

# **IMAGINING THE HOME**

**A practice based critical investigation into  
the western frontier domestic space and  
its mediated form**

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## ABSTRACT

This practice-based enquiry questions the narrative positioning of the home within Western films created between 1920 and the early 1960s. It seeks to juxtapose the reality of the home in the construction of the US West with its subsequent mediated representation through film and popular cultural narratives. The interdisciplinary practice engages these concerns using archive material, film stills and the researcher's own photographic images in the medium of the quilt, breaking the traditional frame and opening up tactile avenues for visual storytelling. The quilt reflects pre-industrial methods of construction. The use of expanded photography – the construction of a mutual relationship between photography and other art or craft practices in order to shift cultural perceptions of the discipline – removes film from its linear narrative and highlights the tropes and conventions of domestic space in the Western film and the historical landscape.

Focusing on narratives that reflect the period of US expansion and settlement in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thesis argues that the frontier home was fundamental not only to the historical mapping and settlement of the US West, but also to the re-enactment of that settlement within the Western film. Importantly, the research leads to the development of a discourse that highlights how the re-presentation of the home in Western film engages ideological imperatives at the time of the film's production, such that these films draw upon mythological and technological constraints that reflect current and prevalent attitudes and prejudices. Reflecting upon the home as a gendered space, the work engages with codes relating to the cinematic role of women within such films to identify and reveal stylistic tropes and filmic conventions used within the interior *mise-en-scène*, where female characters are placed in roles that typically act as a support for the male protagonist. This body of work therefore seeks to question the populist perception and importance of the home in the 'Wild West'.

The accompanying written thesis presents practice and theory as distinct but interwoven concerns, which are manifest as parallel discourses: one written in the first person, and one written in the third person. The reader is left to negotiate these personal and academic voices, both of which reflect a critical understanding of the importance of the domestic space in Western films.

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~

Dedicated to R.P. Dryden for those Saturday afternoons watching Westerns ...  
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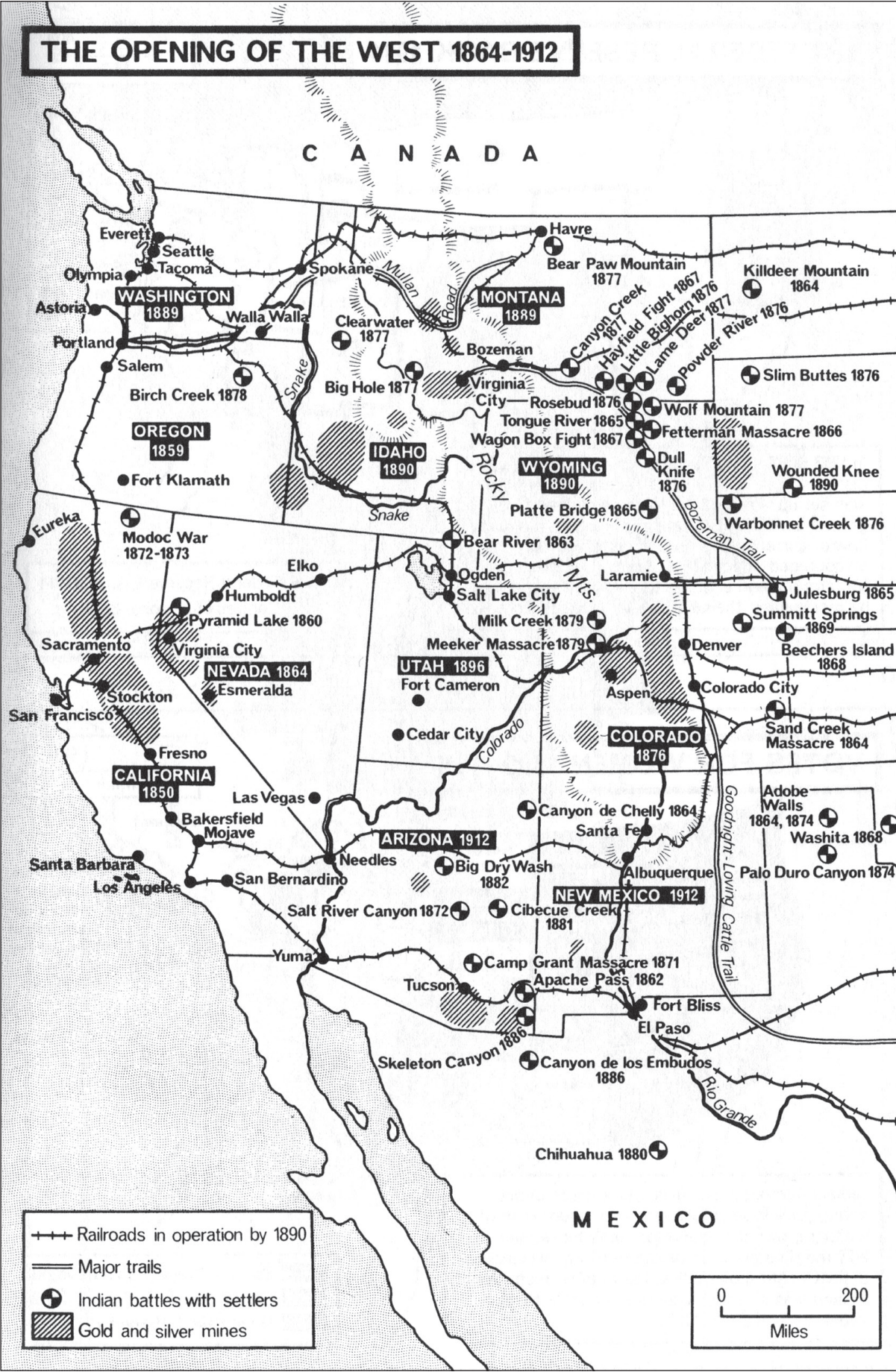


Fig.1: Map of early period of US settlement in the West, 1864-1912.

# INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the importance of the home space in the construction and settlement of the US West and draws attention to the mediated form of the home within the Western film genre.<sup>1</sup> Traditional elements within the Western narrative – drawn from a range of archetypes reflecting what historian Richard Slotkin calls ‘the language of Frontier symbolism – wilderness, savages’ (Slotkin 1985: 117) – include gunfighters, iconic heroes and villains that transverse epic mountain ranges, open prairies or desert landscapes, meeting and conflicting with others. Seldom would the first images that come to mind be based on actual settlements within the West, or the home space that supports that settlement, as these are elements that comprise what could be described as ‘hidden histories providing a memory of place often silenced in conventional accounts’ (Campbell 2000: 124). In so doing, the research highlights how several repetitive tropes can be observed in the architectural styles, family relationships, gendered spaces and cultural representation of the early settlement of the Western United States within the medium of cinema. All these aspects reinforce a mythical, fictional ‘Wild West’ that is an ideological construct, with the conventions of the physical and narrated home space used to convey rituals that reflect the cultural codes and audience worldview at the time of the film’s production. Ultimately, the home space becomes an ideological prop in the support of fictional storytelling that denies its historical reality.<sup>2</sup>

This study is paralleled and foregrounded by the production of a body of work that contributes to the exploration of expanded photography – the construction of a mutual relationship between photography and other art or craft practices in order to shift cultural perceptions of the discipline. The practice takes the image outside of its traditional frame and places it within the form of the American quilt, blurring the boundaries between material culture, traditional crafts and photographic practice. The research draws upon material generated during my trips across the United States, where I visited many historical locations and places of settlement (including small, isolated homesteads and larger preserved ghost towns). My journeys highlighted the extraordinary efforts of migration and settlement in relation to everyday experiences, and as such I was particularly interested in different climates, access to water and the construction and building materials of habitats. Travelling and exploring the remnants of historical architecture, combined with personal memories of watching Western films on a Saturday afternoon with my father as a young child, gave me the chance to reflect on received knowledge, and to question the importance of the home space in the ‘Wild West’.

My practice utilises the physical embodiment of US Western architecture in several surviving ghost towns. I have conducted research in seven such towns along with historical and archival field research in the states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona, photographing historical architectural structures and incorporating the resulting images within a series of practical outcomes. These images have been used in photographic exhibitions and in the

1. In *The Western: Parables of the American Dream* (1999), Wallmann and Wheeler note that many authors capitalise the term Western. They choose not to follow this convention; they use lowercase as they believe that as a genre it should be written, just like other genres, in lowercase. I disagree, as I place the term Western as a proper noun and in doing so, use the uppercase term.

2. Of course, it could also be said that this is reflected in the majority of film genres such as historical drama and science fiction, where the contemporary built environment is not reflected onscreen.



construction of the iconic object of the American home, the quilt. The traditional craft and practice of quilting offers an opportunity to reflect upon ‘*a particularly moving symbolism of the American democratic ideal*’ (Walker 1994: 198). This medium not only has a direct relationship to the home space but also acts as a vehicle in which to freeze-frame film, allowing a closer viewing outside of a time-based medium. Laura Mulvey develops this theme in her work and discusses how framing a still image from film allows the spectator to engage in ‘*representations of time that can be discovered in the relation between movement and stillness in cinema*’ (Mulvey 2006: 7). Mulvey’s critical analysis of repetition and the film still, the slowing down and freeze-framing of motion, can offer an alternative perspective on a type of film. The construction of the quilt, in this sense, ‘*evokes the ghostly presence of the individual celluloid frame*’ (Mulvey 2006: 26).

The medium of the quilt allows for a non-time-based experience in which to critically analyse the ideologies of the home space as presented in the Western film. The quilt also draws attention to the position of women as custodians of the home space and the gendered tropes and conventions that place her as a narrative anchor in support of the male protagonist. The form of the quilt itself carries gendered meaning, particularly through its long association with the notion of homemaking and women’s crafts, having been ‘*constructed over time in the context of changing ideological definitions of femininity as well as strongly gendered separations of the spheres of craft and art*’ (Walker 1994: 197). Equally, as Lucy Uppard observes, ‘*the mixing and matching of fragments is the product of an interrupted life... what is popularly seen as “repetitive”, “obsessive” and “compulsive” in women’s art is in fact a necessity for those whose time comes in small squares*’ (Uppard, cited in Walker 1994: 200).

In historical terms, the quilt itself foregrounds the female through ‘*a gendered practice that changed from one generation to the next, and that has now become the symbol of American identity at the fin de siècle*’ (Walker 1994: 198). Rozsika Parker in turn highlights a debate initiated by George Eliot in relation to sewing for bazaars, in that ‘*they permitted women to cross the threshold into public life, to be mobile themselves instead of acting as anchors for others*’ (Parker 2010: 163). These debates, of course, reflect those of traditional female exclusion within the exhibition of art and design, with the notion of craft being a low-end art form outside of high culture:

*There is more to the problem than the art/craft controversy... more than anything, it is sexism, not just elitism, that has kept quilts from a share of the space on museum walls. Quilts after all, have been and still are made almost exclusively by women in a culture where the work, concerns, and accomplishments of women are inexorably dismissed as meaningless and unimportant.* (Walker 1994: 197)

The use of the patchwork quilt within this work also questions a mythological object wrapped in American patriotism which reflects a notion of self-sufficiency connected to Western pioneer settlement. The quilt is often included in the *mise-en-scène* of Western films that are situated within the

narrative timeframe of the 1800s, though this visual representation is questionable. Quilts could, of course, have been transported to the West from an individual’s original home space. It is well documented that those dying on the journey would have often been wrapped in the family quilt to be buried, so it is viable that a person who has migrated West would be in possession of heirloom family quilts. However, the image of the pioneer woman constructing quilts and using every piece of available fabric is problematic, itself an ideological construct.

Across the developed Eastern United States in the early 1800s, manufacturing, technology and an ‘*alliance between technology and the attainment of liberty*’ (Kasson 1999: 13) became the driving force behind mass textile production. With the push toward the notion of Americanism, individuals were encouraged to look to home production of utility domestic objects; as John Kasson states, ‘*instead of buying “foreign trifles” colonists vowed to encourage industry, frugality, and independence through the production and consumption of native goods*’ (Kasson 1999: 9). The growth and transition of these ideas would not filter through to the American West until later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historians often focus on innovations within the major cities of the Eastern states, with the US portrayed as one country, and do not consider the sliding timeframes of different regions. In this sense, ‘*patchwork was not a product of pioneer life but of the industrial world*’ (Flanders 2014: 191).

The construction of the quilt relies on a surplus of reused textiles in good enough condition to combine to make a large, functional object. Judith Flanders explores how one single spinning wheel could only produce enough for an average family to be kept in stockings. Within the early settlement of the West, individuals would only own one or two sets of clothes, predominantly for work and ‘best’, hence it would have taken a very long time to have enough offcuts to make one single quilt. It took the development of inexpensive textiles through mass production – following the industrialisation of the West – for surplus material to filter down for pioneer women to accumulate enough to produce a patchwork quilt. This context allowed me to reconsider the quilt and its employment as a domestic object that symbolised the growth of the West and the self-sufficiency agendas pushed by the US government (see Frederick Jackson Turner’s thesis *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, for instance). In this sense, the quilt would allow me to produce practical work that directly fed into and allowed me to reflect upon the mythology that surrounds the West.

Given the above, this research reasserts the narrative function of such home spaces within the Western film genre in ways that critically reflect upon its historical context, with the following aims and objectives:

### Aims

- To explore ideological, mythological and technological constraints of the US Western frontier domestic space in relation to the Western film genre, and to demonstrate the repetitive use of common themes and stereotypes.

- To map cinematic conventions and the mythologies surrounding the mediated home space and to compare the film’s narrative timespan of the late 1800s with social and cultural codes and conventions of the time of production of the Western film.
- To identify the repetitive tropes and conventions within the exterior and interior of the home space that allow for narrative complexities to develop.
- To study the role of the female character within the home space in the context of the Western film, occupying both a ‘naturally’ feminine environment and as a narrative anchor in relation to male characters.

Objectives

- To document the historical and physical properties and stylistic tropes employed in the architectural construction of the US West frontier domestic space and ascertain their relevance to the mediation of historical narratives.
- To identify the visual tropes and conventions of the architectural US frontier domestic space (circa late 19<sup>th</sup> century) as depicted in its mediated form within the Western film.
- To create an original, practice-based discourse concerning the re-presentation of domestic space in the Western film genre.
- To work between practice and theory in the production of a body of visual work and a series of exhibitions which can inform further critical reflection as the project evolves.

The Western

Early Western films often drew heavily on narratives in the form of short stores and dime novels. In turn, these set the genre conventions that were produced by well-known authors such as E.Z.C. Judon (known as Ned Bunthine) who developed the archetypal legend of Buffalo Bill, the comic books of Stephen Crane including *The Bride Comes To Yellow Sky* (1898), Owen Wister who wrote *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey who wrote over eighty Western books including *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912). Translated to cinema, these narratives were often well known by the audience prior to viewing and were perfect for the film format with its limited ability to expand and improvise or to include a vast ensemble of characters in different narrative situations.<sup>3</sup> Slight variations in the plots occurred with the development of the low budget feature film between 1920-1940 and the introduction of the epic Western. The epic Western with its bigger budget and expansive cinematography was epitomised by blockbuster films such as *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze 1923), *The Iron Horse* (John Ford 1924), *The Big Trail* (Raoul Walsh 1930) and *Stagecoach* (John Ford 1939). As film evolved and running times became longer, story lines became more complex and the narratives evolved to embrace more diverse plots (see Chapter 2). This also coincided with developments in camera and lighting technology that allowed film makers to reframe and reposition characters in a more realistic way.

As the Western film developed and began to encompass new technicolour production technologies it also introduced the notion of the film star, with

actors such as Audie Murphy, Gary Cooper, James Stewart and John Wayne heading a cast of leading actors who came to define the genre at the height of its popularity in the 1940s and 1950s. From the 1950s onwards, a wider selection of narrative themes developed, adding a level of dramatic realism to Western films such as *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann 1952), *Shane* (George Stevens 1953) and *The Big Country* (William Wyllers 1958). During the 1960s, revisionist Westerns moved away from the traditional novel-based structure to introduce more complex readings (see, for instance, *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* [George Roy Hill 1969], *True Grit* [Henry Hathaway 1969] and *Django Unchained* [Quentin Tarantino 2012]).

The home space, both as an architectural form and as an aid to narrative, has not to date featured extensively in scholarly analyses of the Western film genre. Two excellent texts were published in 2017, *Spaces of the Cinematic Home: Behind the Screen Door*, edited by Eleanor Andrews, Stella Hockenhull and Fran Pheasant-Kelly, and *Spectacle of Property: The House in American Film* by John David Rhodes, described on the book’s jacket as ‘opening up a new and exciting field of study’. Both texts situate the home within a film context, without specifically focusing upon the Western. A third text, by Ahi Karaoghlanian, *The Architecture of Cinematic Spaces by Interiors* (2020), gives a very brief overview of the relationship between architecture and film in terms of the construction of floor plans from a variety of film genres. However, this work does not cover the Western and does not give an in-depth analysis of the use of the home space in film beyond a scoping overview.

Where my research intersects with emerging research is in discussions of the architectural and interior design and details, in particular the use of windows, doors and the use of rooms within the film narrative. These texts generally focus on a series of themes in relation to the cinematic home that cross a range of film genres where the architecture is either historically identifiable or reflects emerging social change; the texts also offer some discussion on vernacular architecture and basic methods of construction in contrast to the wider embrace of modernity and cultural progress. Nonetheless, the first two books only discuss the Western film genre twice, firstly to use D. W. Griffith’s film *Birth Of A Nation* (1915) and the wooden cabin as an example, with discussions on the narrative use of windows and doors and the notion of attack, and secondly John Ford’s *The Searchers* (1956) with discussion on the well-known shot of John Wayne standing in the door as a framing device. My research explores a series of theoretical and practical methods that can be utilised and expanded upon by other scholars and applied to other film genres. It extends this body of knowledge by conducting in-depth research into one film genre. The visual representation of both the landscape and the home space were crucial to the Western narrative, as André Bazin suggests:

*The continuous movement of the characters, carried almost to a pitch of frenzy, is inseparable from its geographical setting and one might just as well define the Western by its set – the frontier town and its landscape.* (Bazin 2005: 141)

3. These Western narratives were taken forward by directors such as Mitchell and Kenyon with *Kidnapping by Indians* (1899), a short film loosely based on the novel *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper (1826); Edwin Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) reflecting a novel of the same title produced by Scot Marble (1896); and D.W. Griffith’s *Birth Of A Nation* (1915) with ideas taken from a novel and play *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon Jr (1905).





Fig.2: Ranch set, Paramount Studios. Image courtesy of California Through My Lens.



Fig.3: Paramount Studios. Image courtesy of California Through My Lens.

#### 4. Locations include:

- Monument Valley, Arizona-Utah: made popular as a Western backdrop by John Ford who shot ten films there including *Stagecoach* (1936), *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *Rio Grande* (1950) and *The Searchers* (1956).
- Moab, Utah: used for cowboy gunfights from the 1940s onward, including John Ford's *Rio Grande* (1950) and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964).
- Lone Pine (Alabama Hills), California: used for desert scenery in films including Henry Hathaway and John Ford's *How The West Was Won* (1962) and *Nevada Smith* (1966) and Henry Hathaway and John Sturges' *Joe Kid* (1972).
- Jackson Hole, Wyoming: peaks of the Teton Range, used in George Stevens' *Shane* (1953) and Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012).
- Kanab, Utah: The area around Red Rock Bluffs (also known as Little Hollywood) featured in more than one hundred films and television shows including John Ford's *Drums Along The Mohawk* (1939), Stuart Heisler's *The Lone Ranger* (1956) and *Sergeants 3* (1962) and Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976).

5. When filming for the television series *The Little House On The Prairie* moved from Paramount to MGM (NBC 1970s) it repurposed sets from the film *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming 1939).

Western cinematic towns and houses reflect part of the film's *mise-en-scène* that includes the arrangement of props, actors, costume and lighting. The set design and scenography contextualise the location, affording a sense of place and space that situates the characters, the period and narrative. The cinematic home becomes a replica of the built environment, creating an illusion of architectural composition including structural elements, materials and aesthetics.

Western towns and houses were filmed mainly in one of five quintessential locations based on the terrain that was required for the film's narration. These were scouted for their ability to represent certain narrative plots that demanded either a mountainous or desert landscape.<sup>4</sup> Major film studios purchased undeveloped rural land and established movie ranches: structures dedicated to use as a generic location set. One of the most important factors was their location, usually less than thirty miles from a main studio to allow for transport links and quick access to technical support (such as photographic processing laboratories).

