and a prominent politician in the state of Minnesota. His notable relation here to the signing of the Fond du Lac treaty of 1847 was that it ceded an extensive acreage of land from Native Americans to the United States government. See "Rice, Henry Mower, (1816 – 1894)," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*.

⁴³⁰ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was an American geographer, geologist, and ethnologist, noted for his early studies of Native American cultures. In 1846 Schoolcraft was commissioned by Congress for a major study, known as *Indian Tribes of the United States*, which was published in six volumes from 1851 to 1857.

⁴³¹ George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation*.

⁴³² Warren's entrance in 1851 to the legislature followed events at Sandy Creek, whereupon a removal effort of the Ojibwe from Wisconsin to Minnesota resulted in a number of deaths due to starvation. Warren loudly criticized this incident, regardless of his own presence in government leading him to believe that the process of removal might be inevitable. While it may seem hypocritical or contradictory, Warren involvement in the assistance of the United States government in Native American removal was believed to have been done so as to ensure that the government would go forward in ways which might avoid such tragedy while simultaneously pushing for a unified sovereign nation.

As a sitting member of the Minnesota State Legislature, Warren found support for his employment of the print industry to subvert the colonizing dehumanization and removal—both physically and culturally—of Native Americans with fellow legislator and editor of the *Minnesota Democrat*, Col. D. A. Robertson. Robertson encouraged Warren to publish his history of the Ojibwe people, making public their resiliency toward removal and the survivance their narratives exemplified, encouraging their liberty and freedom. Warren then began to publish his writing and research in the *Minnesota Democrat* throughout 1851, of which these texts would form the foundation of his book, *History of the Ojibway People*, which Warren finished in 1852.

Although Warren was not able to find a publisher for his book before his death, it remains a persistent work which details a history of Native Americans in a way which subverts standard modes of production for historiography in white, heteronormative socio-cultural Europe and America. Warren's book resists arguments which question the origins of Native Americans as a people with culture and their right to a sovereign future. Instead, Warren presents Native Americans as resilient and adaptive upon the cultural frontier of North America, having a long-standing relationship with the land that they live upon. In turn, they function as figures who anticipate the connotative values of the Cowboy operating upon this frontier, including their self-reliance, sovereignty, freedom and resistance to normative colonial processes. For these reasons and the recognition of the book's significance, the book was published in 1885 by the Minnesota Historical Society.

While it was true that Warren ultimately had to be involved in the process of removal as a government agent, his personal stances on the issue come across as resistant to the process. As Schenck writes, "In a letter to his cousin on July 6, 1851, that he marked as private, Warren confesses he had felt 'somewhat dubious' about taking an official position in the government's newest removal plans" (127). As it was with Copway's own plans for 'Kahgega', Warren chose his position so as to promote a vision for the future of Native Americans with his plan for Ojibwe unity.⁴³³ Like in 'Kahgega', Warren saw a movement away from the frontier line of white, heteronormative socio-cultural America westward, wherein all Ojibwe and mixed bloods and Native Americans could come together as a single entity.

⁴³³ Unlike Copway, however, there does not seem to be a discernable name for the Native American community Warren would like to establish.

In this regard, Warren felt that it would give Native Americans the potential to engage with the United States on equal footing. Warren specifically encourages resistance to the dominant white colonizers in a letter to his cousin where he cries that ‘united action’ must be the Ojibwe motto.⁴³⁴ Unlike Copway, Warren’s stance concerning removal brought together a practical acceptance of the inevitable with a strong desire for resistance and survivance by developing ways in which Native Americans could retain sovereignty. This thought process encouraged Warren to serve as a connection between the Ojibwe and white, heteronormative socio-cultural America, subverting dominant discourse with his mixed-race identity. In the process of doing so, Warren also navigated multiple cultures and spheres along a frontier line while seeking to establish positive representations of Native American identity, embodying the Native American Cowboy just as Baptiste is the African American Cowboy. Warren’s writing and work supported the anti-removal sentiments of Native Americans and their desire to look forward to the future, yet demanded that he then be involved with the very government that would expand over Native American lands.

Contrary to Copway, Warren avoids using familiar terms for the Ojibwe in his writing and does not seek to encourage a complete transformation to Ojibwe for those tribes seeking to join in a sovereign state, employing an element of scholarly distance in his work. As Schenck reminds us, Warren “always identified as a mixed blood and never as an Ojibway in his lifetime” (viii). However, like Copway, Warren sought to establish himself as an authority figure on Native American representation. Warren suggests that his mixed-blood and bilingual heritage made him uniquely positioned to be an authority on Native American history. To this end, he criticized other scholars and politicians on Native American identity, adding to his critiques on the colonization of Native lands. Konkle states, “Warren was willing to challenge European American scholars’ accounts of the Ojibwe on this basis” (199).⁴³⁵

As I have stated, Warren occupied multiple, even conflicting spheres in his life, and he negotiated these public and private identities and feelings toward the interests of Native Americans and ideas of resilience and survivance. These concepts are clarified and expressed in his writing on the history of his people, as well as in the discourse Warren became involved in concerning the origins of Native Americans, as seen in his 1885 *History of the Ojibway People*. Herein Warren expresses that he has always maintained a commitment to both the Ojibwe and to Native

⁴³⁴ Schenck. *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters, and Times of an Ojibwe Leader*. pp. 127-8.

⁴³⁵ Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*.

Americans, and that in his work he prioritized Native American resilience, survivance, and sovereignty.⁴³⁶

5.3.4 William Whipple Warren and *History of the Ojibway People*

Toward the encouragement of Native American survivance and in presenting a history of Native Americans, as well as a collection of their stories, Warren confronts the dominant position of Native American origins in *History of the Ojibway People*. Here, Warren demonstrates an intellectual familiarity with the dominant discourse on the topic as well as an awareness for the political implications of popular origin theories circulating in white, heteronormative socio-cultural print. Elias Boudinot's support for the 'Ten tribes theory', written in his 1816 book *A Star in the West*,⁴³⁷ asserts that in response to Native American mistreatment and removal, they should be recognized for a supposed Jewish relationship, justifying their forced conversion to Christianity. Boudinot writes:

[Native Americans] are to be converted to the faith of Christ, and instructed in their glorious prerogatives, and prepared and assisted to return to their own land and their ancient city, even the city of Zion.... Let not our unbelief, or other irreligious conduct, with a want of a lively, active faith in our Almighty Redeemer, become a stumbling block to those outcasts of Israel.... Who knows but God has raised up these United States in these latter days, for the very purpose of accomplishing his will in bringing his beloved people to their own land. (297)

Boudinot's assertion attempts to justify not only their forced conversion to Christianity and deracination through Boarding Schools, but also the removal of Native Americans from the expanding nation. In addition, the suggestion that Native Americans originate elsewhere suggests that they are but temporary owners to America, and that their displacement can be justified by the 'rightful' transition of ownership to Euro-American Christians.

