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Carry On, Cowboy: roast beef Westerns

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Carry On, Cowboy: Roast Beef Westerns

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> For obvious reasons – lack of landscape, the pointlessness of competing with the Americans in a genre they invented, lack of British actors who looked good in the saddle – Britain's contribution to the Western has been on a par with Switzerland's contribution to naval warfare.[1]
>
> Paul Simpson

The chapter on "Westerns around the world" in Paul Simpson's survey book *The Rough Guide to Westerns* includes entries on a dozen countries or regions which have produced significant numbers of Westerns; yet Britain is the only country to attract this kind of mockery. Not surprisingly, Simpson is British, thus exemplifying the traditional national characteristics of self-deprecation and celebration of failure. The first point Simpson makes recalls one of the reasons François Truffaut gave to Alfred Hitchcock for what Truffaut notoriously saw as "a certain incompatibility between the terms 'cinema' and 'Britain' […] there are national characteristics – among them, the English countryside, the subdued way of life, the stolid routine – that are antidramatic in a sense. The weather itself is uncinematic".[2]

In his own reference book on the Western, Edward Buscombe makes a similar point when he discusses the way in which the genre has represented the English as an ethnic group:

> There's something about the English that is inherently un-Western; or at least the cinema makes them so [...] not being settlers, like the Irish or the Swedes in John Ford's films, they never get to be fully at home in the West.[3]

Although Irish, Scottish, and Welsh frontier communities have been the subject of Hollywood Westerns, English pioneers have not. Even the Mayflower pilgrims of *Plymouth Adventure* (1952) are played mostly by American actors. The relatively few English

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[1] Paul Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Westerns* (London: Rough Guides, 2006), p. 241.
[2] François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* Revised Edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 124.
[3] Edward Buscombe (ed.), *The BFI Companion to the Western* (London: André Deutsch/BFI Publishing, 1988), p. 117.

characters to have appeared in the genre are typically comical outsiders belonging to the archetypes of the "dude" ("anyone who comes west just for fun", as Buscombe described him)[4] or the "tenderfoot" or "greenhorn" (a newcomer or alien to the frontier West). Such figures, typically clad in inappropriate garb more suited to the urbane, urbanized East, may take the form of a prim butler (Charles Laughton in *Ruggles of Red Gap* [1935]), a florid travelling player (Alan Mowbray in both *My Darling Clementine* [1946] and *Wagon Master* [1950]), an eccentric aristocrat (Roland Young in *Ruggles of Red Gap*), a seedy clergyman (David Warner in *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* [1970]), or a self-pitying intellectual (John Hurt in *Heaven's Gate* [1980]). Villains are of course another matter. Unsympathetic English-accented figures are encountered in Westerns with pre-Revolutionary settings (George Sanders in *Allegheny Uprising* [1939]) and films concerned with range wars and despotic cattle barons (Donald Crisp in *The Man from Laramie* [1955]; Alan Rickman in the Australian-set *Quigley Down Under* [1990]). More gentlemanly British ranchers are represented by Crisp again in *Saddle the Wind* (1958) and by the paternalistic benefactor of Billy the Kid, usually named Henry Tunstall, played by various actors including Ian Hunter (*Billy the Kid* [1941]), Colin Keith-Johnston (*The Left Handed Gun* [1958]), and Patric Knowles (*Chisum* [1970]). *Chuka* (1967), a minor but interesting Western, which emphasizes character motivation and back-story over action, features both John Mills and Louis Hayward as US Cavalry officers commanding a back-of-beyond fort, with the former having been cashiered for cowardice from the British Army in the Sudan. The novelty casting of John Cleese as a non-comedic English sheriff in *Silverado* (1985) creates expectations of the dude while delivering instead a heavy. These characters are, however, exceptions, and none of them occupies the major principal role in the film in which he appears.

Despite the handicap of their accents (sometimes suitably modified), two English-born actors did forge substantial careers as Western heroes. Ray Milland and Stewart Granger played leads in six and seven Westerns respectively (although three of Granger's films were European-produced). Granger also starred as a British Colonel in the final season (1970–71) of the television series *The Virginian* (1962–1971), which was re-titled *The Men from Shiloh*. Tasmanian-born Errol Flynn starred in eight Westerns; but, while his Anglicized pronunciation never varies, none of his characters is identified clearly as English. One of those characters is George Armstrong Custer, in *They Died with Their Boots On* (1941), and it may have been the dandyish qualities of Custer that led to the casting in *Custer of the West*

[4] Ibid., p. 114.

(1967) of British actor Robert Shaw. Accent is the downfall of Terence Stamp in the title role of *Blue* (1968). While his character, the adopted son of a Mexican bandit, remains silent for the film's opening third, he exudes a mysterious, otherworldly quality, instantly dissipated when Stamp's first line of dialogue reveals a distracting tangle of artificial American burr and London East End Cockney. Only Irishman Richard Harris has made a virtue of his immigrant Otherness, notably in *Major Dundee* (1965), as the English lord turned Sioux warrior of *A Man Called Horse* (1970) and its sequels, and as "English Bob" in *Unforgiven* (1992). The foregoing, however, are all American-produced films; and it is British productions that I mainly want to discuss here.

It may at first glance appear surprising that few scholars have written about the British Western when the Continental European Western has become so fashionable. Although they had a long pre-history, European-produced Westerns first made a significant international impact in the mid-1960s, most notably with *Der Schatz im Silbersee* (AKA *The Treasure of Silver Lake*), a co-production between West Germany, Yugoslavia, and France, in 1962 and with *Per un pugno di dollari* (AKA *A Fistful of Dollars*), a co-production between Italy, Spain, and West Germany, in 1964. Generally dismissed by reviewers at the time, especially in Anglophone countries, European Westerns have since been subjected to critical and cultural analysis which has established them as a legitimate development of the Western genre. Such films belong as much to European cultural traditions as to the American ones to which they refer, sometimes imitatively, sometimes ironically.[5] Indeed, their very existence throws into relief those aspects of the Western which make it an exceptional, rather than an exemplary, genre: the particularity of its geographical and historical setting and its central thematic concern with the national identity of the United States.[6]

Yet, in spite of all the attention paid to the Italian and, to a lesser extent, to the German Western, little notice has been taken of the British variety, aside from a few passing references in genre histories. The only sustained discussion of British Westerns I have found is online, notably a transcript of a talk given by Luke McKernan at the British Film Institute's Museum of the Moving Image in 1999. McKernan's paper is suggestive of some of the

[5] Major studies of the European Western include: Tim Bergfelder, *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and International Co-Productions in the 1960s* (New York: Berghahn, 2004), pp. 172-206; Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Tassilo Schneider, 'Finding a New Heimat in the Wild West: Karl May and the German Western of the 1960s', in Edward Buscombe and Roberta E. Pearson (eds), *Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western* (London: BFI Publishing, 1998), pp. 141-59; Laurence Staig and Tony Williams, *Italian Western: the Opera of Violence* (London: Lorrimer, 1975).