With costs prohibitively high to get a film crew and technicians to certain locations, the major Hollywood studios constructed stage sets onsite to represent whole streets and individual houses, for example Warner Brothers' Laramie Street. These sets contained repetitive elements that became familiar Western tropes, including a main street, saloon, jail, church, stables and a general store. With homesteads represented standing on their own just outside of the town, characters would ride through a void space to reach the main street facilities, then leave the other end of the street back into another empty space. All the constructed buildings and towns were therefore generic representations, '*a series of sets that demand and instigate action*' (Lehnerer, Macken, Kelly & Stieger 2013: 8). The narrative location of films would vary, but the same stage set would be reused and adapted as necessary. This was standard practice for Hollywood, where the repurposing of sets involved changing the facades and scenery to make them unrecognizable from other genre style films that had previously utilised the same materials.<sup>5</sup>

Within this research I use the term home space to describe any architectural structure that functions as a dwelling pertaining to the family or social unit. This includes structures that form part of a town as well as those placed in isolation for the purpose of the working and settlement of land (the homestead) and land acquired through the United States Public Land Act of 1863. The latter is my primary focus: structures that relate to the direct settlement of the West and align to the historical and cinematic film narrative period of 1862-1890. These dates fall within the same timespan as the US Government Homestead Acts that encouraged US citizens to relocate to the West and to establish new settlements and territories. During the research process, it became evident that mediated narratives of the migration West mainly fall into two broad categories, those depicted contemporaneously within advertising leaflets, literature, artwork and dime novels of the late nineteenth century and a second, later source, relating to television, posters and comics, largely inspired by photography and, particularly, film.

As I have noted above, much of the mythology of the 'Wild West' originated in dime novels, sensationalist newspaper stories and comic strips of the time, in turn informing the generic narratives and visual conventions of Western film in the early twentieth century. These subjects are discussed in more detail by John Dinan in *The Pulp Western: A Popular History of the Western Fiction Magazine in America* (1983) and Peter Rollins and John O'Connor in *Hollywood West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History* (2008). This led to a questioning of how these mediated forms translated to the visual representation of architectural stereotypes in the Western film genre.

Further research expanded on the communication theory of Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, particularly his classification of 'hot' and 'cool' media and the importance of channels of communication to the notions of connotation and meaning.<sup>6</sup> As an example of McLuhan's 'hot' media, popular films are rich in sensory data and constitute a powerful medium to communicate a sense of space and place and the portrayal of stereotypical ideologies. With the viewer's attention focused on the main narrative, there remains a space where the director can communicate other narrative information within the *mise-en-scène*, as Lamster notes, '*in more discreet ways, filmmakers can use their cameras to make statements about the built – or unbuilt – environment, or use that environment to comment metaphorically on any of a variety of subjects, from the lives of the characters in their films to the nature of contemporary society*' (Lamster 2000: 2).

The importance of my scholarship to the Western film genre was highlighted by one of the UK's leading specialists David Lusted in his introduction to the opening of my exhibition, *Ghost Host*, at Solent Showcase Gallery, Southampton in April 2016:

*Imaging the homestead has largely been a feature of record, in painting and photography. But imagining it – through story forms and visual narratives such as films – that is something else. And, it's in this area that Sarah's work bears the promise of breaking the ground of new knowledge, because the homestead hasn't featured much in film textual analysis... it is the kind of absence that Sarah's work promises to rectify.* (Lusted: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016)

The architectural spaces of the West – wooden cabins, sod houses – were often constructed in haste and were later replaced by permanent structures. The old settler camps no longer exist within the built environment (beyond museums and preserved ghost towns) and are not part of the physical landscape, hence they are not directly familiar to the audience. The landscape itself has also changed radically over the past two hundred years: forestry and land development for farming, along with the shift from open range to enclosures and the establishment of networks of roads, railways and access routes have dramatically impinged on what were once wild, open spaces. Cinema is enjoyed and viewed within the urban environment: the open range and the territories form part of an unfamiliar mythological past;



Fig.4: Paramount Studios. Image courtesy of California Through My Lens.



Fig.5: Paramount Studios. Image courtesy of California Through My Lens.

6. McLuhan theorised the effect of mass media on an individual's thoughts and behaviour. McLuhan's work identified the ways in which the choice of media plays an important role in the way content is perceived and interpreted.



*Westerns must have a certain kind of setting, a particular cast of characters, and follow a limited number of lines of action. A Western that does not take place in the west, near the frontiers, at a point in history when social order and anarchy are in tension, and that does not involve some form of pursuit, is simply not a Western.* (Ashley 1997: 73)

Along with the home/homestead space itself, I have drawn attention to the custodians and cultural mediators of the home space: the woman, the housewife, the mother, the sister, the partner, who was not only fundamental to the construction of the West, but also to the continuous nature of settlement. While it is not the central intention of this research to focus on the role of women, I am interested in the way that they have been framed through the cinematic home space, not only situated within the domestic role but also acting as an anchor to the meaning of other (male) characters.

Penny Sparke and Susie McKellar's *Interior Design and Identity* acknowledges the relationship of gender to class and ideological systems, stating that class '*... constitutes the dominant socio-cultural force behind the formation of the domestic interior*' (Sparke and McKellar 2004: 3). Sparke and McKellar see the domestic interior as a strongly gendered space; women dominate the interior, not only as producers but also as consumers. This point of view is also highlighted by Gillian Rose who draws attention to how the '*persistent reference to the home*' is used to '*signify a feminization of place*' (Rose 1993: 56). My research highlights the ways in which the narrative tropes and conventions of the Western have not portrayed women in an active light, since they are usually operating largely as a support to the male protagonist. However, while my work does focus on the importance of the home as a highly gendered space, it is not the intention here to offer an analysis of the role of women in the history of the US West.

Nevertheless, as John Lenihan (1980) notes, women within the Western (like the racist representation of indigenous people) have traditionally not featured well. They are usually portrayed as being lusted after – often by 'inferior' races – if not captured, violated, raped or they are simply represented as the focus of romantic desire. Seldom are they portrayed as powerful individuals whose presence was fundamental to both migration and settlement. As noted by André Bazin,

*The myth of the Western illustrates, and both initiates and confirms women in her role as vestal of the social virtues, of which this chaotic world is so greatly in need.* (Bazin 2005: 145)

One of the most renowned female historians of the United States, Patricia Nelson Limerick (1987), highlights the subject of this distorted representation of women, while still emphasising the masculine narrative of the construction of the West. Limerick's focus on women, however, is mainly in terms of the importance of the prostitute, although she does briefly investigate women's

role in the overland journey and the women who responded directly to the Homestead Acts. Women cannot be excluded from the narrative:

*Exclude women from Western history, and unreality sets in. Restore them, and the Western drama gains a fully human cast of characters – males and females whose urges, needs, failings, and conflicts we can recognize and even share.* (Limerick 1987: 52)

As David Lusted notes, the Western has long been associated with the gangster film in its representation of high drama and pockets of male-generated action. Just like the gangster film, the early Westerns relied on male conflict, with structural comparisons of good and bad, the villain and the hero,<sup>7</sup> the conflicts between the 'cowboy' and the 'Indian'.<sup>8</sup> Lusted asserts that '*the Western has historically privileged stories centring on men, offering limited and exceptional roles for women*' (Lusted 2003: 6).

As the family is '*one of the central agencies of socialisation in society*' (Wolf 1993: 77), it could be questioned why those films that highlighted historical overland journeys, the leaving of one home and the construction of another and the development of settlements, would not reflect the historical role of women, the home and its occupants with greater clarity, . The epic overland Western narratives naturally needed to represent shelter, somewhere in which to place women and children; first the interior of a wagon and secondly a more permanent structure, resulting in extended scenes that show home spaces, signifying settlement and stability. In this way the female characters did at least become more relevant within the narrative, if only in a very limited way and, as I have mentioned above, to support the male protagonist.

By the 1930s, the Western again, with its links to the gangster film, began to further extend its narrative cues from the Victorian melodrama: '*the melodrama and the Western assume an aesthetic and ideological imbrication between the place of the home and the space or sphere of the feminine and their attendant antinomies*' (Colomina 1992: 56). From the point of view of Hollywood, for a film to be popular it had to appeal to a mixed audience. Peter Stanfield notes how Westerns became '*tied up with finding ways and means of attracting women, whom the studios recognise are not the Western's foremost consumers*' (Stanfield 1999: 16).

It is clear to see how the Western appeals to a male audience, with that sense of the romance of independence, strength and pursuit of valour and chivalry. In terms of a female audience, the persona of the male star always appealed. Further to this, however, my research highlights the significance, affinity and familiarity of the mediated home space and the notion of the everyday, '*the taken-for-granted backdrop, the commonsensical basis of all human activities*' (Felski 200: 80). With the emphasis on advancement, settlement and population growth, the repetitive tropes and conventions reflecting the social and moral codes that surround the family group highlight the significance of the home.<sup>9</sup> It is in this area that the Western often appeals to

7. For example Michell and Kenyon's *Kidnapping By Indians* (1899), Edwin Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and Wallace McCutcheon's *The Pioneers* (1903). These Westerns featured a film running time of around 12 minutes.

8. I acknowledge that the term Indian is now culturally problematic.

9. The tropes and conventions identified within this work reflect a set of perspectives and habits that are affiliated to a particular person or group.

women: the inconsequential housework and child care scenes project the housewife’s symbolic values and identity, the importance of the home space and ‘*the social necessity of labour*’ (DeRoo 2017: 66).

The standard Victorian melodrama characters of the hero, the villain, the heroine, the aged parent, a sidekick and a servant are familiar to Westerns. The melodrama’s central tensions of post-industrialisation and social change in the 1900s also reflect similar elements to early Western films in relation to living conditions and a way of life. With the genre’s focus of examining family and social issues within the context of the home space, I situate the characteristics of the Victorian melodrama film as equally as important to the Western as the gangster film. Doing so situates both the home and the women of the West as fundamental to the Western film narrative. Although they occupy a limited number of roles, the presence of female characters does at least resituate the female character within the context of the drive west.

Through the journey of my research, three distinct areas of underdevelopment within scholarly investigation were identified:

1. The relationship between historical architecture of the West and its mediated cinematic form. Often the specific locality, natural environment and building materials are not considered as being important for the film by the director, with a generic shape of the home space representing what in practice would have been many diverse cultures and corresponding architectural structures.<sup>10</sup>

2. The cultural and social mythologies underpinning what is being presented in terms of the home space. The Western film draws upon mythological and technological constraints within its re-presentation of the home that often reflect prevalent attitudes and prejudices at the time of the film’s production.

3. The way the home space in the Western supports the film’s narrative drive and the framing of scenes. The conventions of spatiality, architectural and interior settings are utilised to highlight social dynamics and gendered roles.

Across these three areas, my research focuses on that what is presented within the Western film genre is a stylized, fictional image of the home space that bears little relation to historical reality in terms of the importance of the home space to the drive toward, development, construction and longevity of the West.

10. See for example D.W. Griffith (1916) *Intolerance*, Franklyn Barrett (1916) *The Pioneers*, Albert Herman (1940) *Rolling Home To Texas* and William Witney (1946) *Home In Oklahoma*.

# METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a variety of mixed methods, an approach that draws upon film theory alongside various models of critical analysis and classification integrated with practice-based modes of enquiry and reflection. The written thesis element of the submission critically interrogates the history of migration to the US West, notions of settlement and expansion, the mythology of the ‘pioneer’, the role of women in this agenda of advancement and progression, and the ways in which popular cultural artefacts employed these themes in the establishment of a genre of Western films in the twentieth century.

Visual research has also played an important role in defining the parameters of the work and in the establishment of a detailed classification of the tropes and conventions within the home space of the Western film. The initial stage of this process involved a broad, quantitative review of a wide range of Western films that reflected the period starting from, the late 1800s,<sup>11</sup> to ascertain common visual elements and their interrelation with the *mise-en-scène*. This quantitative research highlighted conventions regularly seen on screen, including hierarchical family construction, the home as a gendered space, interior and exterior architectural styles and materials and aspects relating to the cultural representation of the home. This formal review of content focused on different aspects of building structure, i.e., the use of materials, reaction to climate, weathering, identification of common interior elements (decoration, objects, housewares, china etc.), employing visual comparison and repetition to highlight commonality. The points within the duration of the film where the home space occurred on screen were also noted at this stage. Once a series of common visual and structural elements had been identified, practical work was undertaken to communicate – or highlight – patterns, distinctions and thematic conventions. Visual typologies were employed to reveal and communicate commonalities in several identified visual themes, from objects and architectural details to the gendered home space, patterns of behaviour and stereotypical representations in plot, narrative and set styling. It is important to note that the visual research methods utilised were developed to reveal and communicate collective visual tropes, patterns and narrative conventions across a range of Western films. As such, I chose not to conduct a close visual analysis of individual images (such as film stills), and instead utilised methods that focus on classification, taxonomies and typologies (Noble & Bestley 2015).

Although my research includes what is considered the first Western films, *Kidnapping by Indians* (1899) directed by the Mitchell and Kenyan film company and *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) directed by Edwin S. Porter, these films do not reference the home space. Instead, I looked for early film examples where an element of the narrative focus was on the home and then looked for examples that showed a variation of domestic structure or/and interior scenes. These include the early films of D.W. Griffith which fall within the Western genre such as *The Renunciation* (1909), *Ramona* (1910), *The Massacre* (1912) and *The Battle Of Elder* (1913), and those that do not; for example, *Romance Of*

11. See Bibliography for full list of films.



*A Jewess* (1908), *Her First Adventure* (1908), *A Child Of The Ghetto* (1910) and *Her Mothering Heart* (1913). Looking outside the Western genre allowed me to ascertain whether there is a generic style of the domestic within film in general or if each film genre has its own style of domestic representation.<sup>12</sup>

At the start of my research, it became evident that the Western film covered many genres and the complete spectrum of film history; as Bazin notes ‘*the Western is the only genre whose origins are almost identical with those of the cinema itself*’ (Bazin 2005: 140). As the genre covers such a vast time span, I selected a broad sample with the intention of comparing the visual elements of the home space across different sub genres. Once a systematic analysis of the visual conventions of the cinematic Western home space was achieved, I compared the repetitive tropes to life story museum sites and ghost towns to investigate variables in representation.<sup>13</sup> At this stage a need arose to contextualise a method and a rationale for using photography through which to build an archive of work.

My practical work draws upon the production and consumption of American photography 1839-1938, with a later focus on the relationship between photography and the development of film and the moving image. During the latter part of this period, experiments in cinema reflected on the still and moving image and the construction of ‘realism’ through film. Examples of photographers and filmmakers who explored this notion included the American photographer Walker Evans, whose shift from documentary to art photography inspired me to look at the ‘static movie’, the organisation and juxtaposing of still images to create meaning. This in turn draws upon Sergei Eisenstein’s 1929 ‘*dialectical approach to film*’ (Gray 2010) – the reassembling of images, incorporating elements of montage to give multiple readings that engage the reader in the creation of meaning. Bertolt Brecht’s essay *An Interpretation of a Text* (1967) deliberately foregrounded the multiple layers and meanings embodied within an open text (Monaco 1977). This led to the investigation of contemporary expanded photography through which to explore new connections between photography and another form of visual communication, with the quilt mediating reassembled images for the audience to visualise mythological storytelling. The contribution to photographic practice has been utilised through quilt making, expanding and changing the photographic frame into a tactile medium. A range of experimental work is documented at my website [www.sarahdryden.com](http://www.sarahdryden.com).

Latterly, my practical methodology was informed by Laura Mulvey’s research on interrupting the film’s flow of time and viewing, ‘*during which some detail has lain dormant*’ (Mulvey 2006: 8). This process involved taking the moving film and delaying time, halting the narrative and creating a stillness of the frame which allows the viewer to engage with the work differently, through the ability of return and repetition.

## Experimental Work

My practical work identified the key conventions of domestic settings within the Western film and I isolated both exterior and interior detail of recurring

tropes. Using film software packages such as iMovie and QuickTime, I edited scenes from various films together to run as one film essay, looking not only at the representation of constructed space and function of the home space, but also the cinematic processes through which the representation was formed. These early time-based experiments formed a working method, rather than a visual practice or outcome, allowing me to highlight commonly recurring conventions and to communicate to a viewing audience as part of the Ghost Host exhibition at Southampton Solent University in 2016.

The next step was to shoot still images on location at preserved sites and ghost towns in the US West. In most cases, I had to operate within an extremely limited timeframe for access to interior spaces that are normally off-limits to the visiting public. Realising that the experience would probably be a one-off chance within some sites, I developed a photographic grid system prior to the shoot to cover as many aspects of the home space as possible (see appendices). I chose to seek out aspects of each interior space that reflected technological, material, economic, social and design-informed agendas and contexts.<sup>14</sup> Observational and photographic location work was conducted during two visits to the Western United States, via the special collections department of the University of Nevada, Reno, NV and the State Archives in Sacramento, California. Additionally, I sourced and photographed three different ghost towns (site visits in 2012 and 2015) that either related to the time span of a domestic setting being explored (1800s) and/or are linked via their generic representation to the Western film in terms of the architectural or historical narrative, the Gold Rush narrative and as educational sites. The first of these was Kern County Museum, Bakersfield, California.<sup>15</sup> The museum’s mission statement reflects the desire to preserve important examples of local architecture, reflected through the relocation of historical houses to the museum site to give visitors a linear journey through a timeline of architectural styles and conventions.

The second site, Calico ghost town in Yermo, Southern California, is a reconstructed ghost town that includes a domestic cave setting and one original domestic structure. Many of the original buildings were removed to local towns and replaced instead with ‘gingerbread’ architecture and false facades, made of wood with a weathered appearance.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Fort Bluff, Utah (close to Monument Valley) includes a reconstruction of a settlement with one original domestic structure. The rest of the domestic buildings within the fort are reconstructions so a direct comparison between the historical and the modern-day reconstruction can be made. These early site visits led me to further locations that would become central to my research: The Homestead Museum at Cedar City, Utah and Bodie State Park, California. Further details of these visits follow in Chapter One of the thesis. My practice continued to involve the development of methods to combine and contrast visual material from historical sources, cinematic representations of the American West and my own documentary photography, moving from documentary practice to contemporary art practice.

I developed a practice of transferring my images from my photographic archive and film stills onto fabric and reassembled them based on the historical



Fig.6: Kern County Museum, Bakersfield, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.7: Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

12. Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language defines the term genre as ‘*a category of artistic, musical or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form or content*’.

13. Museum sites were selected purely to aid the practical investigation. This work does not offer a full analysis of museology.

14. This grid system did not function well onsite. The ghost towns, particular Bodie, are very guarded as historical objects in their own right. I was extremely lucky to be given access to the interior spaces, but this was only under very tight control, with a guide, who would often like to talk about the historical narratives of who had lived in the house, drawing on the sites set narrativity. I could not use a tripod or put my camera bag down and was guided to where I could stand. Flash photography was not allowed. This led to a very stylised set of images, mostly shot at head level very much like past literature of the West, including the aesthetic finish of a film which is styled by the director and stage set designer.

15. Bakersfield was also the location of filming for *The Wind*.

16. An architectural style that consists of elaborately detailed embellishment. Loosely based on fictional depictions of Western towns of the 1830s.



Fig.8: Cabin interior, Fort Bluff Museum, Utah. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

object of the American quilt. This textile object has a direct relationship with the American home and relates to the narrative film period of Western films of pre-industrial times, home and the notion of craft, traditional methods of production that take place in the home and feminine behaviour. I aimed to represent the use of interior and exterior spaces through image selection, editing and reproduction and the creation of textile-based objects that hold some significance in the history and culture of the United States. This entailed the development of a new skill for me as I could not sew before this project and embarked on local classes. Joining a quilting bee and learning the process not only gave me new skills and a better understanding of the notion of pre-industrial craft, but the act itself became a process where narrative stories were shared and information exchanged, a meditative process that can be both a solitary and a collective experience, a chance for the academic discourse to link to community ideals.

Each quilt explores how the narrative is broken into segments. Taking sequences from my film selection and my own images, 'it reflects the fragmentation of woman's time, the scrappiness and uncertainty of women's creative or solitary moments' (Walker 2010: 199). The quilt panels were first developed with computer software, later in material form.<sup>17</sup> The sizing of the quilt is based on elements of the Hollywood method of using repetition of segments of montage, scenes and the unity of time, space and action leading to a visual narrative. The quilt panels also play on colour and lighting, foreground and background, dissolves and transitional sequences.

## Thesis Structure

This thesis has been divided into sections relating to the introduction, context and methodology, followed by an explanation of my practical work (including personal diary extracts from my travels in the American West). The section reflecting upon the practical work utilises a different font, and the page layout has been designed to reflect these intersecting and parallel research investigations. All work that directly relates to my own discourse has been written in the first person, while the three contextual chapters have been written in the standard neutral third person protocols of academic writing. These three chapters have distinct themes identified as being underdeveloped in academic studies, the relationship of the Western to historical data, the ideological shifts in the representation of the home space and the home space in terms of reoccurring tropes and conventions. A great deal of consideration was given to the utilisation of terms used in the document to describe the cinematic domestic space and if this should be house, home or domestic space, with a final decision on the *home space* where it is grammatically possible. In this sense the word home is used as a noun that describes a place where the members of a family live on a (semi) permanent basis and this can be extrapolated to include the term 'homestead'.