⁴³⁶ Warren indeed embodied what Jace Weaver sets out in *That the People Might Live* (1999) as critical for being a Native American author, that is, his concept of "communitism." To briefly elaborate on Weaver's ideas, "communitism" is a combination of community and activism, of which Weaver felt was most definitive for Native American writing and of which Warren was exemplary in supporting.

⁴³⁷ Boudinot, Elias. *A Star in the West; or, A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to Their Beloved City, Jerusalem*.

Warren's interests lie in presenting the Native American, indigenous view of "their own first existence". Warren challenges the assumption that Native Americans were preconfigured into Euro-American grand narratives tied to Christianity, and he does so in a way that is digestible to white audiences. Warren does this through an association of Native American identity with values that predate the Cowboy's connotative symbolism, set upon a frontier established from a Native American perspective operating against white colonial culture. By doing so, Warren asserts a unique identity, culture, and history to Native Americans that is not reliant on a white colonizing perspective. It is in this way that Warren's writing allows him to undermine dominant theories which attempt to justify removal of Native Americans while establishing resilience literature and survivance of Native American culture in popular American discourse.

Specifically, Warren addresses the question of this origin with his third chapter, "Origin of the Ojibways." Warren notes to his readers that the question of Native American origins remains a mystery that still puzzles the "learned civilized world," making use of sarcasm and cynicism to refer to the dominant white, heteronormative audiences reading his work. In a subtle manner of subversion and repositioning for Native American identity, Warren excludes the subject of his work, the Ojibwe, for this question does not exist for them. He continues by enlightening his readers with information on the "beliefs of the Ojibways respecting their origin." Warren writes that he is unable to provide exact information concerning their "own first existence" other than to define the name they have given to their race, "An-ish-in-aub-ag" (56).⁴³⁸ Warren definition of this name is "Spontaneous People," a strong statement which contests Schoolcraft's definition of the Ojibwe as "Common People" (56).

Warren's argument states in no uncertain terms that the Ojibwe's understanding of their own origins is quite clear. To Warren, they are a 'spontaneous' people, in this sense spontaneous meaning indigenous, natural, and, counter to concerns over their legitimacy in holding land, that they were always present in America. Warren's claim then is that Native Americans, specifically the Ojibwe, have a natural claim to an independent homeland, in turn defining their sovereignty. In a turnaround that may be done to make his work more acceptable to white audiences, Warren disregards the view of the Ojibwe, writing that they "have their beliefs and oral traditions, but so obscure and unnatural, that nothing approximating certainty can be drawn from them" (55). Whether Warren sincerely believes this or not, his argument is all the same affirmation that Native

⁴³⁸ Warren, William W. *History of the Ojibway People*.

Americans were always present, and that their spontaneity of peoplehood can be directed not only to their sovereignty, but also to their future survivance and resilience.

To this end, Warren gives his “humble opinion” concerning the origins of the “Algics or Algonquin”, specifically the “Ojibway tribe.” He confronts one of the dominant theories of Native American origins of the day as presented by the dominant white, heteronormative socio-culture, blending Native American identity with Christian narratives. Warren claims that they “may be descended from a portion of the lost tribes of Israel, whom they also resemble in many important particulars” (62).

Warren states that this knowledge “has grown on me imperceptibly from my youth, ever since I could first read the Bible, and compare with it, the lodge stories and legends of my Indian grandfathers” (62). Warren draws on comparisons between the Hebrews and the Ojibwe: “a belief in one unseen Great Spirit, never using God’s name in vain, a shared belief in the power of dreams, similar rites, fasts, and sacrifices, and menstrual taboos” (63–65). Extended further, Warren compares the similarities between Ojibwe stories and Bible stories (66–75). However, Warren’s writing on the matter is not a simple acceptance of the sort of claims Boudinot made, but rather an argument made concerning Native Americans’ rightful ownership to land, shaming the colonizing process of socio-cultural white America.

The subversion of the dominant, white socio-cultural American belief system as a means for injecting Native American identity is a resistance to the construct of superiority over ‘savage Indians’. Additionally, this adaptation of Native American beliefs follows Vizenor’s construction of Native American survivance, pushing for the persistent and active presence of Native Americans in popular discourse. Warren’s actions represent survivability and awareness, as seen in his construction of both a historical overview of the Ojibwe and their rightful future upon their native lands.⁴³⁹ Warren shifts between showing Ojibwe points of view and the dominant white American argument, thus confronting the dominant discourse while simultaneously representing a Native American perspective.

Warren’s response to questions of Native American origins rejects racist myth used to support removal, subverting beliefs of the dominant, white heteronormative socio-culture of the

⁴³⁹ Warren provides us with copious information about what the Ojibwe think about their origin as well as their belief system. Warren’s discussion, while he claims to be proving that the Native Americans were the lost tribes of Israel, tying them inevitably to Christian belief while also detailing the Ojibwe’s version of their origin, is a version that directly contradicts the lost tribe theory.

colonizers in America. As a response, Warren presents a history of Native Americans and a continued and active presence in 19th Century North America whose ideals and values finds parallels to the figure of the later Cowboy. He continues to challenge the logic of Native American removal by framing his discussion of Native origins through the Ojibwe understanding of ‘first existence.’ While not as prolific as Copway, nor as vocal, Warren represents an activism operating on a political and scholarly level, pushing for Native American resistance, solidarity, sovereignty, and survivance upon a frontier focused on Native American perspective.

5.3.5 William Apess and *A Son of the Forest*

Born in 1798 in Cohrain in northwestern Massachusetts, William Apess was an ordained Methodist minister, writer, and activist of mixed-race descent of both African American and Native American ancestry. Apess was also a political and religious leader in Massachusetts. Of the three authors looked at in this chapter, William Apess is perhaps one of the most fiery, outspoken, and direct Native American activists, embodying almost directly the qualities of the Cowboy as seen in later Western authors.⁴⁴⁰ Patricia Bizzell states that he was “perhaps the most successful activist on behalf of Native American rights in the antebellum United States”.⁴⁴¹ Having written five books between 1829 and 1836, historians know little concerning Apess’ personal life beyond what he states in *A Son of the Forest* (1829, rev. ed., 1831), his autobiography, or in the short account of his life included in his 1833 *The Experiences*.