[6] Steve Neale discusses the atypicality of the Western. See Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 133-42.

underlying reasons why British Westerns have not been discussed more widely. Although he claims that "the Western theme is an almost constant thread running through British film history", this observation stands at odds with his overriding point that "British Westerns are obviously a contradiction in terms. We don't have the West – we lost it in 1776, and no amount of pretending Australia or South Africa can act as substitutes will change the fact".[7] McKernan argues that there is something incongruous about the very idea of a British Western, which he suggests is not the case with the European Western, at least, not since its commercial success and later critical acceptance. McKernan cites Leslie Wood, a film historian writing in 1937, who drew attention to "the sense of absurdity that the British Western brought about" from its inception in the early silent era.[8] McKernan provides a summary of the genre's chronological development along with a loose typology: "straight attempts at Westerns, adaptations of the Western milieu to British Empire settings, and parodies".[9] I have adapted and built on these categories while adding considerably to the films he lists as examples.[10]

In the account that follows – which should be taken as a scouting of the territory, not an attempt at a definitive study – I concentrate on what I consider to be the British Western's three main phases of development in the sound era, each of which reveals distinct patterns and characteristics: (1) a disparate group of films made between the late 1930s and the mid-1960s, many of which are pseudo-Westerns set in various parts of the British Empire; (2) an intensive period of production between 1968 and 1973, with many "cosmopolitan" Westerns aimed at the international market, along with a few late stragglers in the late 1970s and 1980s; (3) a number of films that have been produced since the early 1990s, with a similarly multinational production base but a more eclectic approach to the genre. Parodies and comedies occur in all three phases and it is with these that I begin. Unlike "straight" dramatic films, parodies and comedies are able not only to acknowledge but to capitalize on what McKernan and others claim to be the basic incongruity of the British – or, more precisely, the

[7] Luke McKernan,'Cockney Cherokees on the sky-line', paper given at MoMI, London, 12 May 1999, pp. 1, 16; Luke McKernan, <http://www.lukemckernan.com/cherokees.pdf> [accessed 25 April 2012]. A version of this paper was previously published as 'Cherokee Cockney,' *Bianco e Nero*, no. 3, 1997. McKernan's filmography of silent British Westerns is available at Brit Movies, <http://www.britmovie.co.uk./forums/ask-film-question/86370-british-westerns-2.html> [accessed 25 April 2012].
[8] Ibid., p. 4.
[9] Ibid., pp. 1-2.
[10] McKernan concentrates particularly on films made in Britain during the silent period; there were some forty-five of these, dating from as early as 1901 and with a particular burst of activity between 1908 and 1913. Only six of the films are known to survive: *The Indian Chief and the Seidlitz Powder* (1901); *The Squatter's Daughter* (1906); *Fly Ann* (1907); *Fate* (1911); *The Scapegrace* (1913); *Little Brother of God* (1922). Although I have viewed some eighty films when researching this article, I have not seen any of the silents and interested readers are therefore referred to McKernan's illuminating discussion.

English – Western. Questions of cultural and aesthetic value raised by scholars in relation to British cinema often hinge on notions of national identity and cultural specificity. Comedic and parodic Westerns, along with imperial and colonial adventures, provide some scope for discussion along these lines, but it is the relative absence of traces of Britishness from the international and multinational productions that has contributed to their neglect by critics. There are, however, other reasons, which have more to do with the quality of the films themselves, and I conclude by considering the nature of the "badness" which is often (with some justice) imputed to British Westerns.

Comedies and Parodies

> If in fact westerns have been shot in France against the landscapes of the Camargue, one can only see in this an additional proof of the popularity and healthiness of a genre that can survive counterfeiting, pastiche, or even parody.[11]
>
> André Bazin

The Frozen Limits (1939), *Ramsbottom Rides Again* (1956), and *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* (1958) are Western comedies. *Carry on Cowboy* (1966) is a Western parody. The distinction lies in the manner in which Western elements are deployed in each type of film. The first three films introduce comedic elements (the English characters) into a Western setting which is itself played essentially straight. The fourth subjects the conventions of the Western to a burlesque treatment, much like the other genre spoofs in the *Carry On* series' "middle period".[12] In all four films the central joke is the contrast of manners between tenderfoot newcomers to a frontier community and the rough-hewn locals (including stereotyped Indians of the 'How!' variety). In *The Frozen Limits*, the Crazy Gang are a theatre troupe in gold-rush-era Alaska; in *Ramsbottom Rides Again* Arthur Askey plays a provincial publican who inherits property in Canada; in *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* Kenneth More stars as a shotgun salesman, and in *Carry on Cowboy* Jim Dale plays a sanitary engineer, both attempting to ply their trade in a Western township (respectively, Fractured Jaw and Stodge City) before

[11] André Bazin, 'The Western: or the American film *par excellence*', translated in *What Is Cinema? Volume II* (ed. Hugh Gray, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971 [1953]), p. 142.
[12] On the *Carry On* genre spoof cycle, see Nicholas J. Cull, 'Camping on the borders: history, identity and Britishness in the *Carry On* costume parodies, 1963-74', in Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (eds), *British Heritage Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 92-109.

becoming lawmen. Such situations are often described as "fish-out-of-water" tales but, in relation to the Western genre, they might more accurately be termed dude narratives.[13] *Carry on Cowboy* also belongs to a long tradition in British popular culture of Western parodies, including an episode of the BBC radio series *Beyond Our Ken* (1958–64) entitled "Tunbridge Wells Fargo"; Benny Hill's chart-topping 1971 song (and accompanying video) "Ernie (the Fastest Milkman in the West)"; a 1975 episode of the TV show *The Goodies* (1970–1981) entitled "Bunfight at the O.K. Tea Rooms"; a 1984 episode of *The Comic Strip Presents...* (1982–2011) called "A Fistful of Travellers' Cheques"; Alex Cox's punk Western *Straight to Hell* (1987); and Edgar Wright's semi-professional directorial debut *A Fistful of Fingers* (1995). In each of the last three examples, the object of parody is specifically the Italian Western, the form in which the genre is best known to contemporary audiences.

Little of the comedy in *The Frozen Limits* derives specifically from its Western setting, although the film's best joke (a reference to the recently-filmed operetta *Rose-Marie*) concerns the Mounties' slowness in riding to the rescue because they insist on singing about "always getting their man". *Ramsbottom Rides Again*, *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw*, and *Carry on Cowboy* hew more closely to the pattern established by *The Lamb* (1915), *Destry Rides Again* (1939), and *The Paleface* (1948), in which an apparent milquetoast proves his mettle.[14] Indeed, the plot of *Ramsbottom Rides Again* (of which I have only been able to view fragments) parallels both *Destry* and *Son of Paleface* (1952), in which the comic lead is a descendant of an authentic town-taming hero whose exploits and masculine example he must learn to match; however, rather than reticence, cowardice, or incompetence, the British films play heavily on the typically-English qualities of their dudes. When his stagecoach is attacked by Indians in *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw*, Jonathan Tibbs (More) remarks disapprovingly: "Someone should definitely have a word with these natives". As the soundtrack strikes up "Rule Britannia", he strolls up to the Chief, taps him on the shoulder with his rolled-up umbrella, and chats politely with him before they shake hands to seal the truce. In a roughhouse saloon, Tibbs orders a glass of sherry, "very dry", followed by a pot of tea and a chicken sandwich. He prefers whist to poker and later employs his Native American blood brother as a butler. Tibbs' patrician confidence and imperturbable civility clearly are modeled on Jules Verne's archetypal Englishman Phileas Fogg, who, in *Around the World in Eighty Days* (filmed in 1956), also journeyed through the Wild West.