The research references the film narration of the nineteenth century, itself having been largely produced between the early 1900s and late 1950s. This

reflects the peak period of popularity of the Western film genre; between World War Two and the 1960s, before the widespread adoption the aforementioned revisionist approach in the 1960s. Early Western films do not make explicit reference to converging cultural groups; most narratives are only in relation to one cultural group, often in conflict with another. Post-1950, Westerns carried narratives linked to a shift of the cinema experience and the technological development of film. The 1960s and 1970s saw the last of the epic Western films linked to notions of nostalgia and/or national identity, and from this period a shift towards a postmodern reading of the Western.<sup>18</sup>

My practice is aimed at a contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century audience. The 1800s narrative covers the associated time of the development of a culturally and historically specific United States identity (1800-1848), together with the expansion of territory and the Homestead Acts of 1862-1890. During this period the acquisition of new territory and the development of national identity were key to what would subsequently become the central narrative concern of the Western film genre.

## Practical Research

This section, which is integrated into the thesis (identified by both a different typographic treatment and colour palette) reflects on the relationship between my practice and theory and considers my methods for presenting an original discourse. The practical and theoretical elements of the work can be read both complementarily and independently of each other: the reader is invited to navigate through the dialogue between the two voices/styles.

Within this research, I have taken an interdisciplinary approach, utilising film, photography, performance, theatre studies, architecture, interior design, historical and mythological studies, with the practical focus on visual outcomes that seek to reflect the critical position of the research. This practice-based research has produced an original discourse that brings together archive images, film stills and my own photographic images of structures that remain in US ghost towns to reproduce a contemporary mediated form that seeks to highlight and problematise the popular representation of the historic home space in the US West. As David Lusted states,

*The images in our head were drawn not from any real West – we had few history books and historical images, and the West was not a topic on the school curriculum – but from the fictional West of Western films, comics and television series'. (Lusted 2003: 9)*

I wish to capitalise on Lusted's statement, taking the idea of mediated forms and their ideological meaning, constructing visual artefacts that reflect the tropes and conventions presented within both staged mediations of ghost towns and Western film. As Neil Campbell argues, 'American cinema constantly shoots and reshoots a single fundamental film, which is the birth of a nation-civilisation' (Campbell 2008: 113).<sup>19</sup>

18. The second half of the 1960s was dominated by America's involvement with Vietnam. Western film stars such as John Wayne publicly supported the right wing politicians, while Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan remained symbols of patriotic America. As a director, Wayne took the characteristics of the Western and transferred them to other genres that supported the US position on Vietnam, for instance *The Green Berets* (Wayne 1968).

19. Campbell takes up the thread where Lusted leaves off, making between them a comprehensive study on the Western film genre from a UK perspective.

17. A description of the technical construction of each quilt is included in the practice section of each chapter. These sections are clearly identified by a tinted page colour and different typographic styling.



Although most extended bodies of photographic work finish with an exhibition, this was my starting point.<sup>20</sup> I constructed two solo exhibitions over a period of two years, with a view to adding to the critical discourse around the history, nature and context of the Western film genre. The exhibitions were intended to be a contribution to what already exists, but with a focus on the home space rather than the generic themes of the Western film. Like photography, *‘cinema has a privileged relation to time, preserving the moment at which the image is registered, inscribing an unprecedented reality into its representation of the past’* (Mulvey 2006: 9).

Meredith Davis and Jamer Hunt (2017) highlight the fact that a range of visual phenomena in our everyday lives such as the home space attract attention, orient our behaviour and create compelling and memorable communication. As such, the representation of the home offers a rich resource to the creative practitioner seeking to offer new insight and critical reflection on accepted historical and fictional narratives. My practice then moved beyond documentary style photography to a wider range of creative practices drawing upon the notion of expanded photography to analyse the visual and conceptual tropes of the Western film and offer further critical positions. Reflecting on Marshall McLuhan’s notion of hot and cool media and Laura Mulvey’s notion of stillness and the freezing of film still, my work moved on to the familiar iconic object of the American home space, the quilt, a medium directly related to the domestic space and *‘a distinctive feature of American society’* (Walker 1994: 198) which carries its own mythological framework.

I employed traditional quilt grids and pre-industrial methods of construction – *‘the homemade, handmade and the natural’* (Parker 2010: 1) – to highlight the conventions of the Western film in comparison to the preserved built interiors of ghost towns in the Western States. By freeze-framing film images, slowing down the flow of film and repositioning them as a section of narrative, the audience is moved away from the time-based medium of film, a deferred action, to be able to return again and again to reconstruct new perspectives.

## Chapter Structure

Knowledge structures are situated within a cultural and historical framework that runs the risk of establishing conceptual, critical and analytical blind spots as time passes and conventions become embedded and perpetuated. New critical frameworks are often rooted in mutations of knowledge from previous structures that have become secreted within invisible but potentially distorting foundations. It is only when we start digging that we can equip ourselves with new critical tools to understand both the past and present. As such, the investigation of the historical construction of the frontier domestic space of the US West in Chapter One underpins my explorations of the ideological, mythological and technological constraints detailed in Chapter Two and film narrative tropes and conventions in Chapter Three. Each chapter reflects a thematic approach to the research and is extended with a critical reflection on the practical work that has been produced in relation to that theme.

## Chapter One

The first chapter begins with an exploration of the philosophical, historical and material construction of the US West (1862-1890). In doing so it acts as an anchor through which to compare the mediated form of the home space in Western film – in terms of its architectural construction and narrative conventions – with life story museums and ghost towns situated in the US West and the physical architecture of preserved buildings.

Most published histories of the development of the Western United States produced between the late nineteenth century and the latter part of the twentieth century (Slotkin, Simmon, Lusted, Limerick) draw upon the model initiated by the historian Frederick Jackson Turner in his 1893 thesis *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. This narrative centred on the evolution of what was to become known as ‘the West’ in the context of US expansion between the east and west coast of the North American continent.

Pioneers moving into the wilderness and away from crowded cities on the eastern seaboard experienced a return to primitive living conditions that reflected an earlier age, notably the time of the Puritans and the first settlers (around the early seventeenth century). This return to a more rudimentary existence destroyed some of the inherited values associated with cultural progress in the developed settlements of the thirteen original states, which had been evolving since July 1776 following the Declaration of Independence.

Although I acknowledge that the US West at the time of pioneering (the mid-to late-1800s) was already populated with many different and converging ethnic groups, my research has largely followed the structure of the Western film before its revisionist approach in the 1960s. As such, I have made a conscious decision to focus on the construction and living conditions of the white Anglo/European and American family group(s) and the work does not attempt to investigate the representation of the living conditions of the Indigenous Americans who occupied the same regions in the same period. Jackson Turner’s paper also explored how the moving frontier had a direct impact on the settlement of pioneers who travelled west. This theme of movement across the landscape and the leaving of one home to travel to a new home became one of the most iconic features of the epic Western film. This is also highlighted in a shift in narrative that further encompassed the need for a mediated cinematic home space.

The significance of this cinematic Western home space is also explored in terms of where in the time frame of the film the home appears and why and within what geographical landscape the home is situated in. This chapter also explores how the historical US Western homestead was constructed, what its physical properties were and how the building of these homes related to climate and their position within the geographical landscape.

20. Two exhibitions were created during the course of the research: *Ghost Host*, Southampton in 2016 and *Once Upon A Time In The West*, North Shields in 2018.

## Chapter Two

This chapter is premised on the notion that many Western film narratives set in the 1800s reflect the socio-cultural conditions of the film's time of production. It explores the ways in which these embedded values are manifest through the cinematic home as a vessel, a container that holds up and helps to structure a combination of narrative disciplines, including technological processes, folklore, historiography, material culture, architectural and interior styling and cultural, political and social codes and conventions.

The personification of the drive west was visualised in a painting produced by John Gast in 1872, *Manifest Destiny* (see Figure 9). This term was first used by newspaper editor John O'Sullivan in 1845 to describe continental expansionism. The painting includes the feminine figure of Columbia, the figure of progress, the goddess of liberty acting as a female personification of the United States. The strong female form symbolises freedom and regeneration. This contrasts with the image of the long-suffering female pioneer as a victim, reflecting Limerick's suggestion of the frontierswoman as a tragic martyr; '*torn from family and civilization, overworked and lonely, disoriented by an unfamiliar landscape, frontierswomen could seem to be tragic martyrs to their husbands' wilful ambitions*' (Limerick 1987: 48). Both representations of course are mythical figures, both reliant on the male protagonist, Columbia being the feminised version of Columbus.

Philip Davis and Brian Neve (1985) introduce key writers and historical reference points in film, noting André Bazin's questioning of authenticity: film cannot stay faithful to history, as it cannot provide historical content. This relates to Foucault's position that understanding is not processed in a linear manner. Davis and Neve look not towards the historical but to the Hollywood product and the foundations of American myths.

Underlying all the chapters within this work will be a critical analysis of the domestic space as a place of ideological and hierarchical power that reinforces industrialisation and the growth of the United States, with architectural detail and interior décor embodied as conventions of culture, knowledge and class. The mythical space of the West before the Hollywood system was propagated through literature and dime novels, but became popular within Western film of the 1950s, portraying a romanticised vision of life on the frontier.

## Chapter Three

In many Western films, for example Fred Zinnemann's *Oklahoma* (1955) and Victor Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928), the epic landscape is utilised for the first opening scene, followed by a contextual shot of an architectural space, often then followed by an interior shot (a structure borrowed from the novel). The structure of Chapter Three follows a similar convention: starting with the domestic space in context and in contrast to the landscape, leading on to conclude with an exploration of the interior *mise-en-scène*, from outside to inside. The architectural features of the homestead are explored to ascertain repetitive



Fig.9: John Gast, *Manifest Destiny*, 1872.

tropes and conventions in the way windows, doors, floors and structural space provide an anchor for the narrative to develop. Secondly, I propose that the home space is fundamental to the various narrative shifts and changes within Western film. Here, the home space becomes an anchor for the exploration of the relationship dynamics between characters that situate the plot.

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) relates the concept of inside-outside to philosophical domestic space. The text focuses on the imagining of a space and the complexity of human lived experience in relation to built structures. A clear relationship can be seen between the domestic space of the imagination and narrative structures in film, as both relate to imaginative storytelling. This is an important element within my research as it discusses the ways in which social dynamics, habits and rituals are formulated around interior spaces and how the individual views a structure from a range of different perspectives. The interior *mise-en-scène* is analysed in terms of stylistic convention, gender depictions, typologies of family and/or social rituals and the physical properties and stereotypical tropes employed in the decoration of the domestic space. The work explores, via the main sample films with some reference to a wider scope, how interior setting and material objects are used to convey a sense of the identity of each character along with shifts and pauses within the narrative that allow the plot to develop. This will include interior spatial configurations, their function and the characters' interaction with material objects, with the narrative determining order, frequency and direction.

The utilisation of the home space as a female gendered space also focuses on gendered situational politics, the codes and conventions of the cinematic role of women, and feminine roles within the Western film. In this sense, the house becomes a multifactorial object based on narrative demands that place the female character in support of the male protagonist.



## Selected Films in the Practical Research

My rationale relates to the production of films that highlight the period under investigation, the 1880s, and looks at those that include the domestic space as a key focus to the construction of the narrative.



Fig.10: *The Wind* (1928).

### ***The Wind* – Directed by Victor Sjöström (1928)**

Rationale: A very early example of a Western that focuses on the domestic space as central to its narrative. The film reflects early conventions in terms of both the external architecture in the landscape, its interior setting and the interaction between the characters within the home space. The film's director was Swedish, which suggests possible cultural alternative views of landscape. The film was shot in and around Bakersfield and in the Mojave Desert, California, with the narrative set in Sweetwater, Texas. Scenes mirror D.W. Griffith's *The Mothering Heart* (1913), with Lillian Gish playing the lead female role in both films.



Fig.11: *The Homesman* (2014).

### ***The Homesman* – Directed by Tommy Lee Jones (2014)**

Rationale: This film is based on pioneer life in the 1800s and adapted from a book by Glendon Swarthout. Historically, husbands would hire a so-called homesman to bring wives back to communities on the edge of the frontier. *The Homesman* was filmed in New Mexico with the narrative set in Nebraska and contains many shots of a variety of interior/exterior domestic spaces. *The Wind* and *The Homesman* show a very early and a recent representation of domestic life on the plains from a perspective that seeks to highlight the inhospitable

landscape and its ability to create mental instability within a gendered space that is referenced heavily in literature of the American West.



Fig.12: *Jane Got A Gun* (2016).

### ***Jane Got A Gun* – Directed by Gavin O'Connor (2016)**

Rationale: The narrative is set in 1871, filmed in New Mexico, although the film offers something of a contemporary view. The film contains a female lead with the narrative set around a secluded domestic ranch. As such, it is a good comparison to *The Wind* in terms of depicting a gendered space and a leading lady role. The film also had a female director of photography (Mandy Walker).



Fig.13: *Shane* (1953).

### ***Shane* – Directed by George Stevens (1953)**

Rationale: The narrative of this film is based around a homestead and town space circa 1863-1865 with historical references to the 1862 Homestead Act. The story and the location of actual filming were both in Wyoming. The film uses a backdrop/stage set throughout the film; the Grand Teton mountain range that was also used in TV Westerns including *Gunsmoke* (1955-75), *Wagon Train* (1957-65), *Tales Of Wells Fargo* (1957-62) and *The Lone Ranger* (1949-57). This film allows for an investigation into the technological shifts in location shooting during the 1950s.





Fig.14: *Calamity Jane* (1953).

***Calamity Jane* – Directed by David Butler (1953)**

Rationale: This film highlights the representation of a gendered domestic space, while at the same time it clearly reflects the stereotypical gender roles of the 1950s. It is a musical comedy-based Western with the female characters central to the narrative. Set in South Dakota, the film was shot in California. Both *Shane* and *Calamity Jane* were produced within the same year, showing a variation of the Western genre within the same period.



Fig.15: *The Searchers* (1956).

***The Searchers* – Directed by John Ford (1956)**

Rationale: The narrative of this film represents the period of 1820-1875 and is listed by the US Library of Congress as culturally, historically and aesthetically significant.<sup>21</sup> The film narrative includes a raiding of a family home; with the storyline set in Texas, it was filmed in Monument Valley in Arizona/Utah. The setting shows a good example of a cinematic sod house (see Chapter One). The director, John Ford, was very influential in the development of the Western genre and its iconography.

21. The film is based on a 1954 novel by Alan Le May, who in turn based his book on the true-life story of Cynthia Ann Parke, a nine year old girl who was abducted by the Comanche Indians from her prairie home in Texas in 1836.



Fig.16: *High Plains Drifter* (1973).

***High Plains Drifter* – Directed by Clint Eastwood (1973)**

Rationale: To compare set and location architectural construction. Universal wanted Eastwood to shoot on its back lot, but Eastwood chose to shoot on location instead. The film was shot in Mono Lake California, with additional locations used in Reno, Nevada, Winnemucca Lake and California Inyo National Forest. The narrative is based in an isolated mining town around 1848-1855.

This was the first film that Eastwood starred in and directed after playing the main lead in Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns. Eastwood built an entire town for the set including fourteen houses incorporating complete interiors rather than just facades. The position of the fictional town is just a few miles from Bodie, an historic ghost town and life story museum site used within my practical work. Although no records exist to say Eastwood visited the town, the construction style and methods closely mirror the houses at Bodie.



Fig.17: *The Unforgiven* (1960).

***The Unforgiven* – Directed by John Huston (1960)**

Rationale: On the cusp of postmodern writings of the Western. Filmed in Durango, Mexico with the narrative based in post-Civil War Texas. A stranger (Joseph Wiseman) spreads a rumour that the Zachary family's adopted daughter Rachel (Audrey Hepburn) is a Kiowa Native American. Consequently, the family (Audie Murphy, Burt Lancaster and Lillian Gish) must defend themselves against racist white aggressors and vengeful Kiowa. The film highlights issues of racism against Native Americans.



Fig.18: Preserved building, Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.





Fig.19: Inscription Rock, New Mexico. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

# CHAPTER ONE

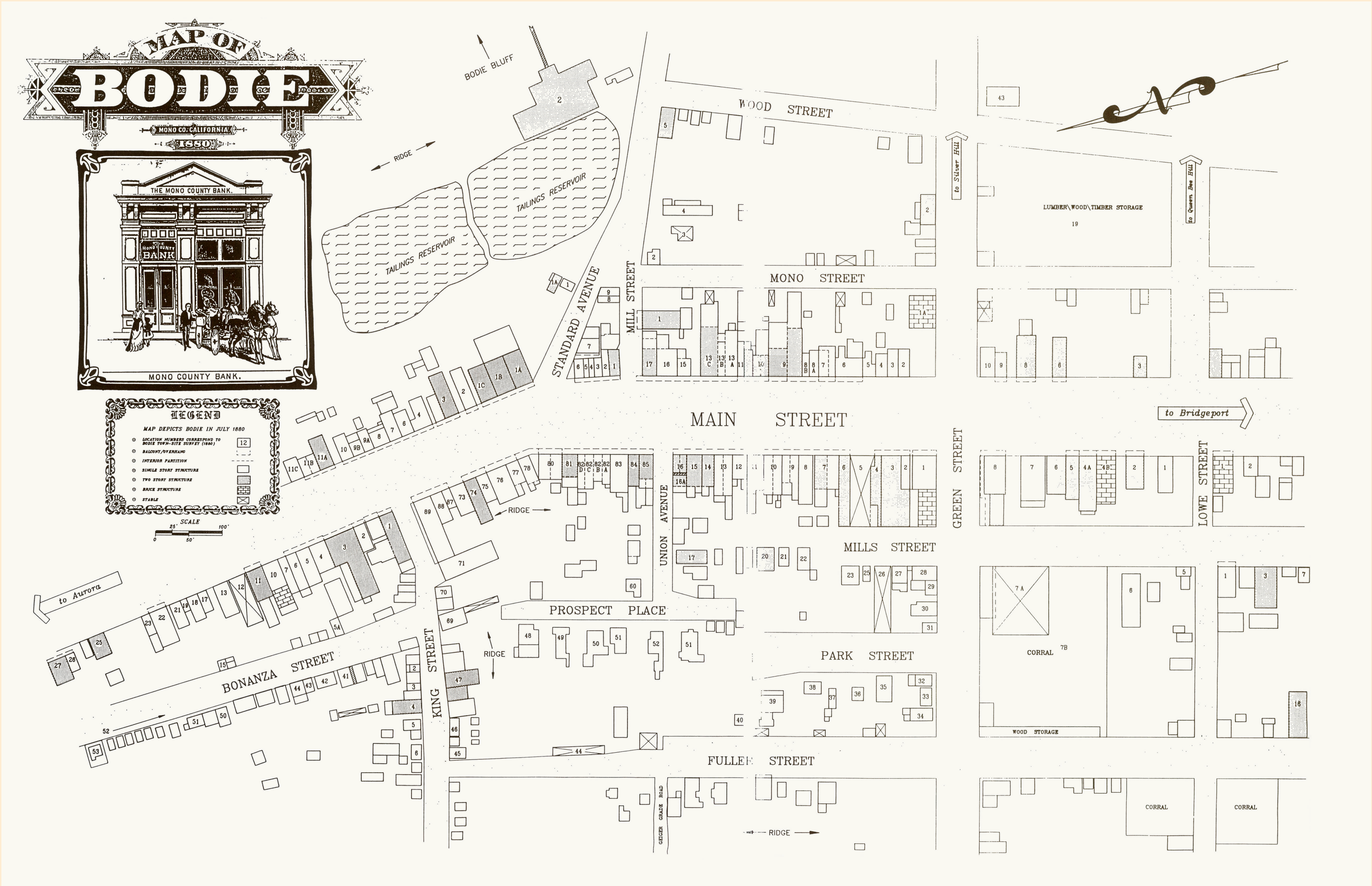
*Diary Extract (August 2012)*

*Driving across the US West, it felt like I was in a small part of a vast landscape that just went on and on for miles. Landmarks took on a different perspective of time and space; you think you are close to a destination, but it is an illusion. The heat was a major problem, causing me to experience physical issues like sleepiness and headaches. The hue on the road gave a distorted view, the position of the sun giving a lot of shadow detail and making photography very difficult. The environment was so harsh, and houses were few and far between. All of this led me to consider how important the domestic space is to the area in terms of survival, which in turn led me to question why domestic spaces are never a key feature within Western films. Why have I not noticed this before? Was I distracted? Caught up in the mediated narrative?*



Fig.20: US West. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.