Yet Apess was heavily involved in the support of Native American communities and rights in a region of the United States thought to have long purged Native Americans from its space, demonstrating a clear and vocal survivance. Barry O’ Connell writes:

His importance, then and now, in these events is due to his militancy and his brilliant expropriation of the Anglo-American language of constitutionalism, rights, and citizenship. His choice of the word “nullification,” in clear echo of South Carolina’s

⁴⁴⁰ William Apess—a stranger to the Mashpee—went in to Cape Cod not unlike the Cowboy of the Classic Western and, in recognizing the corruption of institutionalized overseers who were taking advantage of marginalized and disadvantaged Native Americans, organized a revolt so as to purge corrupting elements from Native American society. His experience in Cape Cod is, broadly speaking, a tale taken straight from the Classic Western genre’s repertoire, moved to the Eastern seaboard but taking place precisely when most Westerns were set.

⁴⁴¹ Bizzell, Patricia. “(Native) American Jeremiad: The ‘Mixedblood’ Rhetoric of William Apess.”

assertion of states' rights against the federal government only a year earlier, during the Nullification Crisis, indicates his wit and his political astuteness. (xxxviii)⁴⁴²

As an advocate for the rights of Native Americans against the abuse of Indian Agents, governmental advocacy for removal, and the subordination of his people, Apess served as a leading figure for Native American resistance, survivance, and sovereignty. Like the Cowboy, Apess championed the marginalized and subordinated and confronted corrupting elements in society, expressing desires for the reinvention of Native American identity toward one of improvement, self-reliance, freedom and liberty. Apess embodied all of the Cowboy's exceptional qualities, and he applied himself upon this frontier for the survivance and resilience of Native Americans.

Writers like William Apess often spoke against the oppression they experienced firsthand and what they knew of through observation and discussions with others. As with Copway and Warren, Apess made use of the rhetoric that the dominant white socio-cultural colonizers employed so as to persuade his audiences, mostly white, that Native Americans had a rightful place in the body politic. Apess' use of rhetoric in arguing for the rights of Native Americans and African Americans during the early part of the 19th Century predates the Revisionist Western and the Native American Renaissance significantly. At the same time, Apess—from his writing to his actions—precisely meshes with the sentiments and efforts of both the Revisionist Western and the Native American Renaissance while simultaneously predating the Western for its representation of a Cowboy-like figure championing those in need upon the frontier.

O'Connell confirms this sentiment, "This voice, and the consciousness of the nature of Euro-American racism it expresses, could have been heard in the 1960s or 1970s, possibly in the 1990s" (xiii).⁴⁴³ Of interest here among Apess' works is his autobiographical text, *A Son of the Forest: The Experience of William Apess, a Native of the Forest, Written by Himself* (1829, 1831).⁴⁴⁴ *A Son of the Forest* is fascinating because it is one of the earliest, if not the earliest,

⁴⁴² O'Connell, Barry. "Introduction," *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, A Pequot*.

⁴⁴³ Interestingly enough, the only person that O'Connell can see similarities in writing during the antebellum period of the United States would be Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life* (London: By the author, 1789), writing that his work "could have come to Apess' attention since it was reprinted in the United States in 1829. Like Apess, Equiano uses direct address to interrogate the presumed white reader and to tax him or her with the hypocrisy of professing Christianity while cooperating in the subjugation of a people, and in its justification, because of the color of their skin" (xiii).

⁴⁴⁴ Referred to as *A Son of the Forest* from this point onward. Other texts by Apess include his narrative from *The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe* (1833); *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts Relative to the Marshpee Tribe; or, The Pretended Riot Explained* (1835); and his *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston* (1836).

autobiographies written and published by a Native American. To this end, Apess' influences and models upon which to base his writing were almost non-existent. Thus, Apess was left to articulate issues of identity and to develop modes of representation that would later become characteristic of works written by Native Americans, operating directly opposed to constructions of 'Indians'.

Every single one of Apess' works directly spoke to the white audiences who had imagined him as a 'fading Indian', on the edge of vanishing into the West. Just as Copway made use of the figure of J.N., Apess incorporated a similar psychology that George Campbell employs in the 1776 *Philosophy of Rhetoric* to place his readership into his own position as that of the oppressed Native American,⁴⁴⁵ relying on both sympathy and an inversion of the socio-cultural positioning both parties take to express their experiences. In *A Son of the Forest*, Apess adds to the origin debates swirling around early to mid-19th Century America with the history of white arrival to North America:

As the story of King Philip is perhaps generally known, and consequently the history of the Pequot tribe, over whom he reigned, it will suffice to say that he was overcome by treachery, and the goodly heritage occupied by this once happy, powerful, yet peaceful people was possessed in the process of time by their avowed enemies, the whites, who had been welcomed to their land in that spirit of kindness so peculiar to the red men of the woods. But the violation of their inherent rights, by those to whom they had extended the hand of friendship, was not the only act of injustice which this oppressed and afflicted nation was called to suffer at the hands of their white neighbors. (4)

The articulation of not only a Native American history steeped in openness and acceptance is sharpened by Apess' criticism of the colonization and violation of Native American rights.

Unlike Copway and Warren, Apess blends elements of subversion with overt directness in his criticism, fearless of reprimand or retaliation against himself for his views. Again, in *A Son of the Forest*, Apess writes against the colonization of Native American lands:

These invaders of a country (in the peaceable possession of a free and happy people, entirely independent, as the deer of the forests) made war upon them with all the advantage of fire arms and the military knowledge of Europe, in the most barbarous manner not observing any rules of nations, or the principles of modern warfare, much less the benign

⁴⁴⁵ Many African American authors have made use of this in a similar fashion to the same end as Copway and Apess.

injunctions of the Gospel. They soon taught the Indians by their fatal examples, to retaliate with the most inveterate malice and diabolical cruelty. The civilized Europeans, though flying from the persecution of the old world, did not hesitate to deny their professed religion of peace and good will to men, by murdering, men, women and children, selling captives as slaves, cutting off the heads, and quartering the bodies of those who were killed, nobly fighting for their liberty and their country, in self-defense, and setting them up in various places, in ignoble triumph at their success. (58)

Apess' criticism of the colonial violence and history of the colonizing socio-cultural Euro-Americans—at the time of his writing the United States—emphasizes the hypocrisy in their actions, the savagery by which it was taken, and the devastation that it had on Native Americans. As such, Apess casts Native Americans as the paragons of civilization, and (though he does not use the terminology) their experience against Euro-Americans as a frontier experience. But even here there are direct correlations to Vizenor's application of survivance and resistance. By tying Native American identity to that of the natural world via metaphors (the deer of the forests), Apess highlights Native American independence, a right to sovereignty, and through his vocalizations of these criticisms, the active presence of Native American survivance. Apess thus embodies both in his actions and his writings the values of the later Cowboy, depicting himself as a Native American figure who serves as a positive representation of resiliency and survivance.