[13] The British production *Africa – Texas Style* (1967) is a reverse fish-out-of-water tale, involving two American cowboys rounding up animals on an East African game reserve.

[14] A milquetoast is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a "timid, submissive or ineffectual person, a milksop". Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oed.com> [accessed 29 April 2012].

These films also depend on other specifically British modes of humor, in particular various forms of wordplay such as the Crazy Gang's crosstalk and tortuous puns, the *Carry On* team's alternately corny and bawdy innuendo, and the common use of British slang terms. In *The Frozen Limits*, Chesney Allen and Bud Flanagan discuss the Gang's destination:

> Ches: Hey, where is this Yukon?
> Bud: It's in, er, I'll-get-her-to-tell-me.
> Ches: It's in I'll-get-her-to-tell-me?
> Bud: Er, I'll-take-it-up-with-the-old-woman.
> Ches: I'll-take-it-up-with-the-old-woman?
> Bud: Yes, I'll-ask-her –
> Together: Alaska, Alaska, oi!

In *Carry on Cowboy*, Judge Burke (Kenneth Williams) and the Doc (Peter Butterworth) introduce the former character thus:

> Judge: I'm Judge Burke, the mayor.
> Doc: That's right. Judge's folks founded Stodge City, Marshal.
> Judge: My great-grandfather came over here on the *Mayflower*. He was the original Burke. Married into the Wright family and became a Wright-Burke.
> Doc: The whole family are right berks, Marshal.[15]

This flaunted Englishness occurs despite the fact that, in all of the films except for *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw*, the frontier townsfolk are played mostly by British actors who affect, with varying degrees of conviction, American accents. They include Bernard Lee, clad in lumberjack cap and zip-up jacket, as the heavy in *The Frozen Limits*, and Sidney James (South African-born but British by association), fulfilling the same function in both *Ramsbottom Rides Again* and *Carry on Cowboy* (James also appears in *Fractured Jaw* as a drunken stagecoach passenger). When the gormless Marshal Marshall P. Knutt (Dale) attempts to apprehend the Rumpo Kid (James) – whose henchmen include Short and Curly – the following exchange ensues:

> Knutt: It seems that last night Colonel Houston's ranch was raided again by rustlers.[16]
> Rumpo: What's that got to do with me?

[15] Non-UK readers who struggle to see the jokes may take that as evidence of their Anglocentricity.
[16] Jim Dale's own speech impediment, which causes him to pronounce his "r"s as "w"s, gives this line a particular piquancy.

> Knutt: I think it's got a lot to do with you. They got away with forty cows.
> Rumpo: Bullocks ...
> Knutt: I know what I'm talking about!

The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw is the only one of the four films not to have been shot entirely in Britain. It was shot in Spain, in contrast to the other films wherein both budgetary considerations and a lack of concern for precise verisimilitude confined them to studio sets and a few neighboring exteriors. Certainly little care was taken to disguise the Buckinghamshire locations of *Carry on Cowboy*, with its overcast skies, country-walk trails, and rain-damp dust. The music-hall origins of the *Carry On* films allow them to take other liberties with credibility. Indian Chief Big Heap (Charles Hawtrey) speaks in the same camp manner and with the same English accent that characterized Hawtrey's numerous other appearances in the *Carry On* series. He also wears the same round, wire-rimmed spectacles. It is precisely this cozy familiarity that Roland Barthes, of all unlikely cultural commentators, celebrates in his analysis of the *Carry On* universe as a Utopian space of comfort and reassurance, comparable to a children's nursery and its games of let's-pretend.[17]

It seems fitting, then, that Edgar Wright's *A Fistful of Fingers* should be a film actually made, if not by a gang of children, then by a group of post-adolescent art college students. As Wright later noted, the fact that "it's all 18-year-olds pretending to be badass Americans" provides the film with its central conceit, similar to Alan Parker's (British-produced) gangster pastiche *Bugsy Malone* (1976). *A Fistful of Fingers* shares with Wright's subsequent films *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (2007) the premise of a disjunction between the foreignness of the generic conventions invoked and the prosaic quaintness of the English surroundings (Wells, Somerset, rather than Apache Wells, Arizona). Wright remarked of proposals to remake his later films and the TV series *Spaced* (1999–2001) in Hollywood: "Surely there's nothing charming about watching American slackers act out American films? Surely the charm of it is that people are in a North London pub recreating scenes from *The Matrix*? Doing it within its own country doesn't really mean anything".[18] Such cultural

[17] Roland Barthes, 'The Nautilus and the Nursery' (trans. Gilbert Adair), *Sight and Sound*, vol. 54, no. 2, (Spring 1985), pp. 130-2.
[18] Interviewed in Nick Dawson, 'Edgar Wright, "Hot Fuzz"', *Filmmaker: the Magazine of Independent Film*, 20 April 2007. Filmmaker: The Magazine of Independent Film, <http://www.filmmakermagazine.com/news/2007/04/edgar-wright-hot-fuzz/> [accessed 25 April 2012]. The pub around which the action in *Shaun of the Dead* revolves is called the Winchester, after the rifle; a quintessentially Western weapon that figures prominently in the film.

disjunctions are central to the comic Western; with colonial and imperial adventure films it is cultural coincidences with the Western that will initially concern us in the following section.

Colonial and Imperial "Westerns"

Unlike that concerning the British Western proper, critical literature on films about the British Empire is extensive. Numerous writers have drawn attention to the resemblances between imperial or colonial adventure films and the Western, often arguing that the former is the generic equivalent of the latter and that it serves a similar set of ideological functions: "themes such as the expansion of the frontier, the taming of a wilderness and the triumph of white culture over barbarism are common to both".[19] This comparison overlooks important differences between the genres, not only in terms of narrative and iconography, but also in relation to the different colonial experiences they dramatize and from which many of their particular conventions spring. Indeed, distinctions can be drawn within the "Commonwealth" adventure film itself, partly on the basis of the colonies or territories in which stories are set and the specific issues arising from them. The most important distinction is between stories set in the Dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) and those set elsewhere in the British Empire (particularly India and North and East Africa). The central distinguishing factor is of course race, along with the narrative and ideological roles played by the agents of British colonial rule and especially by the military.

British adventure films set in the Dominions are often modeled directly on the narrative structures of American Westerns: the building of the Canadian Pacific railroad in *The Great Barrier* (1937); a hazardous cattle drive in *The Overlanders* (1946); a gold rush in *Eureka Stockade* (1949); an untamed township in *Diamond City* (1949); territorial rivalry over land and water rights in *Bitter Springs* (1950) and *Campbell's Kingdom* (1957); fortune hunters falling out over loot and a woman in *The Adventurers* (1951); pioneer settlers fighting hostile natives in *The Seekers* (1954) and *The Trap* (1966); outlaw bands as either romantic antiheroes in *Robbery under Arms* (1957) and *Ned Kelly* (1970) or as antisocial scum in *The*

[19] James Chapman, 'Action, spectacle and the *Boy's Own* tradition in British cinema', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* Second Edition (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), p. 218. On the relationship between British colonial and imperial films and the Western, see also Raymond Durgnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 77-83; Marcia Landy, *British Film Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 97-117; Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 100-177; Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 43-46; Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the "New Look"* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 116-8.