My practical work developed with a photographic study of seven different US Western ghost towns as physical embodiments of the built environment. Initial photographic location research was conducted over two visits to the Western states, via the Special Collections department of the University of Nevada, Reno, NV and the State Archives in Sacramento, California. Additionally, I sourced and photographed different ghost towns (site visits 2012 and 2015) that either related to the time span of a domestic setting being explored (1800s) and/or are linked via their generic representation to the Western film in terms of the architectural or historical narrative, the Gold Rush and the educational site. The first of these was Kern County Museum, Bakersfield, California. Bakersfield was the location of filming for *The Wind*. The museum's mission statement reflects the desire to preserve important examples of local architecture, reflected through the relocation of historical houses to the site to give a linear journey around architectural styles and conventions of the domestic space. The second site, Calico Ghost Town, Yermo, California, is a reconstructed ghost town that includes a domestic cave setting and one original domestic structure. Fort Bluff, Utah (close to Monument Valley) includes a reconstruction of a settlement with one original structure.

Two sites have been instrumental within the development of my investigation. The first is the Homestead Museum, Cedar City, Utah. This site is focused on education and curator Ryan Paul is a specialist on the migration west and a Professor of American History in Southern Utah University.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, I chose to use Bodie, a former mining town that lies East of the Sierra Nevada mountain range in Mono County, California, for my extended photographic work as I had access granted to both the exterior and interiors of the domestic buildings. It is testament to the originality of my research that the US State National Park and the Bodie Foundation allowed me access to the interior of the domestic spaces; other than park rangers and Bodie Foundation staff, I am one of but a few people to enter the houses since 1965, as even the dust within the buildings is subjected to a preservation order.<sup>23</sup>

The same buildings within Bodie have been used to represent a very diverse fictional historical and cultural background, from Wild West gun fighting to the spaghetti Western iconography of Burkes Roberts' *Spindrift: Ghost of the West* (2014). Bodie has also been used as a location for television historical documentaries, including Huell Hower Production's *California Gold* (1992), Lynn Stevenson's *Ghosts of California* (2003) and Flight 33 Production Company's *Forgotten Planet* (2011), further perpetuating the mythical form of the domestic setting within the US West. I made two site visits, the first in 2012 and the second in 2015. I also conducted a location site visit of the fictional town of Lago from the film *High Plains Drifter*, ten miles away from Bodie near Mono Lake.

Life story or living history museum sites project architecture as a narrative medium that communicates a sequence of past events through the immersion of visitors in what it describes as 'authentic' living conditions, with the wooden house acting as an iconic symbol of the construction and reconstruction of the US West. Those visiting the site pay their ten dollars and can wander through the dust roads,

22. This contact was not only important from a practical sense, but also in terms of the written history of the US West migration. He was instrumental in guiding me through the huge array of secondary resources, for which I will always be indebted.

23. Bodie is an important site for me to investigate as it has a direct relationship with film settings: first with the suggestion that the fictional town of Lago in Clint Eastwood's *High Plains Drifter* draws its inspiration from the site, and second that the site has been used as a film set from as early as 1929 with William Wyler's *Hells Heroes* right up to and beyond Jared Isham's *Trail To Mercy* in 2015.



Fig.22: The Homestead Museum, Cedar City, Utah. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.23: Preserved buildings, Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.24: Mono Lake, California: Location for the fictional town of Lago in *High Plains Drifter*. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.





Fig.25: Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

peering into the windows of the houses to view the interior spaces, akin to those visiting a cinema and accessing the film's narrative via the screen, both framing a performative mythological idea of life in the 'Wild West'. Here is rural tourism consciously echoing the format of Western film, reinforcing a mythical historical narrative of how people lived, with the interiors acting as traces of everyday life.

It is clear to see (although the Bodie Foundation deny it) that the interior props and objects and their setting are staged. Further into the research I tracked down Carl Chavez, a Bodie Park Ranger who, together with his wife, Margaret, wrote the memoir *A Year in Bodie 1966-1967* (2013). In the book they state, '*I went through most of the buildings on the east side of green street and set up displays in each of them*' (Chavez 2013: 98) and '*this morning I worked in the Conway house up on Green Street re-arranging furniture for display*' (Chavez 2013: 111). During a telephone discussion (March 2021), when questioned about the different narrative that his book projects in relation to the Bodie Foundation's insistence that the site has been left in a state of decay, Chavez stated that perhaps this was due to the change in museology within later years and that now objects would no longer be moved or staged. However, the houses display similar wall coverings, the same placement of furniture as a stage set, and even the state of decay is staged with the dust on the floor giving an authentic feel to the passing of time.

My first visit was very different from my second as it was clear to see that a lot more intervention had happened in the intervening period. Sold as 'frozen moments', the viewer gazes through the window at rooms with the different functions defined by objects and furnishings that are placed in them. The bed, the table, the soft chair, with the style and age of the furnishings matching those said to be in production in the 1800s, are also seen in the interior spaces of Western films. These objects and furnishings are placed in such a way that the spectator can look through the window and interpret how the space functions or make nostalgic connections with past family narratives, thus making interpretations of the missing element, the actual people who are said to have lived there. The only clue



Fig.26: Building interior, Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

of the former inhabitants of Bodie is in the naming of the houses (the Dolan's, the McDonald's, the Miller's, the Donnelly's, the Medocini's, the Cameron's) recalling to mind people who owned and lived in the individual buildings. This system of naming individuals and families (taken from historical archive sites) give the house spaces a perceived identity and a sense of attachment. Here, as with Western film, architecture remains '*the backdrop against which action takes place*' (Holman & Harmon 1992: 440).

## GHOST HOST

### The Showcase Gallery Southampton, April 2016

To aid my understanding of the importance of the home space, I aimed to produce visual interruptions that would make the tropes and conventions of the Western home more apparent. This exhibition reflected on the production and consumption of photography in the United States between 1839-1938. During the latter stages, my practical experiments reflected on the still and moving image and the construction of 'realism' through film.

My practice continued to involve the development of methods that combine and contrast visual material from historical sources, cinematic representations of the US West and my own photography practice, moving from documentary practice to contemporary art practice. Although most extended bodies of photographic research finish with an exhibition, it became important to me early in the research to exhibit to ascertain how my own practical exploration could aid and encourage ideological and nostalgic viewpoints.

My practical work for the exhibition *Ghost Host* incorporated some of the images that I had shot at Bodie. Although I gained access to the interior spaces of the homes, the site Ranger had to accompany me into the homes and was very forceful in instructing where I could stand and what equipment I could use within the spaces. No artificial lighting could be used, and I was not allowed to put anything down on surfaces, including the floor. Whilst shooting he also engaged with



Fig.27: Preserved house, Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



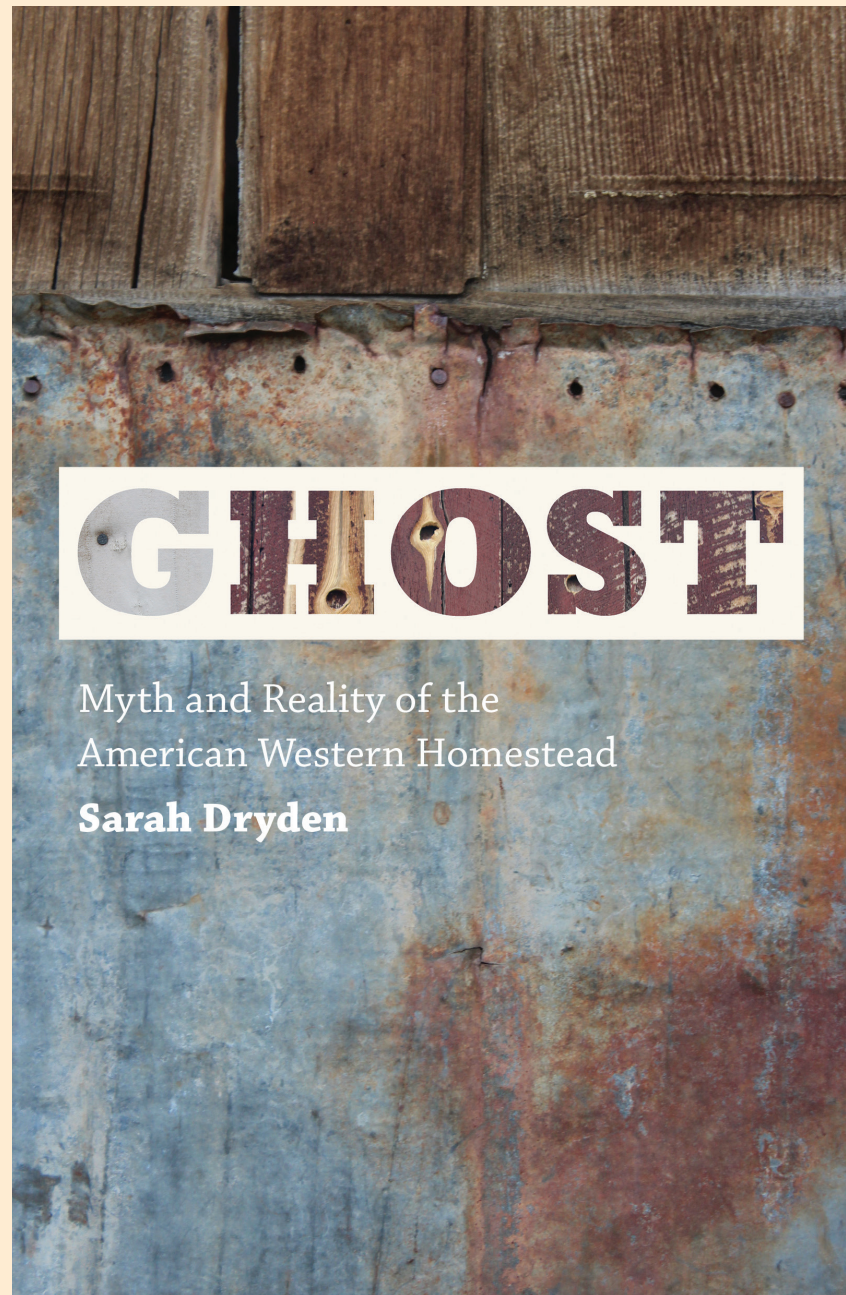


Fig.28: *Ghost Host* exhibition, *The Showcase Gallery*, Southampton 2016.

non-stop stories of the houses that came right out of the advertising literature, hence any reasoning I had previously set as a shooting methodology (please see practical methodology section) was disregarded and like most photographers the aesthetic composition automatically took over in terms of framing, shape and colour balance.

The *Ghost Host* exhibition was opened by the author of *The Western*, David Lusted who afforded a level of authenticity to the production and representation of my work. The exhibition content included my own documentary style photographs of Bodie exteriors and interiors alongside archive film and still images and film essays taken from my sample of Western films as an experiment with the technological and cultural possibilities of film and photography and with producing work for a gallery space.

## Film Essays

The film essays included within the *Ghost Host* exhibition juxtaposed interior conventions, including over-used elements of the narrative, from a selection of Western films: table shots, chair shots, family shots that reinforced the interior as a constructed female domain. I wanted to explore how many times the recurring elements presented themselves, how they supported the film's narrative and the individual characters and how each trope or convention was being framed. I also wanted to reflect upon the territories between photography, film, museum and architectural space as notions of performativity.



Fig.29: *Once Upon A Time In The West* exhibition, *The Exchange*, North Shields 2018.

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

### The Exchange Arts Centre, North Shields, UK. Part of the Whitley Bay Film Festival, August 2018

This follow-up exhibition to *Ghost Host* allowed the work to be shown to a different audience, i.e., those that have an affinity to the Western film genre. The exhibition of my images supported my opening introductory address to John Ford's film *The Searchers* (1956). The narrative of the film is based on an historical event: the kidnapping of a nine-year-old girl, Cynthia Ann, by a tribal group in Texas in the mid-1800s. The film was deemed by the library of Congress to be historically, culturally and aesthetically significant and was selected for preservation in its National Film Registry. This is perhaps rather questionable, as the film misplaces Monument Valley, repositioning it in Texas and thus creating a simulated landscape. The film opens with a home space narrative, showing both the exterior and interior of a spectacular sod



Fig.30: *Once Upon A Time In The West*.



Fig.31: *Once Upon A Time In The West*.





Fig.32: Building interior, Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

house homestead. Later within the narrative the house and its occupants are attacked, and the home is burnt down. The proceeding narrative relates to finding a family member to bring her back into the family group, hence the start and end of the film and the depiction of landscape is very dependent on the home space.

For my introductory talk I produced a backdrop of images taken from Bodie (as exhibited within *Ghost Host*) to directly link the interiors and exteriors of the home space to that shown within the Western film, blending the two mediated forms together. Here the migration west is associated with the activities of watching a film, reading a book, listening to a Western-themed record and reading a variety of mediated forms including history itself (for instance, John Ford's film *The Searchers* was taken from a novel which was itself taken from an historical event). This notion of mediation, method and the production of meaning led me to consider taking my work into a different format, which ultimately led to experimentation with fabric printing and quilting. I experimented with transferring my images onto fabric and repositioning them within a gridded system. My first thoughts centred on the gridded system of a quilt developed

from research on the geographical division of land within street planning in the US, first developed in Philadelphia and adopted throughout the USA. Due to two fires, only a few streets remain of the former large town of Bodie, but it remains clear to see how the gridded town planning system worked with intersections and co-ordinates that represent North, South, East and West.



Fig.33: Building interior, Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.34: Once Upon A Time In The West.



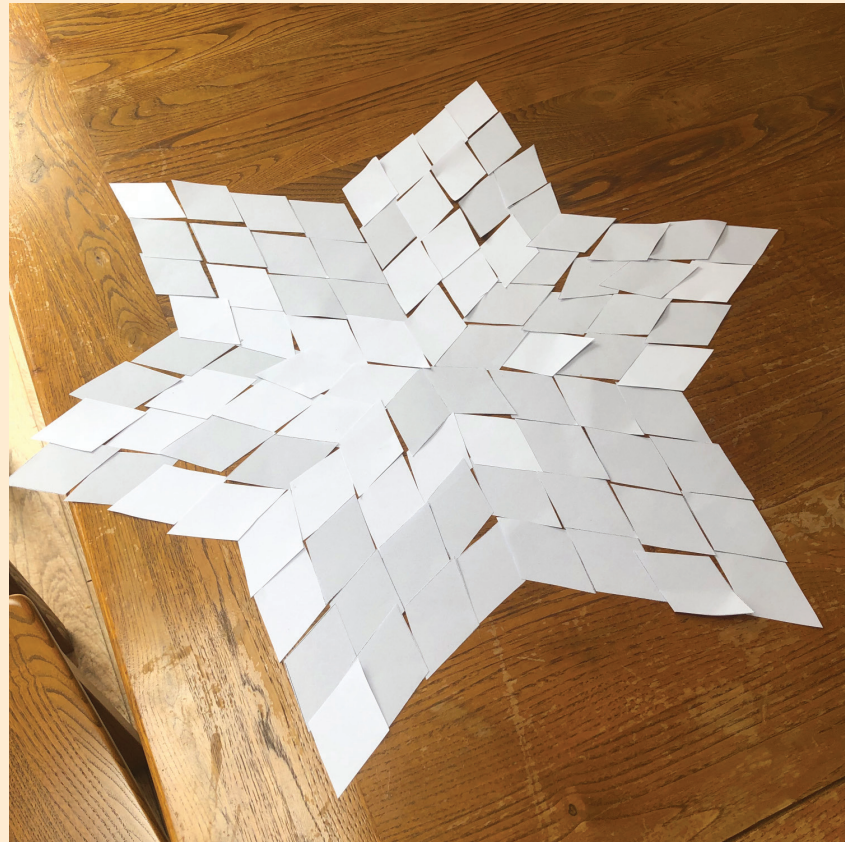


Fig.35: Sarah Dryden, *Historia* quilt template construction.

### THE HISTORIA QUILTS

These practical experiments were influenced by Laura Mulvey's notion of '*return and repetition*' (Mulvey 2006: 8) and the wider field of expanded photography, in particular developing the relationship between photography and craft practices. I wanted to investigate a form of mediation that could relate directly both to the Western home space and to the issue of return and repetition that relates to the mythology of the West. I decided to research the notion of home building and the home-made by working with an iconic symbol of the American home, the quilt. As Rozsika Parker states, '*embroidery is invariably employed to evoke the home*' (Parker 1984: 2); equally, the concept of the everyday, craft and the home is often associated with negative connotations, widely viewed as a 'lower' art form with less cultural status or commercial value.

The traditional quilt is constructed in such a way that each textile element interconnects and corresponds to an often-conventional set of specific shapes and patterns. It was also associated with a form of community gathering (quilting bees), where women would come together, with the suggestion that the production of the quilt can be a shared experience<sup>24</sup> and is closely associated with women and the home space; '*Women had been embedded in houses for centuries and had quilted, sewed, baked, cooked, decorated and nested their creative energies*' (Chicago 2020: 154). The quilt then became a mythical symbol of women's expression of how, '*American women had internalized its aesthetic concepts and designs and saw it as a fundamental part of their tradition*' (Walker 1994: 198).<sup>25</sup> Through the employment of traditional patterns in the quilt's construction, the blending of fragments of



Fig.36: Sarah Dryden, *Historia* quilt #1 centre star construction.



Fig.37: Sarah Dryden, *Historia* quilt #1 centre star fabric template construction.

images of interior and exterior spaces in the *Historia* quilts allows multiple views and narratives to be constructed, while at the same time retaining a formal structure with a specific range of cultural and historical connotations. I have taken the images of the home space out of their *moving* cinematic frame and created a space for contemplation, where fragmentation and multiple points of view can be slowly viewed again and again. This creates a state of stillness regarding the single celluloid frame, where '*return and repetition necessarily involve interrupting the flow of film, delaying its progress, and, in the process, discovering the cinema's complex relation to time*' (Mulvey 2006: 8).

These first two handmade quilts, entitled *Historia*, relate to my written exploration in Chapter One and were produced as a pair to facilitate a direct comparison with each other, thus affording a contrast to be drawn between aesthetic or structural conventions. Utilising photographs detailing elements of the interiors and exteriors of historic buildings in US life story museums along with stills from Western films, the quilts incorporate similar fragments of architecture and interior tropes within each context. The Western genre is based around a structural framework of binary opposites that highlight the similarities and differences between elements. I felt it appropriate to adopt the same approach to produce the first two quilts, highlighting set narratives of the home and drawing direct comparisons between their depiction in Western film and the building conventions and interior staging seen in life story museums in the United States. According to Mieke Bal (2007), the material or content of a chronologically causal sequence of a story (the *fabula*) is established by the fragmentary elements

24. This is also true today, as I needed to actually learn to sew and quilt in relation to American conventions, which are very different from traditional English methods. I had to join a group which was a very enjoyable and informative experience.

25. In reality, the quilting bees themselves, where women were said the gather to produce quilts, may well carry an element of truth that has been embellished. The process of the cutting of shapes, stitching and lining, would have been done at home, a singular or family activity, and it was only the final construction – the layering of the three sections – that required space and others to engage with its construction. This final process of the layering of the quilt was often done in one multifunctional space that was used for other daily activities, so the construction had to be done very quickly to free up the space. It is here that the work often became a collective experience.



presented within the construction of a tale (the *sujet*), and these are linked to human behaviour.<sup>26</sup> Time, location and events constitute the content of a story: they are described as set elements. These elements are organised so that their arrangement to each other produces the desired narrative effect.

There is a conventional process to ordering the elements within a story: the events are arranged in a sequence; an amount of time is then allocated to each event; actions are given distinct traits and a location where the events happen, with the characteristics of the location indicating a specific place. In addition to the relationship between the actors, events, locations and time, other relationships are established that could be either symbolic, traditional or allusive. The various points of view are chosen from which the elements can be viewed, and all of this results in a story which presents itself as distinct from other stories.

The life story museum *Historia* quilt was the first to be hand constructed. I went through my archive of photographic work from the shoot at Bodie, looking for repetitive themes in relation to the home space, those that appeared repeatedly: for example, the windows, doors, building materials and from an interior perspective, recurring objects like the table and chairs. For the window images, I looked at the perspective from inside the home along with shots from the view outside, placing myself subjectively as the photographer within these two different locations, with the window acting as a frame, very much like the film frame.

This theme of repetition was followed by the selection of photographs of the door as a type, reflecting its importance internally in dividing/connecting space, and externally as an entrance and exit joining the landscape to the built environment and as the establishing shot of the start and end of scenes. Lastly, from an interior perspective and reflecting traces of human interaction, I added the table and chairs as types. One of the selected photographs had the chairs stacked on the table and the other two shots had the table laid with dining ware as if it were ready for use. To highlight similarities and differences within the home space in film, the film stills *Historia* quilt followed the same format and utilised the same conventions of the window, the building materials, the door and the table and chairs.