5.3.6 William Apess and *The Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts*

As another example of Apess' writing and persistent activities of resistance and survivance and as a vocal critic of white colonization against Native Americans, Apess' 1835 *The Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts, Relative to the Marshpee Tribe: or, The Pretended Riot Explained*.⁴⁴⁶ Apess incorporates elements of cynicism (the Pretended Riot) and strong criticism via a subversion of the dominant culture's written laws, subjecting them to scrutiny which reveals their obvious racist treatment of Native Americans. Here, Apess criticizes the forced education and religious indoctrination of Native Americans by whites:

⁴⁴⁶ From here on out simply referred to as *Indian Nullification*. Additionally, the 'Marshpee' tribe is also referred to as 'Mashpee', a more contemporary name for the tribe. As O'Connell also uses the name 'Mashpee', so will I in the dissertation. However, some documents that I do cite refer to them as 'Marshpee', and so, to make clear, both 'Marshpee' and 'Mashpee' refer to the same tribe.

The [Education] Bill passed the House and also the Senate, without any objection, and it is now a law of the State of Massachusetts, that the Marshpee [sic] Indians shall have one hundred dollars every year, paid out of the School fund, to help them educate their children... I trust the Indians will best show their gratitude by the pains they will take to send their children to good schools, and by their raising as much more money as they can, to get good instructors [sic]; and give the rising generation all the advantages which the children of the whites enjoy in schooling. This will be one of the best means to raise them to an equality, and *teach them to put away from their mouths forever, the enemy which the white man, when he wanted to cheat and subdue our race, first got them to put therein, to steal away their brains, well knowing that their lands would follow.* (Web, my emphasis)⁴⁴⁷

Apess demonstrates his cynicism toward a false gratitude over the forced education of the Mashpee tribe. Apess also directly criticizes the colonizing efforts of whites to remove Native Americans of both their culture and their land so that they can experience an ‘equality’ at the cost of everything they hold dear. Apess shows an acumen for political appropriation of Native American land and an insight for the colonizing process he and his fellow Native Americans are experiencing upon this frontier, and the need to be resilient to its efforts.

Andy Doolen argues that Apess’ *Indian Nullification* bears parallels to William Lloyd Garrison’s own abolitionist writing, *Thoughts on African Colonization* (1832).⁴⁴⁸ Garrison’s discussion of and stance against colonization bears influence on Apess’ own arguments, and in particular, Garrison’s formulation of this argument in the second half of his book provides African Americans their own voice against these efforts. As Doolen suggests, Apess saw the appeal in this for its providing the subaltern an opportunity to convey their own arguments, as Apess begins the *Indian Nullification* with an introductory essay by himself. He then proceeds to move into “a wide selection of documents such as the resolutions, minutes, and letters of the Mashpee Indians, his own commentary that contextualizes the fragments and makes them cohere, and the few newspaper editorials sympathetic to the cause” (165).

Advocates drew similarities between the treatment of the Mashpee tribe, a focus of Apess’ writing following the Mashpee riot—which he was accused of inciting—and slavery.⁴⁴⁹ Apess

⁴⁴⁷ Apess, Williams. *Indian Nullification*.

⁴⁴⁸ Doolen, Andy. *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism*.

⁴⁴⁹ ‘The Mashpee Riot’ (also known as ‘The Mashpee Revolt of 1833’) is seen as Apess’ gathering together of Native Americans to protest their unfair treatment under racist and oppressive clergymen installed in their communities, as

demonstrates not only his capacity to be an advocate for Native American resistance and survivance in writing, but also in activism. As O'Connell writes of Apess' entry into the Mashpee tribe and introduction to its three racist overseers, one of whom was a clergyman, he clearly states Apess' ability to motivate and encourage other Native Americans:

Whatever his knowledge, he became immediately involved in the longstanding discontent and struggle within Mashpee against the overseers imposed on the community by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The three men had the power, which they seem to have exercised freely, to lease out grazing and haying lands to neighboring whites, to grant woodlot rights, to bind out in employment any man, woman, or child in the community, and to control who entered and who could stay in the township. This last power they commonly employed to keep out free blacks so as to prevent any further racial mixing.
(xxxv)

Ties between African American and Native American experience reveal themselves to have shared experiences, and Apess was aware of this. Apess' role in the Mashpee incident reflects his eventual position within the broader Native American community akin to a Native American Cowboy, serving as a source of inspiration for resistance to the hegemonic practices of colonial white America. In addition to this, his active presence reminds North Americans, particularly along the northeast, that Native Americans are not absent, that they have not vanished, and that they operate against a cultural frontier which would rather they be entirely removed. Apess continued to serve as just such an influence, developing frameworks with his autobiography that other writers, like Copway, would employ in their own subversive works.

An unnamed writing on September 11, 1833 in an article for the *Boston Advocate* states that Apess has visited the Mashpee tribe and they expressed "upon the subject of what they really believe to be, their slavery to the overseers" (Doolen 201). Apess, reaffirming this point, published an article from the January 25, 1834 edition of the *Liberator* on the Mashpee incident, wherein it is clarified that the Mashpee could be lifted up if "those fetters and restrictions which now bind them to the dust" were removed (221). The article goes on to state that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts "has loaded [the tribe] with chains so effectually to prevent their running" (222). Again, as an example of the shared experience between African Americans and Native Americans

well as their mistreatment by United States government officials. As stated earlier, the episode has all the earmarks of a Classic Western narrative contextualized toward Native American experience.

upon the frontier, the *Liberator* makes a defense of the Mashpee tribe by drawing parallels between the Mashpee and slaves with both being in chains preventing them from fleeing their oppressors.