Hellions (1961). The point can be extended to a film such as *The Sundowners* (1960), which was produced in Britain by an American company (Warner Bros.) and shot partially on location in Australia. The film has comparatively few narrative elements in common with the Western but shares its central thematic core: an oppositional tension between the desire to settle and to wander.

The notion of the relationship between British imperial adventure films and Westerns being determined by more than narrative similarities is set out by Peter Limbrick in a discussion of Ealing Studios' trilogy of Australian "Westerns": *The Overlanders*, *Eureka Stockade*, and *Bitter Springs*.[20] Limbrick demonstrates persuasively that *The Overlanders* in particular was conceived by its director, Harry Watt, and received by contemporaneous critics as, to use Charles Barr's term, a "quasi-Western".[21] For Limbrick, both the American and the Australian Western are instances of a type of narrative form common to all cultures with a "settler colonial" past, including the other Dominions. This phenomenon can also be seen in films produced by these territories' own national film industries, such as the Afrikaans epics *De Voortrekkers* (1916) and *They Built a Nation* (1938), with their Boer wagon trains attacked by Zulus, as well as in American-produced films such as *Untamed* (1955) and *The Fiercest Heart* (1961), both of which feature similar situations.[22]

There remain, however, elements of imperial cinema that cannot be equated quite so easily to the conventions of the American Western. This is most clearly the case with adventure films set in India and North and East Africa, which concern, not pioneer settlers, but the British Army and other official agencies of colonial government. Typically, such films involve a native uprising in which the white male hero proves his courage and fortitude by helping to suppress the rebellion. Examples include *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Drum* (1938), *The Four Feathers* (1939), the latter's remake *Storm over the Nile* (1955), *North West Frontier* (1959), and *East of Sudan* (1964). Two relatively late entries provide significant variations on the genre: *The Long Duel* (1967), in which a native rebel is himself the hero, who leads a just revolt against colonialist oppression; and *The Brigand of Kandahar* (1965), in which a mixed-race army officer joins an Indian outlaw band after he is falsely accused of cowardice – a charge triggered by his affair with the wife of a white officer. *The*

[20] Peter Limbrick, 'The Australian Western, or a settler colonial cinema *par excellence*,' *Cinema Journal*, vol. 46, no. 4 (Summer 2007), pp. 68–95.
[21] Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* Third Edition (Moffat: Cameron & Hollis, 1998), p. 64. Raymond Durgnat refers to Harry Watt's *Where No Vultures Fly* (1951) as a "game reservation 'Western'". See Durgnat, *A Mirror for England*, p. 79. On Watt's *Eureka Stockade*, see Durgnat, *A Mirror for England*, pp. 38-39.
[22] For discussion of these and other South African-set films, see Peter Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996).

Brigand of Kandahar is a reworking of *King of the Khyber Rifles*, a 1916 novel by Talbot Mundy that was twice filmed in Hollywood, in which the Anglo-Indian Captain King is torn between his sense of duty to a British establishment (several of whose officers are represented as racist) and his sense of loyalty to a colonized people.[23] In all of these films, the hero is (unsurprisingly given the period in which they were made) played by a white actor, irrespective of the character's race.[24] All of the films are also concerned with the legitimacy of British governance, and, at some point, establish their position on this issue. This may be done non-verbally, through action and through the figure of the hero himself, who embodies the virtues of the British ruling class. As Jeffrey Richards has noted, one of the defining features of the genre is therefore the Britishness of the hero and the qualities of the national character he represents.[25]

The military adventure nevertheless has its affinities to the Cavalry Western, which also deals with the imposition of order on an indigenous population, often represented as hostile and rebellious (with or without justification). The "pro-Indian" Western of the 1950s became the anti-Cavalry Western of the 1960s and 1970s, represented by such films as *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), *A Distant Trumpet* (1964), *Little Big Man* (1970), and *Soldier Blue* (1970). It was in this context that *Zulu* (1964) and its prequel *Zulu Dawn* (1979) were produced. *Zulu* in particular has regularly been described as a "Welsh Western".[26] Its climax, in which the Welsh defenders of Rorke's Drift sing "Men of Harlech" to counter enemy war chants, is anticipated by *Apache Drums* (1951), in which Welsh settlers do the same thing albeit in the Welsh language. Although *Zulu* and *Zulu Dawn* are both examples of the imperial narrative discussed above, neither film articulates an affirmative reason for the British presence in

[23] The first of the American versions, *The Black Watch* (1929), was directed by John Ford and starred Victor McLaglen, both of whom subsequently made the Rudyard Kipling adaptation *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937), also set on India's North West frontier. McLaglen, who invariably played Irishmen for Ford, was born in Scotland. The Westerns directed by his son, Andrew V. McLaglen, evince a second-generation nostalgia for Scottishness every bit as sentimental as Ford's for Irishness.

[24] As late as 1978, a remake of *The Four Feathers* could boast the credit "and Richard Johnson as Abou Fatma".

[25] On the British imperial adventure and the character of the hero see: Jeffrey Richards, *Visions of Yesterday* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 2-220; Jeffrey Richards, '"Patriotism with profit": British imperial cinema in the 1930s', in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 245-56; Jeffrey Richards, 'Boy's own empire: feature films and imperialism in the 1930s', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 140-64; Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to "Dad's Army"* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 31-81; Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: the Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), pp. 68-71.

[26] On *Zulu*'s relationships to the Western see: Christopher Sharrett, '*Zulu*, or the Limits of Liberalism', *Cineaste*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2000), pp. 28-33; Stephen Bourne, 'Secrets and lies: black histories and British historical films', and Sheldon Hall, 'Monkey feathers: defending *Zulu*', both in Monk and Sargeant, *British Heritage Cinema*, pp. 47-65, 110-28; Robert Shail, 'Stanley Baker's "Welsh Western": masculinity and cultural identity in *Zulu*', *Cyfrwng: Media Wales Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2004), pp. 11-25; James Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 199-227.

South Africa. In the former, skepticism is expressed through the querulous attitudes of the lower ranks, which nevertheless hold the line and withstand a massive Zulu assault. In *Zulu Dawn*, the imperial project is roundly defeated with the massacre of the British forces in what is shown as an unjust war that has been started by the colonial governor. These and the other imperial adventure films demonstrate the pressure attendant upon the theme of the British colonial presence in an alien land.

Even the earliest colonial adventure films were made in the context of political challenges to the legitimacy of the British Empire, and they therefore continually address that issue in one way or another. In the American Western, on the other hand, the legitimacy of white rule, and indeed the presence of white civilization on the North American continent, is a given. While the morality of the US government's and the Cavalry's treatment of Indians is often at issue, neither the right of the government to rule nor the authority of the Cavalry to maintain the peace has to be articulated or defended. Unlike the British Empire, the American Empire remains in existence. Whereas assent to the validity of white colonial rule can therefore be assumed in the Western, in the imperial adventure it is always contested even when it is ultimately upheld. In this respect, then, the imperial "Western" is quite unlike its nominal model and deserves separate analysis. In the next section, I consider a group of films aimed specifically at resembling the American and Continental European Western.