Each set of three images relates to Aristotle's three act narrative structure where a story is divided into three main acts; the beginning, the middle (confrontation) and the end (resolution). I reflected this concept in the quilt's narrative elements of:

1. The *set-up*: the framing of the convention or trope itself.
2. The *confrontation*: the internal or external views of the home and the ways in which they support the Western narrative.
3. The *resolution*: the compositional elements that work together.

The notion of a narrative of three is based on the principle that a trio of events combines the smallest amount of information to create a pattern that an audience is likely to remember. I constructed a range of views that are repeated within the narrative form of three: the home's conventions depicted as a story of three

conjoined frames within a harmonious pattern. The rule of three in connection with the production of my quilts has also been deployed in:

1. The *narrative pattern* that I have produced
2. The *imagined narratives* in my head as I am working to construct the quilt.
3. The narratives being *reconstructed by the viewer* as they view the quilts.

This comparative approach allowed for multiple layered narratives from different perspectives to be employed and discussed in relation to the representation of the home space in the Western film and in their reconstruction or preservation in life story sites. The reflective and meditative process of construction and interpretation also allows for contemplation of each image as an individual frame and as part of a structured system.

The colour palette reflects the notion of viewing the US West through a European or global lens (please see Chapter One). For the life story museum photographic image quilt, a sky blue has been used to represent the Californian sky and a rust colour to represent the industrial decay of the built environment. For the companion film stills quilt, an aqua marine (Seafoam Green) and bright red (Dakota Red) evoke 1950s United States interior design and Dupont classic car paint colours which were later used by Fender guitars and carry a resonance within 1950s and 60s popular culture. The star in the middle reflects elements of wall coverings with the patterns, colour and styles representing layered lived experience as fragments of the past.

Five rounds of three images highlight the tropes and conventions of the home space in both the Western film and Bodie life story museum site. These are repeated all around the edges of the quilt as a form of visual saturation. These images have been selected and taken out of context, presented as frozen moments to create what Laura Mulvey terms a 'stillness'. In turn, that stillness creates and situates the home space as a punctuation within the Western film's narrative. The quilt can be viewed as an aesthetic form which can be contemplated slowly. It can also be used in its original form of a physical three-dimensional, functional domestic object, with direct connotations to the home space.

The technical processes involved in the design and production of the *Historia* quilts involved several steps and the creation of formal test pieces to develop sewing techniques, design and print methods and key measurements. Each photograph needed to be digitally printed on sample textile materials to evaluate image clarity, contrast and resolution together with dimensions and optimal positioning relative to the shape and size of each quilted element. I designed several test pieces digitally, then had them printed onto a range of different fabrics to evaluate image quality and tone along with the suitability of the material for cutting, folding and sewing. Some heavier fabrics were unsuitable for tight folding and creasing, while others frayed when trimmed or stitched very tightly. Equally, the tone of the printed image varied and the original digital artwork had to be adjusted on screen with direct reference to the test pieces to achieve the desired result on the final printed

26. Mieke Bal takes this distinction from Russian Formalism.





Fig.38: Sarah Dryden, *Historia* quilt textile print grid example.

material. At the same time, I produced a series of small samplers using a variety of fabrics to develop my sewing and quilting skills and to gain a better understanding of specific patterns and techniques.

Each individual piece of material employed in the construction of the quilt required a quarter inch (6.4mm) bleed on each edge so that it could be folded and sewn together with adjacent pieces. As such, while the overall pattern and grid for the *Historia* quilts was decided in advance and could be planned on the computer, the actual production had to be done as a series of incremental steps and the final design relied as much on a process of iterative decision-making (and creative experimentation) as it did on the determination of a final design at the drafting stage. Selected photographs were laid out at a specific size to match the final requirements of the design, including a quarter-inch bleed on each individual image, then digitally printed on to 228gsm cotton linen in 600mm widths and 300mm lengths. Once printed, the individual pieces could be cut out ready for sewing into the final quilt pattern.

On reflecting on the production of these two quilts, I noticed a lack of representation of human interaction within the life story museum quilt. The sites (unless they are ghost town tourist sites that include characters dressed up in costume to re-enact a shootout or similar staged event) are devoid of people. Visitors make up the audience rather like an audience at a cinema or film screening. It is clear to see how the home architecture is the main feature of the life story museum site and everything else is navigated around the buildings. The stories relayed by curators or in museum guidebooks relate to people or specific historical characters who lived in each house, with the importance of lived experience and architectural spaces central to the historical narrative. By contrast, within the film stills the architecture is one of the main supports, but the movement and interaction of the characters remains the

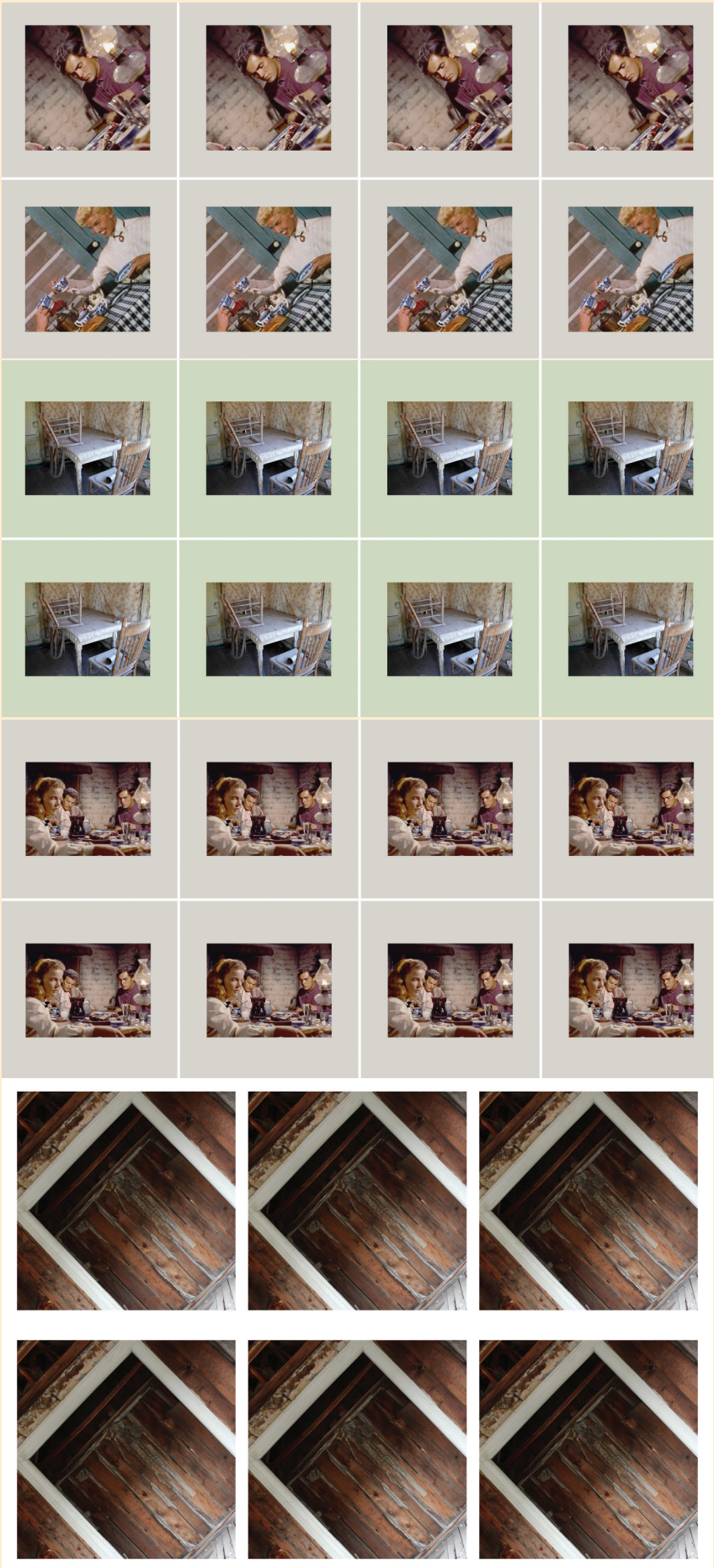


Fig.39: Sarah Dryden, *Historia* quilt textile print grid examples.



predominant feature. Looking back at my photographic life story archive it is clear to see a distinct lack of human presence that I just did not recognise at the time. This suggests a direct contrast to the home space within Western film and stresses the importance of adding a human element to the narrative.

These quilts were showcased within a joint exhibition in Plymouth, UK, as part of the Mayflower 400 events in September 2020. My quilts were placed alongside work by community quilting groups with members from the UK quilters guild, an excellent chance to gain feedback from both community members and professional quilting organisations. The exhibition also raised interesting debates regarding the Mayflower celebrations of so called free and empty land.

The Mayflower landing has its own mythological past that often neglects the already established 17<sup>th</sup> century settlements of Jamestown that had been established for thirteen years prior to the landing. As Slotkin states, what is presented is a traditional colonial narrative; *'myths are stories, drawn from history, that have acquired through usage over many generations a symbolizing function that is central to the cultural functioning of the society that produces them'* (Slotkin 1985: 16). Although I was questioned as to why I would want to place my work within an exhibition that raises many negative connotations, I felt it important that these different conflicting narratives are given a platform in which to open dialogue.



Fig.40: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #2 centre star construction.



Fig.41: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #1 (detail).



Fig.42: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #2 (detail).



Fig.43: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #1 (detail).



Fig.44: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #2 (detail).





Fig.45: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #1, based on photographs from US ghost towns and museum sites.



Fig.46: Sarah Dryden, Historia quilt #2, based on stills from classic Western films.



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Fig.47: Poster promoting opportunities for settlement in Iowa and Nebraska, 1875.

## THE HISTORICAL WEST

The American Institute of Architects (AIOA) identifies the significant period relating to the development of Western frontier architecture as between 1850-1890. These dates represent a timescale spanning the American Homestead Acts of 1862, 1866 and 1873,<sup>27</sup> with the resulting settlement of the West becoming one of the main narrative themes in Western films.<sup>28</sup> Within these narratives, individual and family groups travelled overland to build a home and forge a community, with the settler/farmer constructing a homestead and farming the land. This concept directly mirrored Thomas Jefferson's idea of the small farmer as the mythical figurehead of westward expansion. Politicians and historians of the 1800s foregrounded the idea of taming the landscape, a concept that underpinned a developing nationalist ideology of the evolving United States. Through the symbolism of a form of rural nostalgia, the farmers would lead the way as national 'heroes':

*The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of the society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and techniques of life. (Rothman 2005: 259)*

## Architectural Traditions

From an historical perspective, the settlement of the West started with a mass migration across the landscape, and this is visualised in early Westerns as the overland journey film, for example Cruze's *The Covered Wagon* (1923) and Raoul Walsh's *The Big Trail* (1930). The narrative follows the journey of the characters from east to west as they pass through numerous terrains in pursuit of settlement. Throughout these epic journeys, it remains clear that the reason for travelling is wrapped up in producing a stable life in the West, enough to face all the hardships that the journey could produce.

Following the original settlement on the United States eastern seaboard (and prior to the migration west), buildings in larger cities such as Washington followed historic traditions which were strongly linked to European architecture of the same period and endorsed by politicians such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. These architectural styles were in turn inspired by Roman and classical Greek design. US domestic 'home' architecture between 1790-1830 followed regional traditions. Most houses of the nineteenth century United States varied by region and were shaped by local culture, climate and the shared development of local practice. Aspects of the architectural traditions of Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and Northern Europe can clearly be seen in early buildings in the emerging United States. These building methods included framed houses made of timber, with wooden posts, beams and interlocking joints in which a protruding tenon was cut out of one timber to fit a corresponding one. The frame was then boarded on the sides with clapboards, with roof coverings comprising wooden shingles. The availability and *affordances* (Norman 2013, Noble & Bestley 2015) of materials along

27. A series of laws passed by the US Federal Government in respect to the ownership of land to build a home:

1862 First Homestead Act – this included women and immigrants

1866 Homestead Act – this included Black Americans for the first time

1873 Timber Act – granted rights to those planting trees

1904 Kinkaid Amendment – specifically applying to homesteaders settling in Western Nebraska

1909 Amendment to 1862 Homestead Act – doubled the allocation of land

1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act – increased land

28. For example *Shane* (Stevens 1953) depicted homesteaders in Wyoming, *Oklahoma!* (Rogers and Hammerstein 1955) was centred on the Oklahoma land rush and *The Little House On The Prairie* (Michael Landon 1974) was centred on homesteaders in Kansas. In the 1992 film *Far and Away* (Ron Howard) starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, the central characters struggle to obtain their 160 acres of land, while *The Magnificent Seven* (Antoine Fuqua 2016) adapted from the 1960 film of the same name, focussed on competition for real estate on the frontier.



with cultural customs and craftsmanship, particularly when larger groups moved west as settler communities, also affected construction styles. Regional variations reflected types of building material available through the adaptation of traditional techniques – different local woods (cedar, oak, willow, pine, redwood) demanded localised alterations to generic building patterns.

After 1830, these regional forms were largely abandoned due to a rapid growth in building technology and the widespread adoption of catalogue ordered, mass-produced houses following standardized plans. The localism of design was lost, and this gave the evolving United States the chance to design the built environment away from Europe and early colonial America. Mary Douglas describes this as *‘re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea’* (Douglas 2002: 3). Historian Fredrick Jackson Turner (1893) had identified possible barriers to the pioneers and discussed cultural, historical and political knowledge in relation to the Homestead Act of 1862 and the early development of US Republicanism in the ‘civilisation’ of the Western landscape.

Turner’s thesis *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893) refers to the ‘seed’ of Europe and how the characteristics of United States cultural and national patterns needed to be identified as distinct from the confines of European influence and identity. Reinforcing Jefferson’s agenda of the need for the United States to distinguish itself from Europe and to (literally) build its own national identity, Turner noted that, *‘in the settlement of America we have to observe how European life entered the continent, and how America modified and developed that life and reacted on Europe’* (Turner 2008: 3). This construction of an American identity included the building of the domestic home space in the image of the new nation, distinct from European and settler traditions and practices.

There are numerous histories of the United States that reflect multiple points of view in relation to Western migration (Slotkin, Lusted, Kasson etc.), though the influence of Turner’s original thesis runs deep, sometimes leading to a lack of criticality in the narrative of frontier history: as Limerick suggests, *‘to many American historians, the Turner thesis was Western history’* (Limerick 1987: 20). Equally, just like other historians and film directors *‘Turner finds no space for women or ethnic groups, and native Americans appear only to be dismissed’* (Campbell 2000: 8). These histories can be contrasted with the post-war revisionist movement that looked at the West as a region, rather than a process. This new history replaced the notion of the frontier based on (white, male) conquest with the West as a geographical entity. The West can be marked on the map, and its lands have a history of human settlement and habitation that pre-dates US expansion. Equally, this was an attempt to portray a more inclusive history that addresses the interrelationship between different cultures and the role of women, children and excluded minorities in the evolution of the region.

While Turner’s history had not been local or regional but had instead attempted to display a sense of American distinctiveness through the lived experiences of a narrow range of authorities and notable actors from the political, military,

industrial or commercial world, revisionist writers attempted to highlight the hidden voices and excluded histories of the wide range of people who occupied a geographical region. This model of historical narrative and difference can be utilized in the analysis of filmic depictions of the West. Early Western films tended to follow the traditional historical narrative of ‘great men’ forging a path into the unexplored territories, driven by a passion for adventure and independence. Later post-war Westerns, particularly in the 1960s, projected more of a sense of the physical landscape, with characters situated against an expansive backdrop of regional and cultural identity.

Many different theories have been put forward in relation to the construction of the American West. Most, including Slotkin and Wade, relate to the growth of the United States and the advancement of an American identity, fuelled by an ideology that sought to conquer empty and available land for the emerging nation state through what John Kasson would term the civilising of the machine (Kasson 1999). Jefferson’s agenda to distinguish North America from Europe, in the process giving the United States a national identity, reflected a situation where *‘the country stretched before them, an apparently inexhaustible wilderness to be subdued and cultivated’* (Kasson 1999: 6).

### Narratives of Western Architecture

There are several key factors that influence the construction of the mediated image of buildings in the Western film:

1. The interpretation of myth in relation to the reality of architectural history.
2. Building styles and use of materials.
3. Technological advances across the US West.

Historical texts that highlight the ‘taming’ of the West relate to various battles and overland expedition journeys sponsored by the US government (for example the Lewis and Clark expedition, 1804-1806). These were usually led by the US Army with structures such as forts established as stopping and refuelling stations along the journey. None of these historical accounts, however, relate to how these expeditions allowed domestic dwellings to develop, overlooking the important notion that without a home space, a *habitus*, the drive west would not have been possible. The foregrounding of US Army personnel forging ahead to claim land on behalf of the state supports the notion that *‘history becomes the emotionalized story of uplifting individual effort’*. (Simmon 2003: 108)

Records of the 1800s were written mainly by men, excluding women from the frame, though even more contemporary accounts seldom attempt to address this issue. The historian Patricia Nelson Limerick notes on reflection that *‘cities and towns are key elements of the region’s story, and it is a puzzle to me why I paid so little attention to them’* (Limerick 2006: 4). It appears that even when the author of an historical text is female and chooses to focus on the role of women in the settlement of the West, the importance of the domestic home space remains unexplored or marginal. This could of



Fig.48: A log semi-dugout, West Texas, c1870. From the Erwin E. Smith Collection, Library of Congress (Jordan 1978: 113).

course be down to a question of language and syntax: the term 'settlement' can mean anything from a short-term setting down of wagons to rest and resupply to the building of a ranch house as a permanent home, or even the establishment of a settled community.

In etymological terms, archives and historical documents charting the historical development of the United States use the term 'settlement' to describe temporary or permanent places of human habitation, while the 'home' is a term that derives from fictionalised and mediated narratives drawing inspiration from the evolution of the West. Historically a plot of land in the West would be purchased often without the purchaser seeing the land. Some of the plots would contain just the land mass, others would include already built structures, as Sandra Myres states:

*The first look at their new homes certainly tested women's courage and fortitude. Crude log cabins without doors or windows, mining shacks with dirt floors and canvas ceilings; dark and dreary dug outs; flimsy tar paper homestead shacks; dirty brown soddies.*  
(Myres 1999: 141)

On empty plots, settlers would on arrival either erect a tent or use a dugout to live in while the main house was being constructed. This was also dependent on the time of year; if the weather was unstable, they may well at first have to continue to live out of their wagon. Very few Western films visualise or document early shelters, those already erected or those made from the landscape; they mention this process in dialogue and some also reference the temporary use of a tent before the main house is constructed, but very few if any refer to the use of a dugout or give any real detail on how a person would survive without a formal shelter.



Fig.49: A basic double-pen house, West Texas. Courtesy Palo Pinto County Historical Survey Committee (Jordan 1978: 115).

Like other popular film genres, the Western can be seen as an extension from earlier forms of fictional narrative, notably the novel. Fiction relies upon verisimilitude and the suspension of disbelief; the cinema audience is often expected to ignore incongruities and inconsistencies in the depiction of background sets, props and other physical ephemera placed within the frame purely as a context for the central narrative. Like the home space, if the viewer has an interest in materials, for instance, they must make a conscious effort to look for them in film, acknowledging the difference between things that move on screen and the static background. In many ways, this should come as no surprise – fiction film evolved from theatrical performance, where backdrops and scenery could be rudimentary and simplistic, and the home is represented by a purely figurative prop to denote a place or an activity.

The house, or home, in Western film is simply a vessel that contains characters and supports the narrative. The generic wooden or sod exteriors and elements of interior decoration and furnishings viewed on screen represent many different structures: it doesn't matter that living conditions would have been extremely difficult, with limited building materials resulting in cramped and overcrowded conditions, if the *idea* of a home space is presented to, and accepted by, the spectator.

A romanticised, generic, home and family life is offered via everyday rituals depicted as personal experiences, rather than through the interior or exterior architecture and materials of the dwelling itself. Key themes within the Western narrative are presented, but the home space remains in the main either a sod or (more usually) wooden structure, or, to represent more affluent and higher status characters, a large ranch or manor house. The specificity of place, climate and local materials are seldom acknowledged – the 'home space' is simply a backdrop with a range of relatively simple repeated tropes that denote its function and value.



Victor Francis Perkins discusses the ways in which film cannot become ‘too lifelike’. If the viewing audience suspend their disbelief, fiction films retain a sense of validity ‘so long as we retain our awareness of the distinction between film and reality; that is so long as we remain spectators rather than participants.’ (1993: 71). Film in this sense cannot represent reality, and the audience are not bearing witness to a real event; as spectators the audience cannot intervene, they just accept the narrative we are given by the director, and ‘we cannot cross the screen to investigate the film’s world for ourselves.’ (Ibid: 71). This encourages the reading of the West as a place, and not a process – academic enquiry may, therefore, explore critical opportunities within this context: ‘rethinking western history gains a freedom to think of the West as a place, as many complicated environments.’ (Limerick 1987: 26).