Apess would go on to cite *Daily Advocate*, though beforehand he would question why newspaper editors “speak ill” of General Jackson and his policies towards southern Native Americans while at the same time remaining willfully ignorant of the ill treatment the Mashpee tribe received from Governor Lincoln who “manifested as bitter and tyrannical a spirit as Old Hickory ever could” (238-39). The extract Apess quotes from draws the same comparisons as the *Liberator*: “These Indians fought and bled side by side, with our fathers, in the struggle for liberty; but the whites were no sooner free themselves, then they enslaved the poor Indians” (239). The *Daily Advocate* binds African Americans and Native Americans together further through their shared marginalization, writing that “the Marshpee Indians were enslaved by the laws of Massachusetts.” Apess adds that the “[w]hite overseers had power to tear their children from them and bind them out where they pleased,” whereupon the services of any adult Mashpee member could be sold out “for three years at a time” with the ability to renew the lease to “make him a slave for life” (240).

The liberal portion of the white colonizing population in New England saw links between the Mashpee tribe, Native Americans, and slaves, and were made aware of an active presence of Native Americans, where before their presence was almost unheard of. The fascinating thing about these comments and quotes that Apess shows us in *Indian Nullification*, however, is that he does not present them directly in his own voice, though he does add his own fiery rhetoric to the mix throughout his writing. Apess instead uses a similar approach as Copway to illustrate an outsider’s perspective on a situation he finds to be despicable.

Comparisons developed by white liberal newspaper editors confirmed assertions Apess saw between the linkage of African American slavery and the Native American experience of removal and colonization. Doolen makes the point that, by “Inverting Garrison’s use of African American voices [in *Thoughts on African Colonization*], Apess excerpts editorial opinion from white newspapers that explicitly call for racial justice” (168). Just as Copway and Warren had done, so too does Apess subvert the means and the voice of the dominant culture found in newspapers to serve as evidence to persuade his readers.

In the end, Apess’ work serves as much of the foundation for many of the Native American authors to follow who would similarly write and produce art that would criticize the colonization

of Native Americans and Native lands. In this way, Apess was a pioneer of sorts upon a frontier wherein his active resilience and representation of independence, freedom, and liberty defined him as a Native American Cowboy approximately 70 years before Wister finished *The Virginian*. At the same time, Apess' writing reflects an active presence in a region of the United States that was believed to have removed or have made the Native American 'vanish' successfully, contesting the dominant white, heteronormative socio-cultural narrative of westward expansion. Apess demonstrates many of the same elements of resistance and survivance that both Copway and Warren do, pushing for Native American sovereignty and anticipating the later Native American Renaissance and Revisionist Western movements with his criticism of colonizing forces, advocacy of Native American presence and rights, and outlook toward the future of all Native Americans as a Native American Cowboy upon a 19th Century frontier.

5.4.0 The Native American 'Cowboy' Upon the Cultural Frontier

Copway, Warren, and Apess represent in their writing and their activism resiliency and Native American survivance against the colonizing forces of 19th Century America, predating both the Revisionist Western and the Native American Renaissance by approximately a century and a half. They operated as Cowboy figures in their works and actions, inspiring Native Americans upon a cultural frontier whereupon confrontation with white colonial America inverted the dominant culture's conception of 'civilization and savagery'. Their work as authors, politicians, interpreters, missionaries and critics demonstrates a stark contrast to the construction of the 'Indian' by dominant white culture. Theories of Native American origins and historical claim to America were directly intertwined with the work and desires of these three authors. Though Barry O'Connell speaks only of Apess' works in the introduction to *On Our Own Grounds*, his statement here is invariably tied to that of Copway and Warren as well, and so befits the summation of these Native American authors writing upon such a frontier:

They have not simply survived in terms of some reductive genetic genealogy; they have also re-formed and maintained distinctive cultural practices and repertoires. To do so, Native Americans have had to be endlessly inventive, patient, resistant to despair, and to have a faith and a vision to furnish the strength to continue. William Apess's [sic] writing, his presence in our history and our literature, does much to demonstrate these capacities. (lxxvi-lxxvii)

It is upon these capacities that I have written about and explored in this chapter, tying them to the Classic Western through a redefinition of the frontier as a cultural meeting point and our traditional understanding of the Cowboy figure. The placement of their works alongside canonical Classic Westerns diversifies the genre further, temporally shifting the boundaries of its conception and how the Western is to be understood.

I have argued here that the definition of the frontier becomes malleable: when the inclusion of both Native American authors and African American authors is considered—casting aside the arbitrary periodization that Turner and others have eschewed, alongside with racial assumptions of who authored Classic Western literature and, above all else, the race and gender of the Cowboy lead—our understanding of the Classic Western expands to incorporate figures who embody resiliency, strength, self-reliance but also community, independence, freedom, liberty, and survivance.

It is my argument that the works of authors such as George Copway, William Apess, and William Whipple Warren constitute examples of Native American authors who anticipated and predate later Revisionist Western literature and the Native American Renaissance. To exclude their work is to limit definitions of the Classic Western and render their own writing to the periphery. These three authors, along with others who were marginalized by hegemonic processes operating in America, wrote texts which demonstrate a clear survivance of Native American identity and culture while providing early opposition to the normative processes of whites engaging in violent conquest westward.

The Revisionist Western and Native American Renaissance took these ideas and focused them through the lens of Vizenor's concept of survivance, with later films such as Sherman Alexie's *Smoke Signals* representing humanized depictions of Native Americans that encourage Native American identity, culture, and spiritualism through a progressive survivance. I have argued here, however, that the survivance found in the Native American Renaissance, which criticizes earlier representations of Native Americans as stock stereotypes to be brutalized or vanished, can be found in the earlier 19th Century works and actions of Native American authors George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess, and that their works can be contextualized as Westerns featuring Cowboy figures based upon a Native American identity and perspective.

Their ties to the Western lie also in the direction each looked to for the formation of a sovereign nation, be it Copway's 'Kahgega' or Warren's unspecified unification of Native Americans to stand on equal footing with the United States, or even in Apess' call toward open criticism and revolt against the binds of both African Americans and Native Americans. Their works clearly voice survivance and a vision of their future as hopeful and optimistic. Ultimately, Copway's conception of the Ojibwe as their own "first existence" is represented and shared by Warren's "Spontaneous People," and when coupled with Apess criticism of Native American treatment by settlers, they together serve as counternarratives to the dominant culture's construction of Native Americans upon the frontier through their utilization of shared values later found in Wister, Grey, and even Schaefer's Cowboy figure.