International and Multinational Westerns

> When shooting a western in Spain one should not say to oneself, "Never mind, no one is going to see it", because that will be just the film which the Rank Organisation will choose to release in England.[27]
>
> James Mason

I have already mentioned that 1958's *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* was shot in Spain. According to *Variety*, it was in fact the first Western to be made in that country; however, the regular filming of Westerns on Spanish locations (especially in the remote Almeria region, with its mountains, canyons, and desert plains) did not begin in earnest until *The Savage Guns* (1962) became, in the trade paper's words, "the first Western fully fabricated in

[27] Quoted in Bernard Gordon, *Hollywood Exile, or How I Learned to Love the Blacklist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 257. The film Mason had in mind was *Bad Man's River*, produced by Gordon, which was released on Rank's Odeon circuit in 1972.

Spain".[28] Partly because of its low labor costs and its diverse landscapes, Spain was often used by British and American companies as a cheap substitute for other settings in costume epics such as *The Black Knight* (1954), *Alexander the Great* (1956), and *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), and indeed the imperial adventure films *North West Frontier* and *The Long Duel*. Like many European countries, including Britain, Spain imposed fiscal trade barriers limiting the amount of pesetas that could be taken out of the country by foreign companies. The remaining blocked or "frozen" funds could be used only to purchase Spanish goods or to pay for services provided in the country, such as those relating to film production.[29]

The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw was made by British independent producer Daniel M. Angel for release through Twentieth Century-Fox. Its director (Raoul Walsh) and screenwriter (blacklistee Howard Dimsdale, working under the pseudonym Arthur Dales) were Americans, as was co-star Jayne Mansfield and several supporting actors, although top-billed Kenneth More and key crew members were all British. *The Savage Guns* was produced and directed by Michael Carreras, executive producer for Hammer Films, who formed an American company, Capricorn, so that the film could be made as a co-production with the Spanish outfit Tecisa Films for release through MGM. The stars of *The Savage Guns* (Richard Basehart, Don Taylor, and Alex Nicol) and its screenwriter (Edmund Morris) were American, but most other members of its cast and crew were Spanish. Fox's and MGM's frozen peseta revenues were used respectively to fund the two films, which were not only the harbingers of the Spanish-filmed Western – of which hundreds followed in the 1960s and 1970s – but typical instances of cosmopolitan productions of the period, made with international audiences in mind and utilizing talent, labor, and finance drawn from several countries. The "statelessness" of much popular cinema in this period was due partly to prevailing economic conditions: single, dual, or multiple nationality status (which earned participation in state subsidy or tax benefit schemes) often depended on the national origins of cast and crew as much as it did on financing. The need to expand audiences at a time of declining theatrical attendance also motivated the production of types of film with a track-record of international appeal. In this respect, Europeans filled a gap in the market that had been left by the decline in numbers of American Westerns (caused by the profusion of Western television series) by seeking to capitalize on demand for Westerns outside the US: *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), perhaps the most influential Hollywood film in terms of the

[28] Anon., 'Spain's bargain-basement Westerns; British started it there in 1958', *Variety*, 2 October 1963, p. 19.
[29] See for example Hank Werba, 'Blocked pesetas foreseen as hypo to Yank film-making in Spain', *Variety*, 5 November 1958, p. 18.

Western's subsequent development, earned rentals of only $2.5m in the US and Canada but $9m overseas.[30]

British producers were slow to join the Continental rush to make Westerns in the wake of *A Fistful of Dollars* (which was not released in the UK until 1967, some three years after it had opened in Italy). Between 1968 and 1973, however, around twenty Westerns were made with significant British involvement at the level of production.[31] The first of these films, and the one that displays most tangibly its Anglo-European credentials, was *Shalako* (1968), produced by Euan Lloyd. Lloyd acquired a free option on the novel of the same name by Louis L'Amour, raising financing partly through international pre-sales. This method of selling a film to distributors in advance of production had been pioneered for big-budget epics by Dino De Laurentiis and Samuel Bronston and remains common today. Territorial deals with thirty-six distributors around the world, among them Cinerama Releasing Corporation in the US and Anglo Amalgamated in the UK, provided bank guarantees to cover the cost of *Shalako*, which was reported to have been either $4m or $5.1m, including a record $1.2m payment to lead actor Sean Connery. This fee was equal to the original budget for the entire picture before Connery came aboard; the star was also entitled to thirty percent of the film's profits. The rest of the cast was filled with other bankable name players, including the French Brigitte Bardot, the German Peter van Eyck, the Northern Irish Stephen Boyd, the Canadian Alexander Knox, and the English Jack Hawkins, Honor Blackman, and Eric Sykes. The director, Edward Dmytryk, was American; but the most prominent US actor, African-American Woody Strode (playing an Indian), was only billed tenth. The multinational cast was justified not only by the pre-sales arrangement but also by the story, which concerns a party of European aristocrats engaged in a hunting expedition to the Wild West and falling foul of Apaches. Connery plays a former Cavalry scout who comes to their aid, and while he does not noticeably affect an American accent, his character's national origin is unspecified. Although *Shalako* was initially set to be filmed in Mexico, the devaluation of the Mexican peso led to the film's being shot in Almeria instead. Only a modest box-office performer in the US, it fared sufficiently well internationally to turn a profit.[32] In 1970, Lloyd formed Frontier Films with the intention of making additional

[30] Anon., 'Spain current world sagebrush pic capital; a legacy of Leone oaters', *Variety*, 15 July 1970, p. 24.
[31] I have taken an elastic rather than a legalistic view of what constitutes a British production, and have included all films in which a British-based company or a substantial proportion of British personnel were involved at a creative, practical, or financial level.
[32] Anon., 'Sean Connery key to $4-mil co-prod. between Mex film bank, British firm', *Variety*, 21 June 1967, p. 5; Anon., 'Connery winning salary sweepstakes with $1,200,000 in cash for "Shalako"', *Variety*, 3 April 1968, p. 27; Anon., 'Euan Lloyd's coin tactics on "Shalako"; area rights clue', *Variety*, 5 February 1969, pp. 5, 26;

L'Amour adaptations, including a TV series (unrealized). From a projected total of seven feature films, only two were completed: *Catlow* (1971), costing $2 million and starring Yul Brynner and Richard Crenna; and *The Man Called Noon* (1973), costing $1.5 million and starring Crenna and Stephen Boyd. Whereas eighty-five British technicians had been recruited to work on *Shalako*, the majority of the crew on *Catlow* and *The Man Called Noon* was Spanish, helping to keep down budgets and, in the case of *Noon*, facilitating Spanish nationality status despite the presence of British director Peter Collinson. Lloyd and Collinson's plans to make a Western horror film, *Jack the Ripper Goes West*, fell through however, when they were beaten to the draw by a similar American production, *A Knife for the Ladies* (1974).[33]