### Depicting Western Settlement

When asked about the importance of the home in the history of US migration, Ryan Paul, curator of the American Homestead Museum in Cedar City, Utah, stated that the domestic settlement was fundamental to the westward movement of people. Regarding the Western film genre, he thought that it was very important to show the historical representation of a variety of places of settlement. However, when asked how he felt about any misrepresentation of the home space within films, he stated he had not really thought about it, as he supposed he had been engaging with the narrative content of the films and had ‘suspended disbelief’ (Paul 2015). This could perhaps reflect the distinction between the critical discipline required within a historian’s professional life and their enjoyment of fictional narrative through film viewing as a leisure pursuit. However, it should be noted that a sense of blending or overlap between fiction, mythology and history seemed to be a common theme in many US ghost towns and museums that were visited during the research.

Western films, along with other popular forms of entertainment based loosely on historical narratives (period dramas, war films), draw upon a complex mix of origins, some based in interpretations of archive material, news reports and recorded events by historians and academics alongside fictional accounts from popular novels, diaries, stories and other sources. The suspension of disbelief in these situations is further enhanced by an acceptance of the ‘reality’ of the story as it unfolds, and critical details in the depiction of living conditions or contemporaneous elements either remain unnoticed or are simply accepted. Why would a viewer even notice the built environment within a film if it were not a central feature within the narrative? How might the audience be encouraged to question any stereotypical aspects of the film set, when in most cases they were raised on the mediated conventions of the form? Figure 39 maps points within four selected films where the home space interior and exterior appear on-screen. It is clear to see how the space is used at either the beginning, middle or end of a film to punctuate the main narrative; it remains part of the *mise-en-scène*.

Cultural values and mores are reiterated, preserved and passed on to subsequent generations through notions of heritage. This relationship is reflected in the

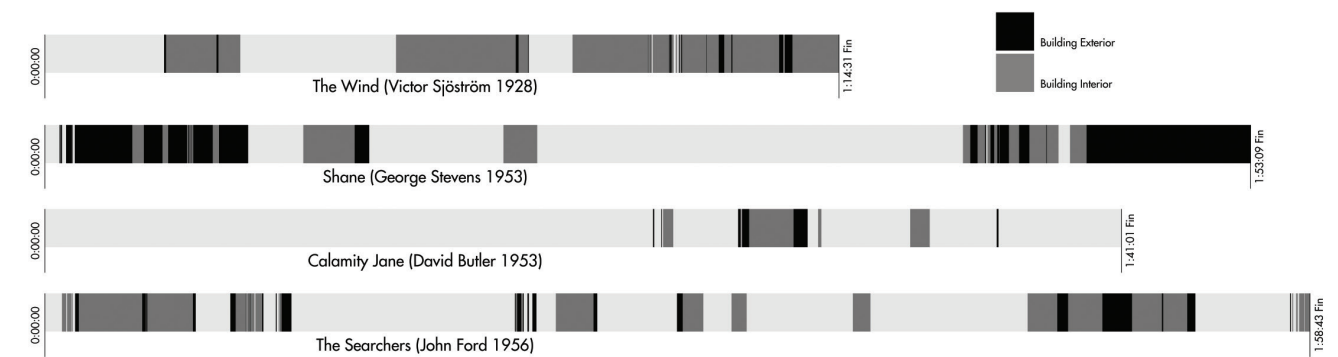


Fig.50: Occurrence timeline of home space interior and exterior in four case study films.

mediated form of film; while many Western films place a great deal of emphasis on the landscape of the US Western states, and on the historical evolution of settlements and communities, few seek directly to address the domestic space, or to highlight its inherent cultural or heritage value. The importance of the home, and the domestic setting, within film narratives of the US West is highlighted in the ways in which the Western acts as

*a non-stop city for the frontier, one that demonstrates the significance of the furnishings and accessories, a scaling down of the town’s overall disposition strategy to the micro grain of the room, a series of sets that demands and instigates action.* (Lehnerer, Macken, Kelly & Stieger 2013: 8)

### The Wagon as Home Space

Prior to settlement and the building of domestic dwelling places, the interior of the wagon acted as a ‘home’ space in transience. On the westward journey before the construction of the railway (1820-1860), the wagon was the first location of domesticity. The internal space was often divided just as the home to create public spaces for the family to converge and private spaces for sleep and intimate routines. Quilts and blankets were often used as temporary space dividers with the interior spaces being able to change to accommodate different needs as they occurred.

For example, as many women were already pregnant before the start of the journey, or became so during the journey, the wagon could also act as a birthing room. The four canvas walls functioned just as a typical home space of the 1800s would, with the same conventions in terms of family hierarchy and set gendered roles. Spatially, wagons were small and had to contain all the family’s provisions including food, clothes, medical supplies and home/cooking objects, often not that well-chosen for such a long and hazard journey. Myres (1999: 105) highlights that information obtained from the overland guidebooks on items required for the journey were produced by men in relation to the company of other men and did not contain any information on traveling with mixed family groups. As with other historical resources, women and children were markedly absent from western historical narratives.<sup>29</sup>





Fig.51: Covered wagon, Fort Bluff Museum. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.52: Wagon, Calico ghost town. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.53: Covered wagon, The Homestead Museum, Cedar City. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

As David Lusted notes, 'the image of the wagon train in Westerns crucially binds an American history of imperial conquest and European settlement into quasi-religious dimensions of the foundation myth' (Lusted 2003: 129). The wagon itself acts as a symbol, the catalyst for future settlement, a makeshift domestic environment that places the women travelling across landscape but not part of it, while the men forged the way forward; 'the domestic sphere of the overland trail was one that involved the close bonding of women and the separation of the women from the men' (Schlissel 2004: 78). In Western migration films, for example, women are largely viewed within the wagon or within the vicinity of it walking alongside with their children.<sup>30</sup> This representation mimics historical details as historical diary excerpts state that 'the women rode in the wagons or walked together' (Schlissel 2004: 78). This representation of woman's migratory role within history and its representation is passive. The woman is portrayed not as a decision maker but rather in a supporting role, where in fact the journey demanded that the divisions of gendered spheres would often merge in demand of the everyday. The journey would have been long, relentless and often laborious. And as Myres notes: 'Contrary to the many misconceptions about overlanding fostered by Hollywood, television and novelists, the trip was not one long series of fights, Indian raids, Prairie fires and armed desperados' (Myres 1999: 137).

As in any large group brought together for a set purpose, the migrating group would contain a variety of different people from different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. Some would take to the journey better than others, some would have welcomed the adventure, others would have been terrified. The Western film generally presents one female stereotype who is journeying west, that of the pioneer (white) woman 'trudging mournfully after the wagons, constantly turning around to gaze homeward' (Myres 1999: 99). This convention sets the standards for women and conforms to domesticity and 'home' spaces: the wagon is a transient home, emulating 1800 social and moral codes, bound to 'house' and family.

29. The Conestoga wagon was 18 feet (5.4 m) long, 11 feet (3.3 m) high and 4 feet (1.2) in width. It could carry up to 12,000 pounds (5,400kg) of cargo. The Prairie Schooner was 4 feet (2 metres) wide, 9 to 6 feet (2.7 to 3,4 metres) long and 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 metres) deep.

30. See for instance Thomas H. Ince, *Blazing the Trail* (1912), James Cruze, *The Covered Wagon* (1923), Raoul Walsh, *The Big Trail* (1930).



Fig.54: Image of wagon train from a film. *The Big Trail*.

### The Homestead in Relation the Landscape

The landscape of the West plays a major role in Westerns: it is an iconic image. The camera pans and sweeps across a wide expanse, with medium shots contextualising the characters within the landscape. The narrative of crossing the wilderness and untamed land suggests a landscape comprised of 'spaces of transition, railroads, deserts, dusty back roads' (Campbell 2008: 120), and many early Westerns narratives reflect Turner's assertion that 'the wilderness masters the colonist' (Turner 2008: 4).

Within the standard landscape narrative, the first shots of the home space are generic with the opening shot of the homestead from a distance. As each film proceeds, the house and its adjoining fenced land becomes more prevalent, and lastly the front view of the house is shown. It is the home space itself that acts as a symbol of contained and civilised space, between wilderness and cultivated spaces. It sets the scene for the pending narrative, allowing changes within the plot to proceed. To remain realistic, the cinematic home space needs to match the rural expansion and architectural construction of the West. For example, one would expect to see log cabins in locations where wood was in abundance and adobe sod houses in dry desert areas.

Contradictions between the narrative and the wider geology, climate, flora and fauna are evident in many Western films. As an example, John Ford's *The Searchers* is set in the Llano Estacado plains of North West Texas but was filmed in Monument Valley on the Arizona/Utah border, in Bronson Canyon, Griffith Park in LA and in Alberta. The film is set in 1868: that period's architectural style generally fell into the term 'Victorian' following on from the Civil War, a period marked by revolutionary change around new technology. Mass produced buildings of wood and metal often featured ventilation devices, steam heat and electrical lighting. Railroad transportation made building materials and products readily available so standardization in building methods would have been very visible in that region at the time.<sup>31</sup>





Fig.55: Still from *The Wind* (1928).



Fig.56: Still from *The Wind* (1928).



Fig.57: Still from *The Wind* (1928).

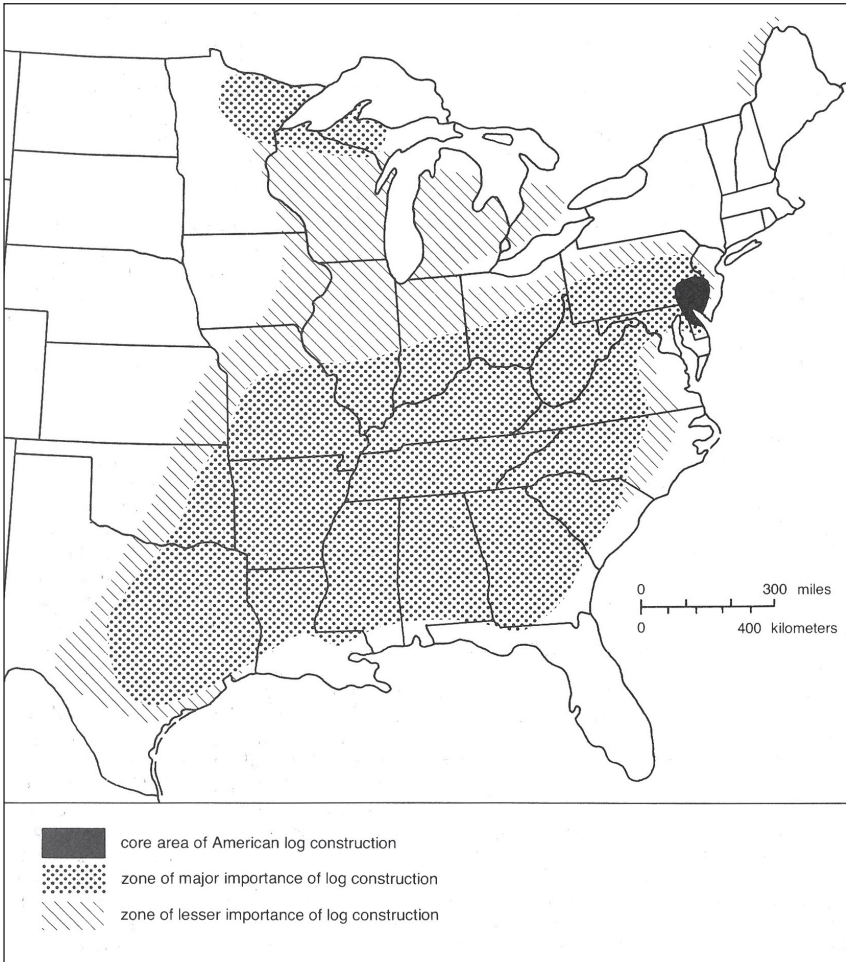


Fig.58: Log cabin construction in the Eastern United States, c1800-1940.

It could be surmised that a greater representation of the differences in journey and destination of individuals panning for gold, or family groups looking to resettle, would have been seen within the overland journey films, but this is not the case. What is presented is a generic journey that covers various climates and underfoot conditions as a group moves either through desert or mountainous conditions. California and Oregon had (and of course still do) very different geographical features; Oregon in the 1800s had an abundance of timber due to its forest peaks, large valleys and dense evergreen and redwood forests. It is evident that settlement during the period of the Oregon Trail (1843-1869) produced a lot of home spaces, as the state today has more ghost towns than any other state in the USA. California, by contrast, has four main regions: the coast, central valley, mountains and deserts. All these features make the landscape very different from each other, meaning that the construction of a home space in each territory would have been quite distinct.

In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner identified key occupations that were linked to successive waves of settlement and different areas of the West: the trader's frontier, the rancher's frontier, the miner's frontier and the farmer's frontier each required a different landscape in which to work and live on the land. These named professions translate very well to the various characters portrayed in the Western film, but the Western does not relate land to character, rather it just positions a character within 'the pioneer landscape' within the narratives constraints.

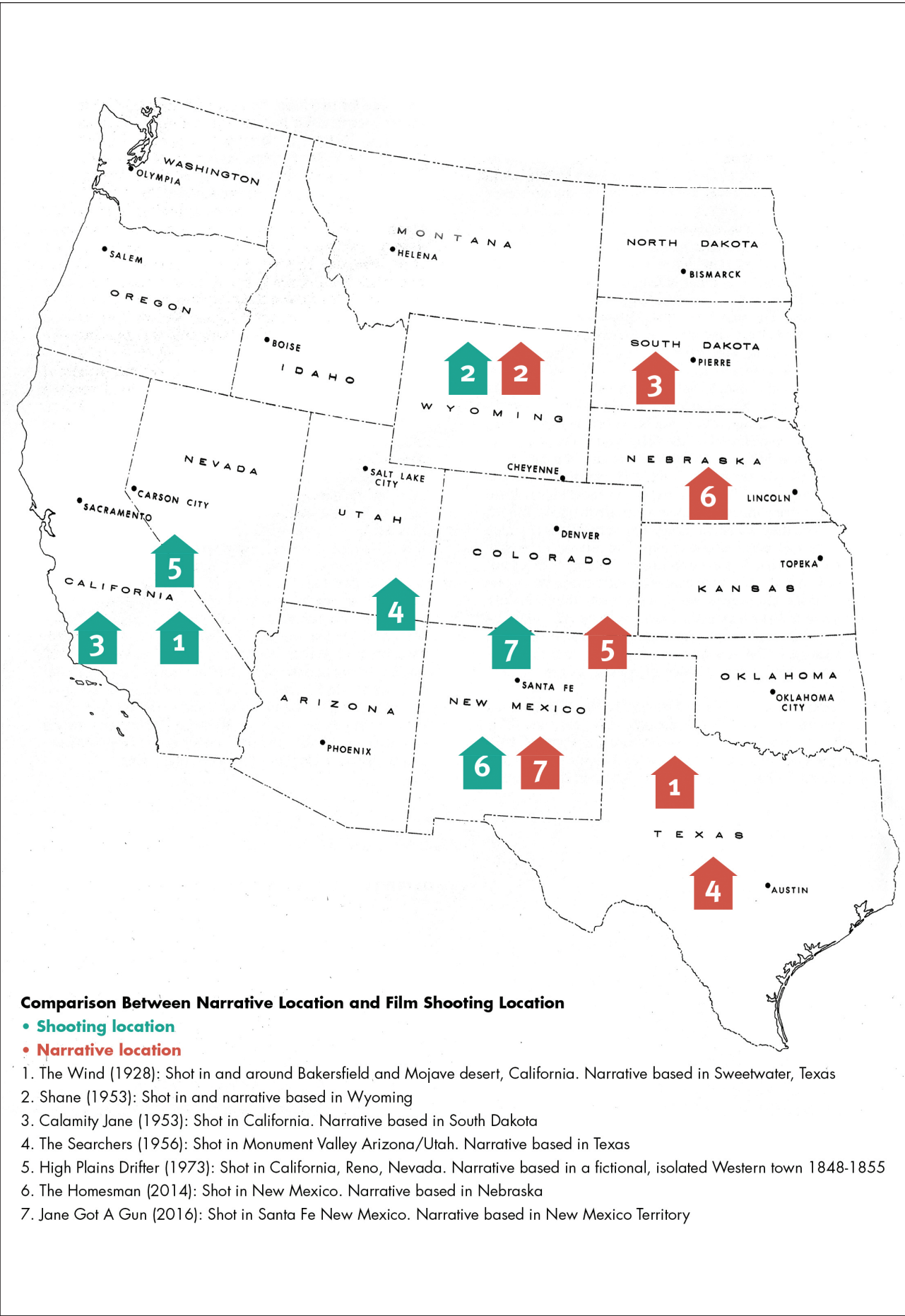


Fig.59: Mapping narrative location and the actual location of the shooting of the film.



The home space situated in the landscape anchors the wild extremes within a space that is civilised and contained, 'the meeting point between savagery and civilization' (Turner 2008: 3). The American Institute of Architects state that in relation to patterns of movement, local climate and the disposition of land is a key factor in the construction of a frontier home. The location of a house should be neither too high – risking exposure to wind, or too low – bringing inhabitants into potential conflict with poisonous creatures, as well as offering limited natural light. In settlements, those in power usually take the higher ground, this can be seen within the Western film narrative where either the advancing group or the attacking group take the higher land position.

Although this body of work is centred on the Western as a genre prior to the 1960s revisionist films, it is pertinent to include one example where the architecture of the West changes its narrative role. The notion of a Western being made outside of the US was not new, indeed the idea is as old as film making itself. In France, the Lumiere brothers shot *Repas d'Indien* in 1895, and the 1913 film *La Vampire Indiana* constituted a combination of a Western and vampire movie, directed by Vincenzo Leone, the father of Sergio Leone. The term *Euro-Western* was used to indicate a Western film not produced in the US, including West German *Winnetou* films and *Ostern Westerns*. Most were co-produced by Italian and Spanish crews and were originally released in Italian: over six hundred films were made between 1960-1978. Spaghetti Westerns were produced between 1964-1978, mostly low budget and filmed at Cinecittà studios with various locations around Southern Italy and Spain, with the most renowned director Sergio Leone. Leone's *Once Upon A Time In The West* (1968) represents the emergence of a liberal counterculture within the Western genre, a turning point as the past makes way for modernity.

It is feasible to suggest that the Western could no longer be considered as such once it was filmed outside of the United States. Neil Campbell, however, describes 'the circulation of the West as a global concept, as iconography and experience, as myth and simulation' (Campbell 2008: 114). Here the Western is considered a transferable concept, a metaphorical space not limited by its geography. Taking Leone's *Dollars* trilogy as an example, the landscape shot in Spain does not carry the same colour palette as the US West; what is missing is the bright blue skyline, the huge mountain ranges and the expanse of space. The colour palette, rather, is a combination of browns and beige that is reminiscent of rural Spain, and this changes the ambient feel of the film set. It could however be stated that the Technicolour style of the 1960s gives a very muted look that could be reminiscent of early cinematic visuals of the US West.