Conclusion and Outlook

Overview of Dissertation and Work

When Leslie Fiedler wrote in 1968 in *The Return of the Vanishing American* that “the heart of the Western is not the confrontation with the alien landscape... but the encounter with the Indian, that utter stranger for whom our new World is an Old Home” (21), he was defining the Western in such a way that emphasized the role of the Native American as the ‘other’ from whom the Cowboy could define everything that he was not. However, Fiedler is also pointing out, perhaps unaware, that along with the Cowboy, this cultural confrontation is at the heart of the Classic Western and what stands at the forefront of the genre. Assuming this to be the case, I agree with Fiedler’s assessment, and expand on his idea to include the works of both African American and Native American authors who tell this story, utilizing a perspective which embodies the positive ideals and values of the Cowboy contextualized for their respective needs.

This use of a Cowboy figure in the writing of African American and Native American authors shatters divisions between the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western, also expanding the incorporation of authors writing within the Western well beyond the origins credited to Wister’s *The Virginian*. Elements of revisionism in canonical Classic Westerns and the inclusions of often neglected and understudied Western texts from and about the Western and the American frontier demand a reevaluation of how the genre is contextualized in American literary history and culture, and who the founding contributors to this genre were.

Elliot Anderson, editor of the literary magazine *TriQuarterly*, asked William Kittredge and Steven Krauzer in 1978 to compile a list of authors who were representative of then-contemporary Western stories. In doing so, Kittredge and Krauzer stated that in 1978, at the height of the Revisionist Western genre, “Just as the old south was gone, the old west is gone. Free of the need to write either out of the mythology or against it, the writers of the new west, responding to the variety and quickness of life in their territory, are experiencing a period of enormous vitality” (12).⁴⁵⁰ As I have shown, and in following Fiedler’s definition of the Western, the variety of life in the Western, Classic or Revisionist, was always inherent to the genre, and well before Wister’s 1902 novel *The Virginian*. Russell Martin, taking upon Kittredge and Krauzer’s analysis, states in

⁴⁵⁰ Taken from the introduction to William Kittredge’s *The Best of the West: New Stories from the Wide Side of the Missouri*.

a 1981 article “Writers of the Purple Sage” that the most distinctive quality of the Revisionist Western was its diversity, attempting to “represent all of the region’s ethnic and social variety”.⁴⁵¹

Yet this diversity finds itself in the works of such African American authors as Oscar Micheaux and Pauline Hopkins, as well as the Native American authors George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess, who all place their texts on a frontier akin to Fiedler’s definition with Cowboys relevant to their respective socio-cultural interests. Robert Rebein, writing in his 2001 book *Hicks, Tribes, and Dirty Realists*, states that Martin’s “three main points about the writing of the New West” is “its diversity, its complicated relationship with myth, and its focus on the land” (110).⁴⁵² As I have demonstrated over the course of this dissertation, the diversity, relationship with myth, and the importance of land have all been relevant issues to the Classic Western from the 19th to the early 20th Century.

Contrary to what Rebein and Martin suggest, along with Kittredge and Krauzer, division between the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western does not lie in any major shifts within the production of Western literature, but rather in how these texts have been classified and how research has tended to ignore those authors and works which do not fit the easy periodization and classification of division between the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western. What defines the Revisionist Western has always been a core part of the Classic Western, and in fact, the Classic Western has always, to varying degrees, espoused diversity, resistance to normative grand narratives concerning identity and socio-cultural expectations, and the confrontation of one culture with another to create a frontier setting upon which figures espousing the values and ideals of the Cowboy would be made out as icons of positive representation.

The research that I have presented in this dissertation culminates into a clear rejection of arbitrary divisions made between the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western. The Classic Western was by no means a narrow or limiting genre, and I have shown that the canonical works of authors within the Classic Western contain elements of resistance, criticism, and support for non-normative figures that anticipate the later Revisionist Western. In addition, I have also shown that the works of African American men and women have been excluded from consideration of

⁴⁵¹ Russell, Martin. “Writers of the Purple Sage,” *Writers of the Purple Sage: An Anthology of Recent Western Writing*.

⁴⁵² Although Rebein is referring to ‘the New West’, it is the same as the Revisionist Western but given a different name. Throughout his chapter “New West, or, the Borderlands”, Rebein seems to define this ‘New West’ in entirely the same manner that the Revisionist Western has been understood. That is to say, there is nothing unique in his concept of the ‘New West’ that would differentiate it from how the Revisionist Western is defined.

the genre, and with their inclusion into the library of the Classic Western we see a diversification in the Western that is associated with the Revisionist Western. Through a reexamination of the frontier as a cultural site of confrontation and a shift in perspective, the work of 19th Century Native Americans operates in much the same fashion as the critical fiction of the later Native American Renaissance and the Western, which runs concurrent with the Revisionist Western. As activists, politicians, and authors, Copway, Warren, and Apess argued for the establishment of a unified Native American nation which incorporated the ethos of the Cowboy and Classic Western themes: freedom, independence, and a sovereignty which would guarantee them and their people a future in America.

I would be remiss to suggest that the proliferation of authors around the 1960's and 70's who criticized the expansion of the United States westward as conquest, or wrote from a position that was other than the white, heteronormative male, or were themselves marginalized figures, was not noteworthy. The contributions of men and women from a wide array of racial and socio-cultural backgrounds portraying alternative histories and critiques of white male hegemony within the Cowboy are rich in quality and depth and do much to add to the Western. However, as I have argued over the course of this study, the diversity in authors and the content of their work in what is considered the Classic Western and in turn the Cowboy clearly finds parallels in the writing and authorship of the later Revisionist Western. The qualities which have been claimed to set apart the Revisionist Western are traceable to the Classic Western and expand well into the 19th Century, both in the traditional canon of the genre and in literature that has been excluded from the Western entirely by attempts to simplify sometimes arbitrary divisions of the genre.

When the notion that the Classic Western was only created and used by white heteronormative males for the purpose of pushing conservative hegemonic agendas is revealed to be superficial, the depth of the field expands considerably. Narratives written by authors who employ the elements of the Western concerning individualism, American exceptionalism, freedom, the spirit of reinvention and self-reliance, and the dreaming of a future utopia they can create for those they see in need, expands the Western well beyond the confines of Owen Wister, Zane Grey, and Jack Schaefer. We begin to see African Americans and Native Americans make use of these qualities in their own writing, working on a similar frontier which, as Fiedler claims and I agree with, is core to the Western.