Other London-based makers of Westerns included both expatriate Americans and native Britons. Euan Lloyd had begun his career as a producer working for Warwick Film Productions, a company owned jointly by Irving Allen and Albert R. Broccoli, with funding by the British arm of Hollywood's Columbia Pictures. After the partnership broke up, Allen's first solo production in 1961 was the South African "Western" *The Hellions*. Later in the decade, Allen made *The Desperados* (1969), a post-Civil War Western with a cast including Jack Palance and Sylvia Syms. Walter Shenson, the American producer of The Beatles' first two films, made *A Talent for Loving* (1969), a comedy Western starring Richard Widmark, for release through Paramount Pictures. Ultimately, Paramount elected not to distribute *A Talent for Loving* and the same studio also shelved Harry Alan Towers' *The Call of the Wild* (1972), a five-nation co-production that had been filmed in Norway with a cast headlined by Charlton Heston. But Paramount did release two other Westerns produced by small British companies. *Hannie Caulder* (1971) was made by Tigon British Film Productions, which generally specialized in horror and exploitation pictures. Hollywood veteran Burt Kennedy directed Raquel Welch in the title role, with a cast including Christopher Lee, Diana Dors, and an uncredited Stephen Boyd.[34] *Charley-One-Eye* (1972) starred Richard Roundtree, Roy Thinnes, and Nigel Davenport. It was made by David Paradine Productions, a company that

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Army Archerd, 'Just for Variety', *Daily Variety*, 11 December 1969, p. 2; Mac McSharry and Terry Hine, 'Euan Lloyd: the ties that Bond, part 2: the way west', *Cinema Retro*, vol. 1, no. 2 (May 2005), pp. 38-45.

[33] Peter Resas, 'Indie prod. Euan Lloyd, pioneer in distrib financing, mourns its decline', *Variety*, 2 June 1971, p. 24; Peter Resas, 'Lloyd's "Noon" wins credit as wholly Spanish pic despite o'seas backing', *Variety*, 4 December 1972, p. 30; Anon., 'Opening up the west', *Films Illustrated*, vol. 1, no. 10 (April 1972), p. 35; Unnumbered Display Ads, *Variety*, 9 May 1973, p. 168; Anon., 'Cannes closings for Euan Lloyd; set world distrib deal on "Ripper"', *Variety*, 23 May 1973, p. 24; Unnumbered Display Ads, *Variety*, 4 July 1973, p. 23; McSharry and Hine, 'Euan Lloyd'.

[34] Boyd claimed that he played the same character in *Shalako*, *Hannie Caulder*, and *A Man Called Noon*: "It doesn't matter what name the script gives him: it is fun to develop him over the years". Quoted in Anon., 'Stephen Boyd: Giving Up Gratefully,' *Films Illustrated*, vol. 3, no. 28 (October 1973), p. 136.

had been formed by broadcaster David Frost to supply programs (mainly featuring Frost himself) to television stations, but which also produced several theatrical films. Richard Harris and his American producing partner Sanford "Sandy" Howard made *Man in the Wilderness* (1971) for release by Warner Bros. Starring Harris with a primarily British cast and crew, it was filmed in Spain with editing, dubbing, and scoring executed in the UK.[35]

While most of the other films just mentioned were also made in Spain, some producers looked further afield for Western locations, including to America itself. Writer/producer Carl Foreman, resident in London since the early 1950s, reassembled several of his collaborators from *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), including director J. Lee Thompson and actors Gregory Peck and Anthony Quayle, to film *Mackenna's Gold* (1969) in Arizona and Oregon, although postproduction was again carried out in Britain. *The McMasters* (1970), filmed in New Mexico, was described by *Variety* as "possibly the first American Western financed by a British company, Dimitri de Grunwald's London Screenplays".[36] In a further instance of what the trade paper called "reverse runaway" production, Michael Winner directed and produced *Lawman* (1971) for his company Scimitar Films and United Artists in Durango, Mexico, at a cost of $3.4m. He then went to Spain to make *Chato's Land* (1972) in Almeria for $1.7m. Winner estimated that both films would have cost $1m more apiece to shoot in the US because of studio overheads and union rates.[37]

Financial considerations invariably determined where a film was shot, and often the composition of its cast and crew. Films made in Commonwealth countries counted as British productions for quota purposes and were also eligible for a subsidy under the government's Eady Plan.[38] This applied, for instance, in the case of *The Canadians* (1961), Burt Kennedy's directorial debut for Twentieth Century-Fox, which was shot on location in Canada and completed in London.[39] Norman Jewison and Ted Kotcheff, themselves Canadians, formed a London-based company, Algonquin, to make *Billy Two Hats* (1973) for release by United Artists.[40] Produced by Jewison and directed by Kotcheff, with a script by Scottish screenwriter Alan Sharp (who also wrote *The Hired Hand* [1971], *Ulzana's Raid* [1972], and

[35] Peter Resas, 'Filmmaking boom in Spain', *Variety*, 17 February 1971, p. 34.
[36] Robe., '*The McMasters*', *Daily Variety*, 17 June 1970, p. 3. Russian-born, de Grunwald had co-produced *Shalako* among other pictures.
[37] Anon., 'Reverse "runaway" continues; U.K.'s Winner to roll "Lawman" in Mexico', *Variety*, 4 February 1970, p. 31; Anon., 'Michael Winner sounds off on Westerns, "classical" producers', *Variety*, 2 June 1971, p. 25.
[38] The Eady Plan was introduced in 1950 to subsidize the producers of British films by returning to them a portion of a fund collected from all UK box-office revenues in a sum proportionate to the films' earnings.
[39] Anon., '20th's "Canadians", shot in Canada, qualifies as British quota film' *Daily Variety*, 23 November 1960, p. 6.
[40] Anon., 'Israel like Ariz., or vice versa', *Variety*, 30 August 1972, p. 22.

Rob Roy [1995]), *Billy Two Hats* starred Gregory Peck as a Scottish outlaw. Asked why the picture, which was set in Arizona, had been shot in Israel, Peck replied: "If I had as good an offer from Cairo, I'd be filming in Egypt right now".[41]

Benmar Productions was formed in 1970 as a subsidiary of Scotia Investments, a British leisure finance group, whose driving force was real-estate tycoon Robert Marmor. Benmar's films were distributed worldwide by Scotia International; its board of directors included producer S. Benjamin Fisz and screenwriter Philip Yordan. The company's Spanish production operations were supervised by another American screenwriter, Bernard Gordon. Both Gordon, a former blacklistee, and Yordan had long been active in Europe. The pair had collaborated on a number of films, including several for Samuel Bronston and for the widescreen roadshow company Cinerama, among which was *Custer of the West*. Scotia's first four releases were all Westerns: *A Town Called Bastard* (1971) and *Pancho Villa* (1972), both of which featured Telly Savalas, and *Captain Apache* (1971) and *Bad Man's River* (1971), both starring Lee Van Cleef. All four films had been made by mainly Spanish crews and, in order to secure Spanish nationality status, *Bad Man's River* and *Pancho Villa* were directed by a Spaniard, Eugenio Martin, who was billed on overseas prints as Gene Martin.[42]

Scotia International's film activities petered out in the late 1970s, by which time the Western, irrespective of origins, was entering into a period of commercial decline that has never since been completely reversed. While Westerns continued to be made in small numbers for the rest of the decade, they were no longer as viable economically as they had once been. Bernard Gordon recalls Philip Yordan telling him as early as 1972: "You can't give them away in the States anymore. And without the American market, there's no way to recoup costs".[43] In fact, none of the British-produced Westerns had been a major box office success in the US, with only *Mackenna's Gold* and *Lawman* (both filmed on the American continent) earning more than the unspectacular sum of $3m in domestic rentals. Several big-budget pictures made by major British companies in the late 1970s and early 1980s fared no better. As part of its first production slate in some considerable time, Rank backed *Eagle's Wing* (1979), which was filmed in Mexico. Lew Grade's Incorporated Television Company (ITC), which had entered theatrical filmmaking in 1974, made *The Legend of the Lone Ranger* (1981) and *Barbarosa* (1982) as part of its short-lived American production program.