With the traditional landscape-based Western, a new focus had to be developed to contain the action. Thus, the architecture came more strongly into play and was given a dominant role. Quite a lot of the close-up shots that frame the character were no longer set in the landscape, but within either the external of the main street or an individual house, framing the character in relation to both the town's location and the home space. The main street itself took on a more varied role through its representation of architectural structures: the

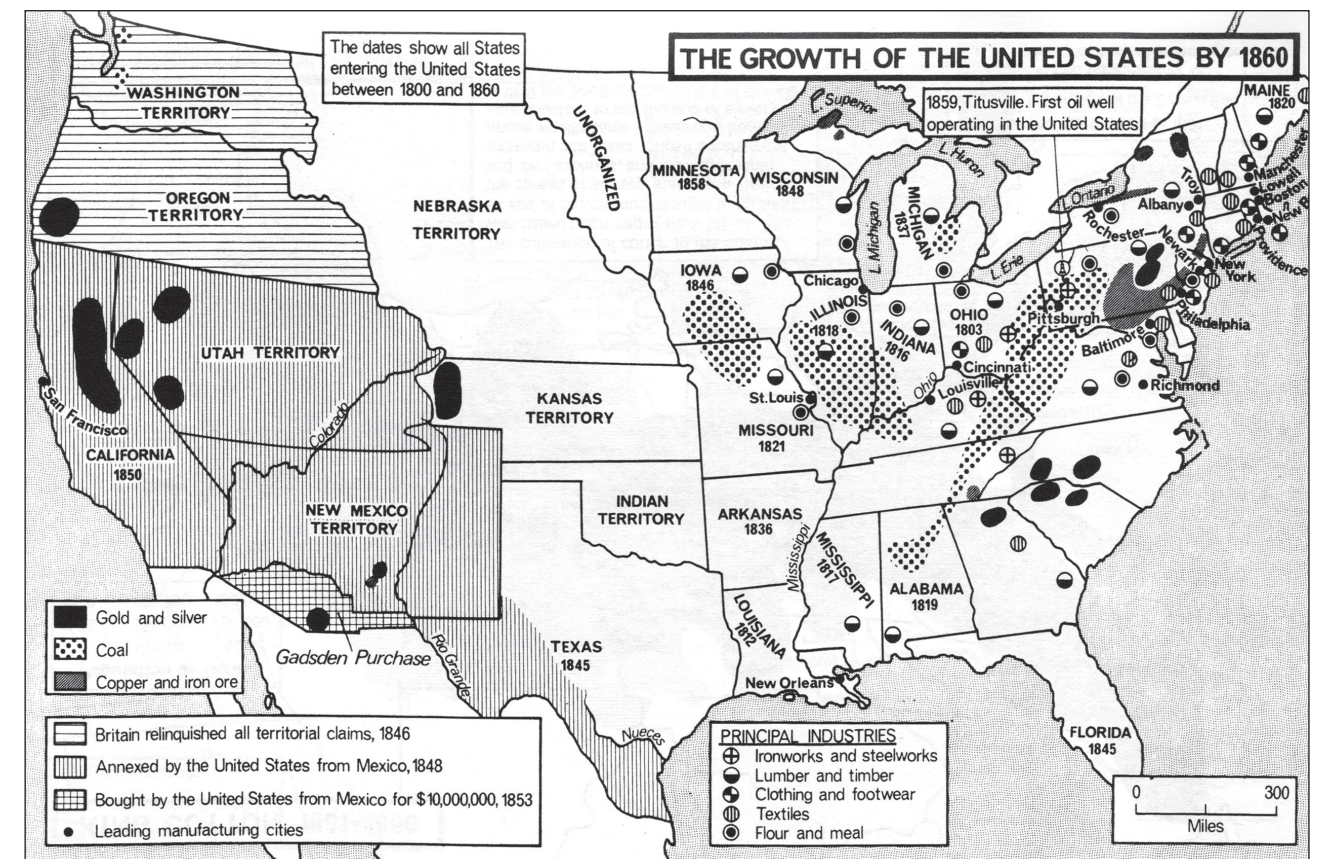


Fig.60: Map of US expansion by 1860.

traditional main street was used, but the buildings were more of a mixture of low American wooden buildings and Spanish adobe buildings, including the church and elements of European architectural detail such as classical arches. However only the front view of the home was usually seen, and none of the action related to the rear of the building.

The individual family homes within *A Fistful of Dollars* (Leone 1964) are placed at opposite ends of the main street, while the interior spaces are painted white and the exterior features outdoor staircases. The interior spaces contain a mixture of wooden roof structures and adobe whitewashed walls which would historically and culturally be correct. Attention to styling changed from the simple notion of blankets rather than quilts on the beds and wooden crosses placed on the walls to a more European aesthetic. It may well be that the Western is no longer a Western when filmed outside of the United States, but the main narrative and the characters remain the same. This raises questions regarding the importance of the Western landscape and the architectural structures within the film. If key elements remain that support the fabula, the actual built environment is not considered that important:

*Most spaghetti filmmakers knew Westerns only because of the movies and therefore were always engaged in imaginative reconstructions in their work, a critical screening of existing images reinterpreted and vital to the effectiveness of the films working with and against genre memory. (Campbell 2008: 115)*

31. Texan building periods:

Indian or Precolonial – to 1682

Spanish Colonial – Mexican 1682 – 1835

Republic – Antebellum 1835 – 61

Victorian 1861 – 1900

Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century 1900-1941

Modern 1941 – 90





Fig.61: Still from *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964).

Scrutinizing Leone's *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* (1966) – a revisionist film shot outside of the US in Southern Spain – the landscape shots indicate different terrain and flora and fauna, different cloud formation and hue in the blue of the sky. The overall ambience of the film has a different feeling due to the colour palette that represents the Western setting, but is not quite a mirror image in that the light is different and the geographical landscape in which it falls, being in the main a combination of yellows and browns as opposed to California's rich sky blues, rust and yellows. The scale of the mountains offer a completely different expanse than the Californian landscape.



Fig.62: Still from *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964).

To compensate for this, the architecture plays a primary role, and takes over as one of the main features of the film. Most of the home space shots are linked directly to the main street. Instead of extended landscape shoot outs where panning shots are used, close-up shots of Eastwood with architecture in the background are shown. The architecture changes, as it becomes a fragmented main street with some wooden buildings alongside adobe buildings such as the church, all placed in the same landscape, within the same narrative. In this way, Sergio Leone borrowed from the visual language of the Western in the 1960s,

*creating an alternative 'outside' within the existing framework of the genre, with textual and ideological ruses that circulate, come and go, overflow and drift over an imposed terrain.* (Campbell 2008: 113)



Fig.63: Still from *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* (1966).

With the shifting landscape comes the shift of the film's focus, from vast empty spaces where the action can play out, shifting the narrative focus to the built environment. The traditional main street is now a *combination* of architectural structures that reference the generic Western landscape. The saloon, bank and jail are central to the narrative, but we now also see the home space: its geographical position has now become part of the main street so that the action can stay within a secluded area in-between the traditional Western buildings.

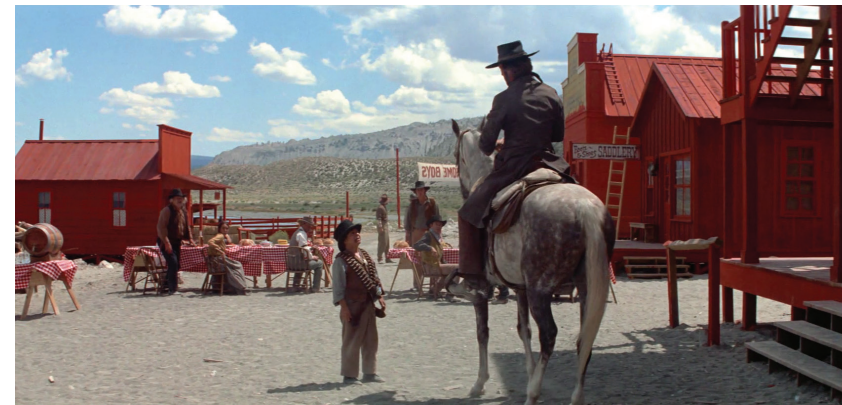


Fig.64: Still from *High Plains Drifter* (1973).

Instead of the landscape framing the narrative, the buildings themselves are used as a key-framing device both to give emphasis to a character and/or a particular narrative. Within the domestic spaces, the classical arch of Greek and Roman European design returns, a new blended architectural 'West' which Campbell describes as 'rhizomatic' (Campbell 2008).<sup>32</sup>

32. A philosophical concept originally proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari that explores the ways in which ideas are interconnected with no natural beginnings or endings.



# HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE US WEST

Across the Midwest and West, two very different styles of homestead developed, both reflecting different climates, terrain and habitat – the wooden cabin and the adobe or sod house.

## The Log Cabin

The image and construction of the log cabin that the original pioneer settlers developed (including English, Irish and Scots) took its influence from Swedish and German architectural design as they settled in the Maryland region and Delaware. The log style house was quick and easy to erect using basic materials and skills. By 1830 most migrants lived in very small cabins, particularly in regions where there was an abundance of trees and/or a sawmill where they could access the required materials. Following the first Homestead Act, houses had to be at least 10 by 12 feet in size with at least one window. Most log cabins had no indoor plumbing and no kitchen appliances and were used as a multifunctional space with living and workroom combined: cooking, washing and other domestic chores would usually take place outside the building.

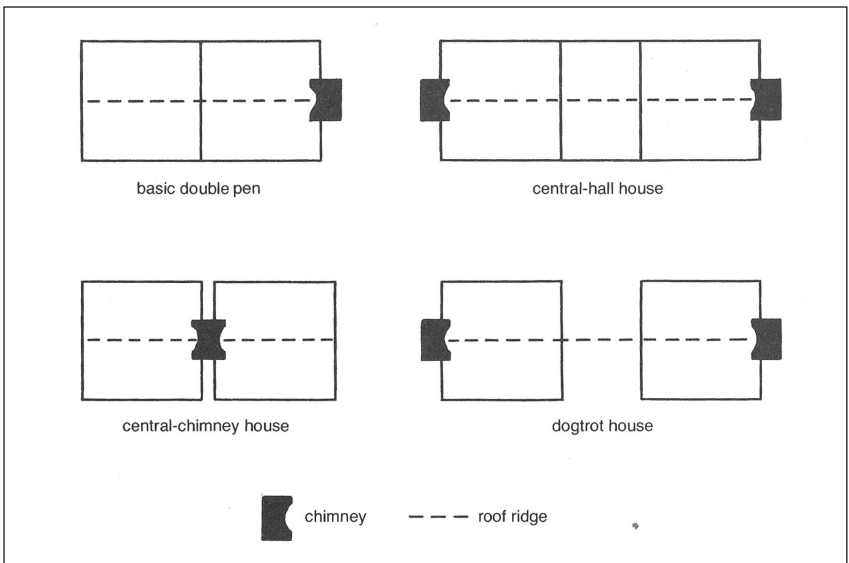


Fig.65: Log cabin floor plans, Texas, 1800s.

These one or two room cabins or sod houses with their single window existed in direct contrast to, for instance, Pennsylvania houses of the same period, with examples of eight-roomed brick-built houses not uncommon. Being out of line with architectural styles across the more developed areas of the United States, occupants sending images of their settlements back to their family in the east were often reported as being slightly embarrassed by their humble surroundings. As pioneer and photographer Solomon Butcher states, the family's home space,

*caused considerable embarrassment to Mrs Hilton so much so that she refused to be photographed in front of it. The organ had to dragged from the house to show family and friends back east that she had one without revealing the condition of their dwelling.* (Butcher 1985: 55)



Fig.66: Image from the archive of Frank Perrault's family who migrated from Canada to Montana in the mid-1800s. Courtesy of Denise Phillips – Phillips' uncle was a professional photographer, mainly producing portraits, but a few architectural images have survived.



Fig.67: The David Hilton family's early homestead, Custer County Nebraska. Photograph by Solomon D. Butcher.

Western film narratives, however, often sought to highlight the positive aspects of the drive west and settlement in new lands, while at the same time ignoring or playing down negative experiences and the hardship endured. The early cabin would often be replaced later with larger houses as the settlement became more stable. That notion of a settlement in transit is often not portrayed: individuals would often keep moving on to bigger and more formally constructed dwellings as time went on. Historically, most early pioneer builders would only use a quickly sketched plan indicating the placement of the major features; no scale drawings, local shared knowledge and unwritten assumptions became the norm with details passed between families and local communities.



Fig.68: Relocation of the Roberts-Farris cabin, Huntsville, Texas, 2001. Photography by Susan Locklear.





Fig.69: Reconstruction of Native American traditional dwellings, Monument Valley, Utah. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

The period 1830-1860 saw Anglo Americans being the first to migrate to settle in the mid-west from New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. These builders brought old ways of building with origins in Europe. The first permanent houses were traditional heavy framed upright, this then switched to second-generation buildings where farmers and carpenters constructed varieties of lightweight balloon frame buildings in the same style. They developed means and methods of building economically and efficiently that originated in traditional timber frame construction.

Cabin conventions and construction became standardised after 1830 through the growth of steam-powered sawmills. These mills were producing standard dimensions of lumber in abundant supply, while industries in the eastern states supplied kegs of cut iron nails at low cost. Water and overland transportation systems developed over the first half of the nineteenth century facilitated the shipment of essential materials, and as a result a standardised form of building in the new territories proceeded at a rapid pace. It was the ability to purchase materials that changed the architectural landscape and its mediated image. The cinematic home space reflects this notion of standardisation and the shift toward a generic US architectural palette; *'thus the advancement of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe'* (Turner 2008: 4).

With buildings being constructed right across the Midwest and West, a different pattern of architecture emerged: a semi-urban village environment that would have appeared out of line with the established Eastern United States or the architectural landscape across Europe. In the developed Eastern seaboard towns and cities, large communities of people and clusters of properties were forming, and as the first settlers moved West the settlements became much smaller.



Fig.70: The Crisman sisters near Goheen settlement on Lieban Creek, Custer County, Nebraska, 1886. Photograph by Solomon D. Butcher.

### The Sod/Adobe House

In contrast to the log cabin, in areas where wood was limited or unavailable, the sod house took its place. Sod/adobe is a style of architecture popular in New Mexico, and Nebraska and areas of California during the period of Mexican California (1824-1848) and became a symbol of the state's Mexican heritage. Grants of land were issued to Mexican citizens for farming, although sod houses were typically used by European settlers too. They were constructed in desert climates where trees and forests were lacking and reflected modes of construction commonly seen in the Middle East, West Asia, North Africa, South America, Spain and the Mediterranean.<sup>33</sup> In climates that have hot days and cool nights the thermal mass of the adobe mediates the high and low temperatures of the day, moderating the living space temperature. They are extremely durable if covered over with a whitewash; if not they would last about six or seven years, hence the reason why many original examples cannot still be seen today.<sup>34</sup>

These home structures also had some very negative features: *'some of them might lack the door or windows and have the entire roof covered with sods that carried great growths of sunflowers and grass on the roof'* (Barns 1970: 64). When it rained it took days to dry out, and the weight of the wet turf would cause roofs to collapse with the dirt and grass falling like rain inside the house, bringing within it a plenitude of insects and small mammals. The dirt floor would sometimes be packed with straw, which became a breeding ground for fleas. Wallpaper would be plastered on the walls as an additional layer to keep pests out. They did have some positives; they were cool in the summer and warm in the winter, and, unlike the wooden cabin, the sod house was fireproof.

Both very basic dwellings would often be replaced later with larger houses as the settlement became more stable, with a landscape of log cabins and sod

33. An adobe brick is a composite material made of earth mixed with water and an organic material such as dung or straw. The soil composition typically contains sand, silt and clay, inexpensive material that has a significant heat reservoir due to its thermal properties. The sod house (often referred to as the soddy) would have been constructed by using the long tough grasses and their roots taken from the plains where they were made into strong bricks with the sodden ground perfect for the construction. Adobe walls are load bearing i.e. they carry their own weight into the foundation.

34. The Sod House Museum in the city of Oklahoma has one original sod house on exhibition. This is a late example, dating from 1893 and lived in from 1894 until 1909. Traditionally, thousands of sod houses would have been dotted over the landscape, but no others have survived.



houses signifying a community in transition where something of a gulf could be seen between the more opulent and poorer residents of the US West. Both the log cabin and the sod house represent architecture that is dependent on the landscape in which it is situated and as such they are related *'not just to the landscape as a purely topographical territory or visual – spatial plenum but also to the landscape of history itself'*. (Rhodes 2017: 158)

### THE CINEMATIC WESTERN HOME

Frederick Jackson Turner looked to the West to define the characteristics of Americanisation, with the pioneer as the perfect vehicle. The West provided cultural patterns and stages of development, identified via key people: the hunter, rancher, cow hand, the farmer and the urban dweller. Jackson Turner suggested that this gave America its identity, and early Western films acted as a vehicle in which this notion is played out, with the architectural home exteriors creating a generic look, that of the sod house or the wooden hut.

Emphasis within Western films produced between 1920 and 1930 centred on the original 19<sup>th</sup> century drive west (to settle and to construct a home) and what had become mythologised as the pioneer spirit: the building of a life, which included home settlement. Predominantly, narratives focused on the migration and the taming of the harsh landscape. Like migration journals, these films do not focus on the home, but instead on narratives of conflict with native Americans, romance between the main characters and links to either fur traders or army battles. The notion of the everyday were minor details also explored by journals and film. Examples include *The Covered Wagon* (Cruze 1923), a drama centred on a wagon train in the mid 1880s with a focus on the harsh environment and the journey towards settlement.

*The media of modern mass culture, especially movies and television, have made the Western at least as significant an element in twentieth-century popular culture as it was in the days of Fenimore Cooper, Deadwood Dick and Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.* (Slotkin 1985: 16)

The frontier homestead, both in its historical form and as depicted within Western film, speaks of the West's humble origins. It represents a simplified life and situates the narrative period of the 1800s, with homes *'the symbolic carriers of period detail'* (Vidal 2012: 11). This concept of 'humble beginnings' was used within Lincoln's presidency as he moved from log cabin cohabitant to the White House. In the 1840s, during the presidential election, Henry Harrison used the log cabin as a symbol to indicate that he was a man of the people. The cabin quickly made its appearance in literature such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last Of The Mohicans* (1826). As Turner states, this *'continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society'* helps to *'furnish the forces dominating American character'* (Turner 2008: 2). As Slotkin later noted, the employment of these powerful metaphors in the construction of a national historical narrative would become further embedded over time:



Fig.71: Scene from *The Covered Wagon* (1923).

*Myths are stories, drawn from history, that have acquired through usage over many generations a symbolising function that is central to the cultural functioning of the society that produce them. Historical experience is preserved in the form of narrative; and through periodic retelling those narratives become traditionalized. These formal qualities and structures are increasingly conventionalized and abstracted, until they are reduced to a set of powerful evocative and resonant 'icons'.* (Slotkin 1985: 16)

Through symbols of nostalgia and an archetypal rural past, the cabin reinforces the relationship between civilisation and the home space, revealing a closer contact with nature through a return to the first principles and truthfulness embodied in the primitive hut. This remains the main context for the depiction of the home within Western film, with habitation presented as a medium that highlights the advancement of governmental power of the United States. As John David Rhodes states it *'preserves the purity of a nation and invigorates its intellectual powers'* (Rhodes 2017: 163).

The photographic image of the late 1800s was produced in the main for home consumption, while obviously pre-dating cinema, and particularly the evolution of 'home movies' and low-cost moving image. Alan Trachtenberg highlights the ways in which *'photographers and publishers understood that their images mediated the daily experience, for the populace at home'* (Trachtenberg 1989: 88). In this sense, the photographic still image was the biggest mediated visual form to encourage and idealise migration within the developing United States: *'Photographers composed their views, edited and arranged their catalogues and sequences, with domestic audiences in mind'* (1989: 88). Robert Taft suggests that the photograph offers a level of immediacy and universality through its simple form: *'A universal language, the photograph is the most literal, the most factual, the most readily and rapidly obtained, and therefore is almost solely used in reporting the news in the modern press.'* (Taft 1964: 450)





Fig.72: Sylvester Rawding house, north of Sargent, Custer County, Nebraska, 1886. Photograph by Solomon D. Butcher.

An example of film drawing its visual style from 'roots in historical reality' (Slotkin 1985: 14) can be seen in the image of a sod house in the opening shot of the classic Western *The Unforgiven* (Huston 1960). The most eye-catching element is the cow on the roof of the house, but it should also be noted that the styling of the exterior, from the walls to the matching window, comes directly from the photographer Solomon D. Butcher's historic archive.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted that the land that the pioneers set out to conquer was not uninhabited by any means, with different areas of the West containing various tribal groups and related architectural home structures. The significance of the building skills of these groups should not be overlooked in informing the design and construction decisions of the new settlers. For instance, many Indigenous American building styles used elements of the natural environment to construct a home space, including the daub house, the longhouse and the pueblo adobe house.<sup>36</sup> Many of these existing architectural elements are not referenced within the Western film as the genre glorifies the expansion of the United States and the new settlers on the land, though buildings based on sod or adobe did employ materials and techniques that mirrored existing conventions in, for instance, the western desert. The Western film representation of Native American home spaces is usually centred on the wigwam, rather than more permanent structures such as the daub house, with this in turn becoming the iconic home shape of the cinematic Native American Indian.

Cinematic architectural forms in general take their visual representation from the genre conventions of architecture itself, those generic styles that match a period and are known and became iconic i.e., the Classical, the Gothic, those buildings that have distinctive and memorable period features. As Judith Flanders states, 'the white facades of Greek Revival were reinterpreted as the embodiment of patriotic Americana, American houses fit for American Success stories' (Flanders 2014: 169). These then become a convention within



Fig.73: Opening shot of *The Unforgiven* (1960).

Hollywood films with the same iconic shape portraying many different styles. Four central themes are important to the depiction of an architectural space: the visual image of the home itself; the narrative; the camera's ability to construct an impression of space; and the use of lighting, tone and colour.

Within its cinematic construction the historical traditions of the past can clearly been seen in a generic way. For example, the log cabin shows logs layered on top of each other, while the sod house shows sod bricks. But this generic shape remains just that, one shape and construction to represent the whole of the Western States. With little regard for climate variation, or the availability of wood or sod, the essential features of aesthetic, structured integrity and utility that architecture is dependent on are not observed.