In Chapter One I defined the Classic Western and, following in Chapter Two, explored the figure of the Cowboy and his pivotal role in the definition of the Western. However, in examining the Revisionist Western I explored how the figure of the Cowboy was critiqued, displaying resistance to conservative normative values. Walter Van Tilburg Clark portrays the Cowboy as an ultimately flaccid character in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, incapable of preventing the worst in man from bubbling to the surface. His novel has all the hallmarks for a Revisionist Western despite predating the genre by approximately ten years. Even the figure of John Wayne, the most iconic representative of the Classic Western, becomes not the single face of the genre but a transitory part of it. His character in both *Red River* and *The Searchers* represents an older generation whose values clash with the newer, more progressive values of the younger generation. This includes but is not limited to criticisms over the use of violence, authority, and racism. Both the novel and the films can be seen as Revisionist, but are similarly located within the Classic Western, inhabiting an ambiguous place for scholars and laymen alike. In either case, as I have examined in Chapters One and Two, the Revisionist Western emphasized a direct critique of the hegemonic Cowboy figure in what was understood to be the distinct Classic Western, seeing the Cowboy as a figure that represented in many ways heteronormative conservative values and white masculinity.

In Chapter Three I challenged this assertion and demonstrated how the Cowboy in the Classic Western of the early 20th Century questioned the heteronormativity of the socio-cultural West, espousing non-normative values and opinions concerning masculinity, women's rights, and the role of violence. In my study, I established how Owen Wister's Virginian character subtly challenges the socio-cultural confines he is pushed into, emphasizing his oratory prowess and vocalization of his value in a work ethic over his use of violence. I also explore his emotional range concerning a masculinity seeking to be non-normative, and how he opposes Steve's death and the expectation that he carries Steve's execution out. I also explore the Virginian's appreciation for non-normative figures such as Em'ly and the unnamed Narrator, who often makes overt references to being attracted to the Virginian. His desires for an egalitarian socio-cultural West free of the burdens of manhood are reiterated time and again, and the paradise island represents his wish to remove himself from the expectations the West has of his masculinity.

In looking at Grey's work, I established how Lassiter directly challenges the hegemonic masculinity of the socio-cultural West in defying Elder Tull and the other Mormons. Throughout the analysis, I explored how Grey addresses the issue of women's rights in the early 1900's through

the character of Jane, and how Lassiter, Jane, Bess and Venters are all used to approach the issue of sexual freedom and the problematic expectation of virginity in female figures. This leads to my view on how the novel addresses sexuality and desire in non-normative relationships, with Lassiter and Venters being gentiles and Jane being Mormon. The study of sexuality and desire leads into my study of Schaefer's *Shane*, exploring the non-normative triangular relationship that Shane, Joe, and Marian all share in the domestic sphere of the novel. The novel disavows violence directly, with Shane following in the Virginian's appreciation of manual labor of gunfighting. Though Shane turns toward the use of violence by the novels end, he nevertheless encourages Bob to avoid it, leaving the future of the West as a site of progressive values instilled in Bob. These values encourage non-normativity to the construction of a violent masculine hegemony that Luke Fletcher represents.

All three of these works show clear evidence of ideas and self-awareness that resonate with the Revisionist Western, challenging any division between the idea of a Classic and Revisionist Western. Expanding my study to authors who were arbitrarily excluded, I discussed how African American authors are excluded from traditional readings of the canonical Classic Western genre. When we rightfully consider their works as a part of the Classic Western genre alongside authors such as Wister, Grey and Schaefer, then we see an expansion of the genre toward inclusion and alternative narrative trajectories concerning the Cowboy character, taking for example Baptiste's character in *The Homesteader*. The Cowboy becomes a multi-racial figure whose symbolic implications as a figure representing American Exceptionalism expands to involve African Americans as a means of establishing positive representations. Disavowing violence entirely, Baptiste becomes a positive representation of individualism, freedom, and restraint for African American men, challenging stereotypes of violent African American males. Micheaux subverts what is understood to be the Classic Western to expand the genre's breadth, showing the flexibility in the Western for inclusion and a clear and present element of revisionism that is core to the genre.

This subversion of the typically white male Cowboy figure sees African American men and women access the Cowboy icon for positive representation of African Americans, as I have shown with my reading of Pauline Hopkin's *Winona*. Hopkins directs readers toward successful disavowals of violence while criticizing systems of oppression in the United States, predating these elements of the Revisionist Western by approximately 70 years. Hopkins makes a powerful

statement concerning her belief in the future failing of Manifest Destiny as an equalizing force shaping American nationalism toward racial, gender, and class-based egalitarianism.

In *Winona*, the female African American Cowboy drastically redefines expectations of the Cowboy's definition, demonstrating the Cowboy to be a fluid and applicable construct to both men and women of any race. In the novel, Hopkins' Winona rejects the prospects of Manifest Destiny, the American West, and by extension, the future success of the United States based on her experiences with the subordination of Native Americans, African Americans, and women of all groups. Hopkins' redefinition of slavers as analogous to cattle rustlers and her use of cross-dressing to make aware gendered oppression infuse her Classic Western with a creative and critical redefinition of cultural confrontation and conflict upon the frontier that has been contextualized to represent a North / South confrontation relevant to African American socio-cultural history. Ultimately, Winona decides to leave the United States entirely to find her true freedom, fortune, and future in Great Britain because the West and the United States do not offer these ideals as attainable to African Americans. Finally, both pieces introduce us to the idea of mixed-race protagonists and relationships, challenging stereotypes of white female sexual victimhood and promoting instead a harmonious result of a socio-cultural and racially egalitarian society.

Finally, my chapter on Native American literature in the 19th Century explored how Native American authors anticipated the Native American Renaissance with their own use of cynicism, survivance, and activism for Native American rights and sovereignty. In doing so, George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess establish themselves through their writing as operating upon a frontier that has been redefined as seen through the perspective of Native Americans. I argued that these authors incorporated the values of individualism, self-reliance, freedom, resistance, actions which champion those in need, as well as a mobility common to the Western, to create Cowboy identities that pre-date Wister's Cowboy but share in most, if not all, of the same characteristics.