[41] Anon., 'Teheran tidbits,' *Variety*, 19 December 1973, p. 6.
[42] Anon., 'Scotia Inv. forms new global distrib', *Variety*, 30 September 1970, p. 27; Anon., 'Benmar rolling four more films for distribution via Scotia Int'l', *Variety*, 7 October 1970, p. 23; Robert B. Frederick, 'Britain's Scotia set in U.S.', *Variety*, 7 June 1971, pp. 5, 24; Gordon, *Hollywood Exile*, pp. 235-84.
[43] Gordon, *Hollywood Exile*, p. 264.

John Daly's Hemdale was involved in *Cattle Annie and Little Britches* (1981), *War Party* (1988), and *Blood Red* (1989).[44] None of these films was sufficiently profitable to revive the moribund genre that the Western had become. What did revive it, albeit temporarily, was an ambitious American independent production financed primarily by overseas distributors. Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990) was co-produced by Guy East's Majestic Films International, a London-based company that itself was financed by the Crédit Lyonnais bank in the Netherlands, a leading film industry investor. Majestic provided up to forty percent of the $15m production budget for the three-hour epic, which went on to become a major box-office hit worldwide, a critical success, and the winner of seven Academy Awards.[45] Among the Westerns made in the wake of *Dances with Wolves* were two films produced by Working Title Films (the highly successful company behind *Four Weddings and a Funeral* [1994]): *Posse* (1993) and *The Hi-Lo Country* (1998).

Market conditions in the 1990s and the 2000s favored multinational financing, albeit often without the restrictive terms imposed by such deals in the 1960s and 1970s, whereby each participating country had to be represented by key personnel, resulting in the polyglot character of many of the films discussed above. Channel Four Television invested in *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1991) and the BBC invested in both *Painted Angels* (1998) and *The Claim* (2000). All of these films were shot in Canada, as was Richard Attenborough's *Grey Owl* (1999), in which Pierce Brosnan plays an English suburban fantasist masquerading as an Indian. The Film Consortium, a venture supported by the UK National Lottery, co-produced *The Proposition* (2005), a quasi-Western filmed and set in Australia. Eastern Europe is now as popular a choice for location filming as Spain was several decades earlier, and, for similar economic reasons: *Dust* (2001), a co-production among the UK, Germany, Italy, and Macedonia, was filmed and partially set in the last-named country, while the horror Western *Ravenous* (1999) and the romantic Civil War saga *Cold Mountain* (2003) were shot largely in the Czech Republic and Romania respectively. South Africa was the location for several Westerns made by Paul Matthews' Peakviewing Productions: *Guns of Honor*, *Trigger Fast* (both 1994), and *Hooded Angels* (2002). The first two of these, which were released direct to video, remain the only film adaptations of the work of J.T. Edson, the prolific Derbyshire-born author of Western novels. *Hooded Angels*, along with a large proportion of

[44] Hemdale had also been a participant in *Les pétroleuses* (AKA *The Legend of Frenchie King*, 1971), a co-production between France, Italy, and Spain, which starred Brigitte Bardot and Claudia Cardinale.
[45] Don Groves, '"Texasville," "Wolves," "Heart" form East's Majestic line-up', *Daily Variety*, 27 February 1989, p. 50.

the other films mentioned in this section, also highlights a characteristic all too readily associated with the British Western: its badness.

Badness and the British Western

> There are no bad Westerns. There are superb Westerns (*Shane*, *Lonely Are the Brave*, *Red River*); there are good Westerns (*The Big Country*). And there are Westerns [...]. But none of them are really bad.[46]
>
> Dilys Powell

For Luke McKernan, *Carry on Cowboy* is "maybe the best British Western there is".[47] The same claim is made more assertively by Andy Medhurst in his study of the *Carry On* films: "The best British Western ever made".[48] In his review of *A Fistful of Fingers* – self-deprecatingly advertised as "The best Western ever made ... in Somerset" – *Sight and Sound* contributor Tom Tunney suggests that "a more accurate line would call it the best British feature Western since *Carry on Cowboy*".[49] The preference expressed by all three critics for this most overtly anachronistic, determinedly down-market example certainly helps to account for the paucity of retrospective commentary on the British Western. With the exception of McKernan's presentation, it has received neither the detailed cultural and historical exegeses enjoyed by German, Italian, and American Westerns nor the auteurist analyses merited by Sergio Leone's work. Filmmakers of comparable stature have simply not been associated with British Westerns and, leaving aside Harry Watt's colonial pictures, the only directors to have made more than one are Burt Kennedy (*The Canadians* and *Hannie Caulder*) and Michael Winner.[50]

John Exshaw is at pains to rescue Winner's *Lawman* and *Chato's Land* from the "seemingly permanent state of disrepute" into which they have fallen since receiving

[46] Dilys Powell, review of *Cheyenne Autumn* and *West of Montana*, *The Sunday Times*, October 1964, reprinted in Christopher Cook (ed.), *The Dilys Powell Film Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 277.
[47] McKernan, 'Cockney Cherokees', p. 12.
[48] Andy Medhurst, 'Carry on Camp', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 2, no. 4 (August 1992), p. 19.
[49] Tom Tunney, '*A Fistful of Fingers*', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 6, no. 2 (February 1996), p. 39.
[50] On *Hannie Caulder* see Tim Lucas, 'Hannie get your gun', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 20, no. 9 (September 2010), p. 90. In addition to the Anglo-American production *Mackenna's Gold*, J. Lee Thompson made the wholly American film *The White Buffalo* (1977). Other non-British Westerns made by British directors include Carol Reed's modern-day comedy *Flap* (1970), John Guillermin's *El Condor* (1970), Terence Young's *Red Sun* (1971), and Peter Hunt's *Death Hunt* (1981). Scottish-born Frank Lloyd directed seven Westerns in Hollywood from 1918, including his final film, *The Last Command* (1955).

generally positive reviews from journalists on initial release; but Exshaw's defense of the films takes the form of an interview with their Canadian screenwriter Gerald Wilson rather than a close analysis of the films, which would surely have confirmed that the promise of the screenplays is often betrayed by the crudity of Winner's direction.[51] Consider, for example, the sequence of the funeral in *Lawman*. Funerals and graveside orations have provided many Westerns with some of their most memorable moments. *Lawman*'s funeral scene lasts ninety seconds and contains eighteen shots. Six of the shots contain abrupt, rapid zooms into or out from close-ups. None of the eighteen set-ups is repeated and few of the camera angles match their neighbors, though two shots are taken from inside the grave, looking up at the mourners. The second of these "coffin point-of-view" shots is the last image of the sequence, which concludes with a shovelful of earth being thrown directly into the camera lens. The result of Winner's choice of angles, movements, and cuts is a riot of over-emphasis. The style fights with the subject of the scene: rather than reinforcing the mood of somber regret suggested by the dialogue and performances, the camera simply draws attention to itself as an obtrusive observer and commentator on the action.[52]