By examining the treatment of Native Americans over the course of canonical Classic Westerns, I demonstrated the stereotypes that authors during the Native American Renaissance operated against. However, as my study makes clear, Native American authors writing in the 19th Century were employing similar techniques and arguments in their own writing and activism, effectively anticipating and predating the Native American Renaissance by 170 years. In addition to this, when we reevaluate the frontier as a cultural construct, its malleability in definition expands

to include the work of Native American writers as figures operating and writing about a frontier experience. The figures of their works, often autobiographical, espouse the same rhetoric and values as the Cowboy, and serve as figures encouraging survivance and positive outlook on the future of Native Americans. Like Hopkins and Micheaux, these Native American Authors—George Copway, William Whipple Warren, and William Apess—write with the prospect of achieving individualism, freedom, and egalitarianism for themselves and marginalized groups.

Taken together, the works which range from the traditional canonical Classic Western to Westerns produced by African Americans, as well as the works of earlier Native American authors, complicates standard readings of popular canonical Western fiction in the United States of America. These texts diversify the Classic Western to incorporate elements of revisionism in ways which are refreshing, breathing new life into fields which have long held a limited and exclusionary view on the genre. My study has incorporated the inclusion of marginalized figures into the canonical works of Classic Westerns because their works contributed to the establishment of the genre and in the promotion of its ideals for all peoples. By complicating divisions between what makes the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western distinct from one another, I reveal not two separate genres, but a single Western genre that flows before and beyond the parameters which have long been artificially established for them.

To reiterate, I have provided an in-depth examination of the subversive narratives in the late 19th and early 20th Century Classic American Western and the elements which anticipate the later Revisionist Western genre an emphasis on literature. The study explores the Classic American Western's role in expressing contemporary conditions of non-normative issues and socio-cultural groups in canonical fiction. This focus ranges from defining the Classic and Revisionist Western genres whose narratives are informed by the normative elements of white, heterosexual working-class masculinity, to inclusive research which expands canonical reading to African American and Native American Western fiction. I have explored how the intersectional convergence of class, race, and gender was accomplished by these authors through appropriating the thematic and mytho-nationalist ethos of the Western in order to challenge subaltern positions.

It is a misconception to view the Classic Western genre as being conceived of as a literary and cultural canon that is defined by its imperialist undertones and normative values concerning socio-cultural America. This view sees the West as a region that was representative of a mythical landscape which provided in fiction only white, heteronormative males endless opportunity and

validation. To address this misconception, my research has demonstrated that in the most canonical of texts and films lie undercurrents of resistance to these normative processes. To balance this reexamination of canonical literature and film, the study situates these canonical works against the fiction of five African American and Native American authors writing within the Classic Western genre while challenging a simple and exclusionary definition.

This general perspective is given depth by close readings of both canonical and non-canonical Classic Westerns, supportive cultural, literary, and film studies, and the incorporation of a new theoretical approach that is supplemented by the cross examination of interdisciplinary research. The study has demonstrated how the practice of normative cultural scripts in literature intersects with subversive narratives to incorporate revisionist elements. The findings of this research suggest a reevaluation of how Academia defines canonical Classic Westerns and Revisionist Westerns. Unlike scholars of the Western who argue for a narrow definition of either the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western, as well as a clear demarcation between the two,⁴⁵³ this study argues that, through a rereading of canonical fiction and the incorporation of marginalized authors, the Western has always to varying degrees supported the resistant non-normative elements of socio-cultural America.

Outlook

Contrary to Jim Kitses' belief in the burial of the Classic Western, and the idea that Western literature and film have run their course for productive academic study, the research that I have provided presents a new way of approaching older texts and films. Rather than burying the Western, we should emphasize burying our preconceived notions of what makes the Classic Western what it is. By moving beyond the arbitrary definitions of the Western that have been ascribed to it based on periodization or the race and gender of authors who contribute to the genre, we see an expansion and proliferation of works that can be associated to the Western, adding new context and perspective into a field of study that continues to develop. My expansion of the Western to include, rightfully I argue, the works of African Americans and Native Americans opens the field of Western studies to both scholars of race and ethnicity in American studies, providing new avenues upon which to explore the often-neglected works of marginalized authors in a genre that carries within it thematic connotations of the nation's progression westward.

⁴⁵³ See commentary from Jim Kitses and Matthew Carter in Chapter One.

The potential of revealing more excluded and forgotten texts and authors whose work can further broaden and diversify how we understand artistic contributions to American literature during the 19th and 20th Century is an exciting prospect. Research into the Revisionist Western and the Classic Western, as well as into African American literature and Native American literature, can now expand into one another to provide new contemporary analysis and perspectives. Rather than placing Pauline Hopkins' *Winona* into a sub-section of the Classic Western known as 'the Black West', I place her alongside both Owen Wister and William Apess. Their works when placed together more accurately reflect the experience of cultural confrontation on the frontier and the development of figures encouraging individualism, freedom, self-reliance, and liberty for all as America developed and expanded, presenting not one perspective on that history, but multiple. When taken together, they represent a far more accurate vision and narrative of American Western literature. Thus, I believe my research will encourage others to expand on my ideas presented here, refine them, and continue to incorporate new perspectives and authors.

Elements that have been claimed to be uniquely found in the Revisionist Western are in fact common within the Classic Western, and so too are the diversity of authors who contribute to the genre. The authors that I have examined here demonstrate resistance, criticism, and non-normative leanings which predate the works of the later Revisionist Western and Native American Renaissance by approximately 70 and 170 years respectively, and in fact extend well into the early 19th Century. Narrow definitions of both the Classic Western and the Revisionist Western exclude these authors out of convenience, not wishing to complicate easy definitions. Yet these complications are vital to finding a more realistic understanding of how the Western was developed, and how marginalized groups employed the elements which portrayed positive representation and constructions of identity for their own resistance and subversive actions. If we do not recognize their contributions for what they are, then the Western will continue to be a misunderstood vision of national development whose concept of the American dream will be exclusionary and marred. As such, I believe my research has accomplished some rejuvenation of this belief, and encourages new readings into canonical works with the idea of recognizing progressive acts of resistance and socio-cultural diversity where it rightfully exists.

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⁴⁵⁴ A note of thanks to Dr. Johannes Fehrle for clarifying this particular citation's confusing publication date, and for pointing me in the direction of 'spacewesterns.com' to what seems to be the only source for an explanation on why there is no exact date for the book's publication. Due to some confusion concerning the actual publication date of the book, I have listed the two earliest agreed upon dates. According to an interview with John Cawelti, N.E. Lilly quotes Cawelti as stating that, during the publication: "It was all casual enough that we never put a date on the copyright page and later couldn't remember whether the book had come out in 1970 or 71."

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