Although one would not want to suggest that all makers of British Westerns should be represented by Winner's approach, "crudity" is a word very much suited to describe many of the other films mentioned above; several are frankly inept, notably the Benmar/Scotia productions. While the same could certainly be said of many of the titles discussed in Christopher Frayling's *Spaghetti Westerns* and in Tim Bergfelder's *International Adventures*, the rich contextual analyses delivered by both of these authors reveal a depth of cultural resonance that would be difficult to match in the British case. Although the comedies and parodies, on the one hand, and the imperial and colonial adventures, on the other, can be related to culturally specific forms and histories, it would be futile to attempt to locate signs of British national identity in the later attempts at "straight" Westerns. The cultural-specificity approach has yielded insights when it has been applied to many a minor British example of a genre such as the horror film; but it is curious that, while Italian, German, and Spanish films have been labeled spaghetti, sauerkraut, and paella Westerns respectively, an

[51] John Exshaw, '"Back Off, Lawman": Gerry Wilson on Winner, the West, and the Wilderness', *Cinema Retro*, vol. 5, no. 14 (2009), pp. 12-17.

[52] *Lawman* was photographed by Robert Paynter, who made ten films with Winner, and edited by Freddie Wilson. Winner himself edited most of his subsequent films under the pseudonym Arnold Crust, so it is safe to assume that he was actively involved in the selection of shots and cuts on this film too. In fairness to Winner, it should be added that Sam Peckinpah was also often criticized for directorial over-emphasis, especially for his use of zooms and montage, and, in common with many directors of 1970s Westerns, it is likely that Winner was influenced by Peckinpah's style.

equivalent culinary term – "roast beef" or "fish and chip" Westerns, perhaps – has not been applied to the British films. This state of affairs suggests a case of non-recognition: the films simply do not boast sufficient unifying characteristics to identify them as a distinct generic type; instead, to borrow André Bazin's terms quoted at the head of an earlier section, they tend to approximate to a "counterfeit" or a "pastiche" of either the American or the Italian form.

The Singer Not the Song (1961) – described by Peter Hutchings as "difficult to classify generically" – has attracted a deal of critical attention, largely because of its close-to-the-surface homoerotic subtext.[53] Set in Mexico and filmed in Spain for the Rank Organisation, *The Singer Not the Song* involves an Irish Catholic priest (John Mills) who becomes the object of desire of a black-leather-clad bandit (Dirk Bogarde) whose gang is terrorizing the territory. Little of the film's thematic interest is particular to the Western, though its quadrangular melodramatic structure (Mills is also desired by a young girl and Bogarde by an older member of his gang) strongly resembles that of *The Outlaw* (1943); however, the miscasting of Mills ensures that the forbidden desire is all in one direction, and is not only unfulfilled but unaccountable. As a result, the film delivers neither authentic amour fou nor an authentic Western. Of course, the use of such a term in such a context begs the questions of what generic authenticity is and of whether *any* non-American Western can aspire to it. The larger problem for the British Western, however, is that it is not usually perceived as authentically British either.[54]

The absence of any particular correlation between the Western and British culture has marooned British Westerns in mid-Atlantic when they are not tangled in the net of European co-production. In most cases, except those in which British actors are involved, it is virtually impossible to pinpoint any specifically British component of the films. In the case of *The Hunting Party* (1971), directed by American TV journeyman Don Medford and produced by the American partnership of Jules Levy, Arthur Gardner, and Arnold Laven for release through United Artists, I have been unable to discover why it was even registered as British

[53] Peter Hutchings, 'Authorship and British cinema: the case of Roy Ward Baker', in Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (eds), *British Cinema, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 179. See also: Andy Medhurst, 'Dirk Bogarde', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1986), pp. 346-54; Durgnat, *A Mirror for England*, pp. 241-2; Geoff Mayer, *Roy Ward Baker* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 33-36, 128-36; Matthew Sweet, *Shepperton Babylon: the Lost Worlds of British Cinema* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 238-48.

[54] Justifying his marginal treatment of films which "though technically British belong to an international, Hollywood-dominated cinema", Robert Murphy refers to *The Sundowners* as an instance of the kind of films "which are British only because British technicians worked on them". Robert Murphy, *Sixties British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1992), pp. 6, 7.

at all. The film stars Oliver Reed in an otherwise predominantly American cast, it was shot in Spain, and postproduction was executed in Los Angeles.[55] Although it is perhaps one of the more interesting "British" Westerns, *The Hunting Party* can scarcely be analyzed as such in a way that confers upon it any sense of cultural belonging.

If non-comic British Westerns are far from "culturally British" (to use the phrase adopted by the BFI) and unreceptive to auteurist analysis, they are not all aesthetically negligible; nor are they, if one ignores the question of national origins, devoid of interest in relation to the historical development of the Western. Apart from *Dances with Wolves* (in which British involvement was exclusively financial) I would make strong claims for Anthony Harvey's *Eagle's Wing* to be regarded as a major work in its own right and for a half-dozen others – including *The Hunting Party*, *The McMasters*, *Man in the Wilderness*, *Billy Two Hats*, *Barbarosa*, and, yes, even *Lawman* – to be seen as significant and substantive, if flawed, genre pieces. But if cultural historians are determined to make a British thematic connection somewhere, they might consider director Michael Winterbottom's *The Claim*, which relocates Thomas Hardy's novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* from Victorian Wessex to the gold-rush California Sierras of 1867. Indeed, one scholar has already done so. According to Gayla S. McGlamery, analysis of *The Claim* reveals a surprising correlation between Hardy's preoccupations and the themes of classic Westerns. Both Hardy and the Western show characters in challenging, impersonal environments; chronicle the thrust of technological and other kinds of progress; record a way of life that is imperiled; present willful, dominant male characters who rule their worlds; and dramatize the descent of doomed leaders who pay the price for youthful violations.[56] But McGlamery also faults Winterbottom for failing to aspire to the epic quality achieved by both the Western and by Hardy's novel.[57] Is this preference for the small, intimate detail over the big picture, for behavioral naturalism over tragic grandeur, a characteristically British impulse? This trait, alongside the knowing anachronisms of the Western parodies and comedies, suggests that the anti-epic impulse may indeed be the most distinctively British quality of the British Western, if there has to be a distinctly British quality at all. Yet, for all its limitations, *The Claim* at least helps to disprove the assumption upon which I began research for this article: to employ a typically British form of extravagant praise, it's not so bad.

[55] Army Archerd, 'Just for Variety', *Daily Variety*, 20 January 1971, p. 2.
[56] Gayla S. McGlamery, 'Hardy goes West: *The Claim*, the Western, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2007), p. 369.
[57] Ibid., p. 371.