Throughout the 1800s the architecture of the US West would have been modified over time. Various extensions would have been added to the original structure, as seen in the remains of wooden buildings within life story museum sites such as Bodie in California. Materials would have changed with the arrival of the railroad (1863-1869) that allowed imported building and construction materials to be utilised. Within Western film these architectural shifts can mark moments of narrative transition: a reordering of the built environment can indicate a shift in time. However, changes in the actual buildings are usually minimal with the home space simply reflecting a nostalgic rural convention. Within interior shots, the relationship between work and living space is often referenced, but the external building frame of the homestead remains unchanged. No matter what time within the 1800s the film is portraying, the building structure remains fundamentally the same.

The overriding narrative of Western film changes in line with contemporary social and cultural changes, while advances in film technology allow for more complex visions to be presented. By contrast, the architectural home space itself remains reflective of the original standard structure of pre-industrial times, that of Turner's primitive and romanticised homestead that distinguishes Americans from Europeans. To this day this remains one of the main tropes (if little referenced) of Western film, a symbol of expansion and the 'civilising' of the West.

35. Butcher was himself a pioneer who migrated across Nebraska under the Homestead Act. In 1886 he produced a photographic record of the history of white settlement in the region.

36. The daub house was a home space created by South Western tribes from wattle and daub, made by weaving river cone and wood into a frame, which was coated with plaster, with a roof thatched with grass or shingle. The longhouse was a long narrow wooden house constructed along the North East, while the pueblo adobe brick house was constructed of straw baked hard bricks and stone.





Fig.74: Grand Teton mountain range painted backdrop, *Shane* (1953).



Fig.75: John Martin, *Trees* (1789-1854), Tate Britain.



Fig.78: Barn used in the film *Shane* (1953).



Fig.76: Cabin set, *Calamity Jane* (1953).

### Façade of Architecture: Stage Set Design

Fiction film evolved from theatrical performance, where backdrops and scenery could be rudimentary and simplistic; purely figurative props to denote a place or an activity, 'a narrative image of a distant recognisable cultural past through the work of the *mise-en-scène*' (Vidal 2012: 9). These backdrops were deployed within the Western, for instance within George Stevens' (1953) film *Shane* where the mountain range of the Grand Teton has been produced as a painted backdrop, a façade of Western landscape. Before the invention of the green screen, backdrops were an optical illusion usually comprising painting merged with real landscape, a chimera of place. Hollywood matte painters descended from Victorian popular painters, for example John Martin and those who produced fantasy scenes: Thomas Couture, Lord Leighton and Cecil B DeMille.

The images produced for William Wyler's *The Big Country* (1958) were often used in other films, with the painted landscape acting as a stock image of what the overland journey terrain should be like regardless of the geographical landscape that it was portraying. As Slotkin states,

*Historical experience is preserved in the form of narrative; and through periodic retelling those narratives become traditionalized. These qualities and structures are increasingly conventionalized and abstracted, until they are reduced to a set of powerfully evocative and resonant icons.* (Slotkin 1985: 16)

Lusted states that 'at the height of Western film production in the first half of the twentieth century, film studios had their own standing sets of Western towns and interiors' (Lusted 2003: 5).<sup>37</sup> Paramount studios had the largest soundstage and a Western street, built first for Fenton's *Whispering Smith* (1947). These large-scale sets were stored at Western Street, Stage 17 within the sprawling

37. Sets at Paramount included interiors for several Western television series including *High Chaparral* (1967-1971), *The Guns of Will Sonnet* (1967-1969), *Have Gun Will Travel* (1957-1963), *The Little House On The Prairie* (1974) and *Nevada Smith* (1966).



Fig.77: Preserved historic cabin, Huntsville, Texas. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

Paramount Studios site and included a cabin replica with an interior space and a main street.<sup>38</sup> These sets became familiar with cinema audiences and the same home and main street images became accepted as 'the' Western architectural landscape.

### Façade of Architecture: Physical Architecture

Equally, it could be said that there is no truth in physical architecture: Ruskin's *Lamp of Truth* (1849) looks at deceptions within architecture. This deceit is extended within physical embodiments of American West architecture as portrayed within the mediated form of the ghost town where originally the more affluent homeowner would add a front façade to their own house as a signifier of additional wealth. In terms of the ghost town representing original lived experience, the buildings that remain within Bodie ghost town have been rebuilt many times (which is evident in the use of some materials, for instance hidden Philips screws). According to park ranger Carl Chavez, who managed the site between 1966-1967, 'most of the work the crew did each summer in Bodie consisted of re-roofing buildings, shoring up dilapidated structures, spraying fireproof solvent on buildings, repairing broken windows' (Chavez 2013: 19).

Ghost towns and stage set design only need to give an impression of the built environment, such as the suggestion of structures or supports; but could this not be true of the physical architectural environment, with the painting of surfaces to represent some other material than that they comprise (i.e., marbling of wood), the use of cast or machine-made ornaments, structural and aesthetic deceptions (Ruskin 1989: 35)? It could be questioned whether human perception of the built environment relies on identification and interpretations that are habit forming, as in the Western film, where the same structures are seen repeatedly.<sup>39</sup> Since the individual sees and experiences the same environment on a day-to-day basis, they do not engage or question

38. This was demolished in 1979 to make way for an executive parking lot.

39. For example see Vidor, *Billy The Kid* (1930); Ruggles, *Cimarron* (1931); Stevens, *Annie Oakley* (1935); DeMille, *The Plainsman* (1936); Lloyd, *Wells Fargo* (1937) and Curtiz, *Dodge City* (1939).





Fig.79: Preserved building, Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.80: Main Street frontage, Florence, Texas. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.81: Main Street historic area, Huntsville, Texas. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.82: Main Street, Tonapah, Nevada. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.83: Deceits of Bodie buildings. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

the structures within the space. In this sense, buildings within the physical landscape are not ‘seen’ by the individual, or, as Mark Lamster notes, they relate to a model of experience that ‘occurs incidentally, disjunctively and largely unconsciously’ (Lamster 2000: 175). This dichotomy may be partly symbolised by the Main Street Program, a planning and architecture-driven campaign to rejuvenate ‘historic’ town centres across the Western United States. Main street itself is a generic phrase meaning, a street in a village or town, the focal point, a place with traditional values, a symbolic conformity, part of the iconography of American life.

The Main Street Centre Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) is dedicated to the economic growth and regeneration through the rehabilitation of historic structures. Town councils bid for funding to assist with preservation and restoration. To bid for funds, visual examples must be presented. These are often based on architectural paintings, old photographs and images sourced from Western films. Here, the ‘real’ physical West is being reconstructed via the fictionalised form of the West. These simulations of the West then go on to produce other simulated forms, for instance life story museum sites and theme parks.<sup>40</sup> As Slotkin states, ‘myth uses the past as an ‘idealized example’, in which a heroic achievement in the past is linked to another in the future of which the reader is the potential hero’ (Slotkin 1985: 19).

40. For instance Ponderosa Ranch house theme park in Nevada 1967-2004, High Chaparral theme park in Scandinavia, life story sites in Bodie, California etc.



Fig.84: Preserved historic building. Photographer unknown.

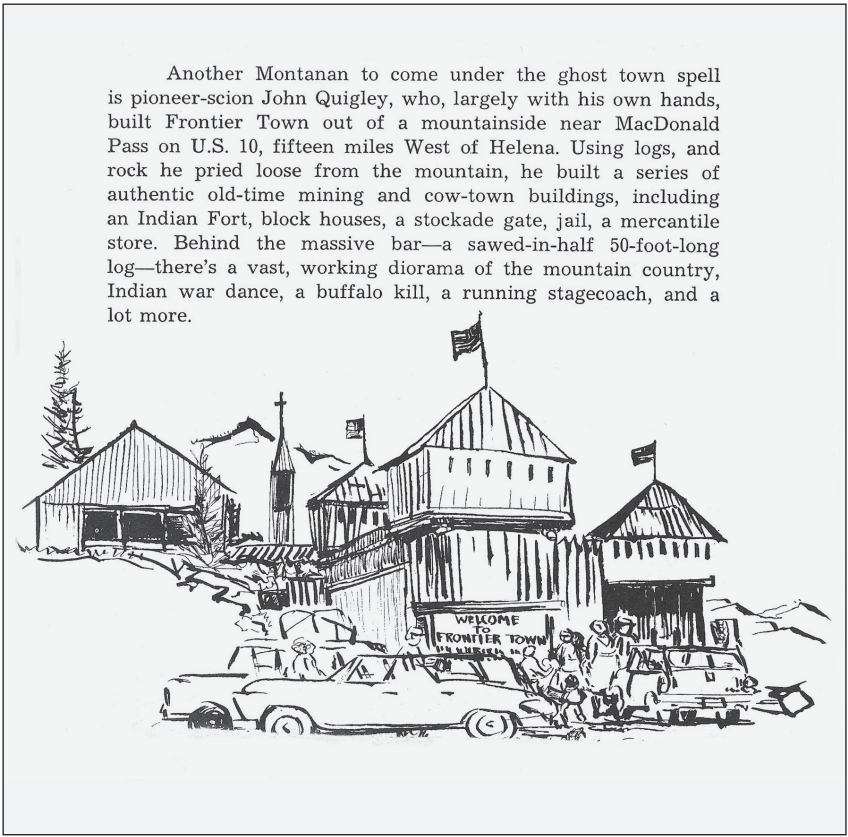


Fig.85: Image from *This Here is Montana*, tourist travel guide 1961.





Fig.86: Preserved building interior, Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

## CHAPTER TWO

*Diary Extract (August 2015)*

*Travelling through each state, you could really imagine that you are travelling through very different countries. It's very confusing to see how each state merges into the next, with different set regulations and conventions; half the time you have no idea as a visitor what you can and cannot do. . . no chance of a pint in dry counties! In terms of trying to get a narrative picture of the migration west, it is equally difficult. Across Utah the drive and settlement west were God's will, his vision of a purer life that's available for all if you put your trust in God; in California the narrative relates to how the individual can prosper with the American dream available for all those who invest in hard work. In Texas, well every Texan carries the 'American spirit', even the street names and some businesses carry the terms, for example 'pioneer street'. Those who I spoke to were insistent that Texan history was 'the only history we tell is that of the truth. School children learn world history – American history and local state history and as we all know Sam Houston was the most important man in American history' (Museum guide Sam Houston memorial museum Huntsville Texas). It becomes clear to see that the construction of the West has nothing to do with geographical location and more to do with the concept of the West, not as a place, but as an ideology.*



Fig.87: Monument Valley. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Like the home space, the quilt embodies cultural patterns and narrative themes that highlight domestic order and ritual. Personal habits, set themes and everyday rituals allow the audience to decipher layered narratives. Artist Judy Chicago asks, '*could the same activities women had used in life be transformed into the means of making art?*' (Chicago 2020: 154). Complex patterns cross-reference distinctions between film and ghost sites: objects remain in Bodie that indicate set rituals and the use of domestic space, but the people, the characters who lived in the homes are missing.

### THE WEATHERING/CLIMATE QUILT

In *Narration in the Fiction of Film* (1985), Bordwell looks at the structural analysis of nineteenth century popular short stories. This approach looks at the narrative plot from a structural point of view, and identifies a sequence of disturbance, struggle, elimination and change. I took this as a starting point to explore the idea of landscape in terms of the climate, weathering and change. Initial experiments were conducted in my own home. Using images from my *Ghost Host* exhibition, I first looked at a single image through which to explore the notion of weathering, with my first experiment conducted in my own back garden. I hung a large print of one of my photographs from Bodie in my garden in Portsmouth, UK, and documented the way it decayed over time with the impact of sunlight and the weather.

The rationale behind this was to consider the notion of ghosting: how fragments of information create new narratives and how the passing of time can change those narratives. My travels through the United States indicated to me that the West could be characterised as a concept and not a geographical place with the message of the 'American dream' becoming fragmented and changed to suit each community, each space and place.

In much the same way, the Western film narrative has been constantly written and rewritten by many different screen writers. For example, *The Virginian* was initially a novel written by Owen Wister (1902) and subsequently a series of films directed by at least four different directors – Cecil B DeMille (1914), Victor Fleming (1929), Stuart Gilmore (1946) and Thomas Makowski (2014) – and a television series produced by Paramount Pictures (1960). Through the fundamentals of storytelling and the passing on of concepts and ideas, the traditional Western narrative has become embedded and fragmented into popular culture as a fable.

Reflecting upon these processes of transformation, I attached my photographs to an external wall and left them to weather, with a photograph of the resulting 'weathered image' taken every week over a period of three months. This experiment gave me the chance to try out materials in terms of what would allow an image to stay fixed on an external wall, how it would fade and decay. The weathering gave a fragmented look as various parts of the image started to decompose. I considered the plot structure employed in Western film narrative and combined three of my images (working again with the narrative structure of the rule of three) montaged together to represent the following:



Fig.88: Weathering experiment at home in Portsmouth. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

- An architectural form (external view, photograph from the exhibition)
- The interior domestic space (internal view, photograph from the exhibition)
- A film still relating to a domestic space

Reflecting on Bordwell's system of narration, such processes enact:

*Disturbance* – represented by the layering of the images into one composition.

*Struggle* – the changing message as the image starts to weather.

*Elimination* – erosion of parts of the image, changing the spatial configuration of coded meaning: leaving traces and fragments of the past.

*Change* – represented by how the weather conditions determine the changes that occur within the original images.

This experiment reflects real processes operative within the US West. I wanted to explore the notion of communication and transference of narratives, where a message is sent out and received by another person. Could I make the other person understand my processes? How would they perceive and translate my ideas from afar? My rationale for this was informed by a consideration of the West as a myth at its very construction and how different messages were passed on to others in the forms of letters, newspaper reports, army records, advertising, individual stories and historical records – stories '*repeated, embellished and bound by myths or discourses that legitimate actions and ideologies*' (Campbell 2000: 125).

My research explores a relationship with something within which I am not culturally or socially embedded. I have no personal connections to the US West, other than a solid interest in the location and a love of the sense of the everyday and its relationship to the home space as a research topic. I wanted to explore the sharing of my ideas with individuals who live in and understand American culture. I teamed up with a Utah resident, Ashleigh Pollock, who was introduced through a mutual friend and works in the offices of the Performing Arts Department of Southern Utah University. Ashleigh is not an academic; she



Fig.89: Weathering experiment at home in Portsmouth. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.





Fig.90: US weathering experiment, Utah.  
Photograph by Benjamin Howe.



Fig.91: US weathering experiment, Utah.  
Photograph by Benjamin Howe.



Fig.92: US weathering experiment, Utah.  
Photograph by Ashleigh Pollock.



Fig.93: Image of weathered print, Utah, by Benjamin Howe. Original photograph by Sarah Dryden, Bodie State Park, California.

works in an office, has lived her whole life in Utah, has a young family and is a home owner. I was also introduced to a commercial photographer who also lives and works in the US West, Benjamin Howe. I have never met either of them in person: all communication in relation to the project has been via email. This was at least partly an experiment to see if I could translate my ideas via email to individuals who knew nothing of my research, to ascertain how my messages would be perceived. One of the photographers works in image construction, the other does not, and I was intrigued as to how they would translate my instructions.

I reprinted my images large format onto non-archival photographic paper, then posted these to the collaborators in Cedar City, Southern Utah – home of the Homestead Museum and film location for many Westerns – with instructions to place them on an external wall within their home location. They chose the sites themselves, both incidentally choosing an outbuilding (a chicken coop and a sheep enclosure) and not directly placing something on the walls of their own home. Ashleigh and Benjamin then took a photograph every week over a period of six months and emailed the resulting digital images directly to me. Both 'photographers' sent me up to six images a week, chosen by themselves. Early in the experiment, it appeared that they were both drawn to the aesthetics of the image and selected photographs that demonstrated good lighting with interesting composition.

What I wanted was a simple, objective visual transcription of the weathering process without adornment or decoration, like a visual report. I did not want the participants to try to capture the perfect image, I was just interested in the decomposing image and the emergence of a new, fragmented image. The participants struggled to understand why I did not want the best composed (rather than decomposed) images. Clearly '*any reading of any cultural product is an act of interpretation*' (Wolff 1981: 97), but what both image makers were doing was drawing on established visual codes of photography.



Fig.94: First log cabin quilt sample. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

Even though '*the way in which we 'translate' or interpret particular works is always determined by our own perspective and our own position in ideology*' (Wolff 1981: 97), it is hard to break out of established ways of representation. The outcome of this experiment led me to consider the various forms of mediation that carried the narratives of the migration West and the visual role that professional cinematography plays in framing and constructing scenes. Conventional cinematic images quite literally reflect and project the director's choice, with the artistry of the cameraman bringing the message, or illusion, to the audience through cinematography.

Four of the final images of the weathered prints in the US West were printed on fabric and cut into strips, then randomly selected and hand sewn into a traditional log cabin quilt pattern. My initial rationale for choosing the log cabin design was its name association to the home space, though as Walker states the pattern carries its own resonance,

*The most popular American pieced-quilt pattern was the log cabin. It begins with a central square, usually red to represent the hearth; and its compositional principle is the contrast between light and dark fabric.* (Walker 1994: 202)

The log cabin quilt traditionally said to use scraps of material, old bedsheets or worn-out clothes. Every scrap of material had to be used and reused; the material would be randomly chosen coming from many different articles of fabric. The constructed symbols would create the abstract pattern with the shape of each strip maintaining consistency, even if the pattern on the strips of cloth was different. The maker would select scraps based on the colour balance using a selection of dark and light shading,

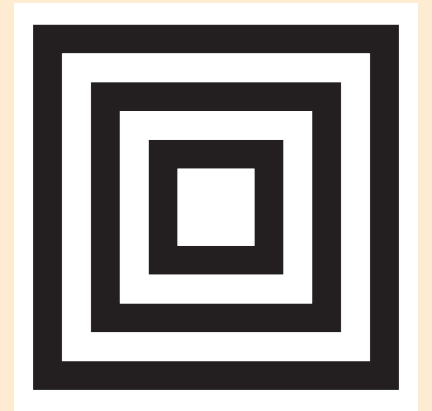


Fig.95: Log cabin quilt digital template.



Fig.96: Weathered exterior, Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.





Fig.97: Vintage handmade quilt. American Museum, Bath.



Fig.98: Log Cabin quilt: Light and Dark variation. Mrs H.A. Batchelor, second half of the nineteenth century, Michigan. Hand pieced and quilted. American Museum, Bath.

so the eye would focus on certain parts of the quilt, creating fragments of information that try to construct a whole picture. My process was the same, as I balanced up the strips of fabric to create a pattern. I found that I was drawn to the notion of white space and fragmentation that created a visual narrative (my photographic training never leaves me to freely construct a completely abstract pattern as I am myself bound by the principles of visual harmony and balance). The illusion of white space and the flashes of blue within parts of the fabric that contained elements of buildings started to repeat without me noticing that I was myself making aesthetic decisions that became less focussed on abstraction and more constructed.

From a construction point of view, I thought that this quilt patterning would be easy to reproduce as it does not rely on mathematics in the same way as my other quilts do in the size and positioning of the individual elements. However, I soon found out that the individual strips of material must be the same size in width (not length) and sewn in the same way or the quilt does not sit or lay straight. This led me to consider the unseen difficulties of quilt making and the converging disciplines of art and mathematics, giving me a new understanding of why this discipline has been passed down from one generation to another in the form of an education practices.

A selection of photographs from the Utah weathering experiments, along with several of my own detail shots from wall coverings, weathered materials and textiles at Bodie, were printed on to 228gsm cotton linen in 2400mm widths and various lengths from 800 to 1200mm. The log cabin design requires two-inch (50.8mm) wide strips of varying lengths, each with a quarter inch (6.4mm) bleed either side to facilitate folding and joining in the final quilt. Two and a half inch (63.6mm) wide strips were cut from the printed images, then hand sewn to create the final design. The choice of each section to add was made during the construction process – like the *Historia* quilts, while the grid and measurements of the planned quilt design could be measured in advance and drawn up on the computer, the actual production employed more hand craft and visual editing skills on the part of the maker and the final design was not fully planned at the drafting stage.

## THE LONE STAR QUILT

The production of this quilt was initially based on an experiment that aimed to help me understand not just the processes involved in sewing a quilt, but also the ways in which a quilt pattern could carry a visual message. I researched historical quilt production at the American Museum at Bath in the United Kingdom and the Smithsonian National Quilt Collection in the United States. Both institutions describe how quilts illuminate the core values of American life, family, community and country.

The collections highlight changes in the textile industry in terms of fabric printing processes and emphasize the shifts toward various levels of consumption, with the introduction of mechanical processes via the sewing machine, and back again into a craft production as the quilt shifted from a utilitarian item to an object of display. The traditional quilt evidences the position of (primarily) women economically and the materials that were available to them, while also illustrating needlework

techniques, fabric designs, processes, styles and patterns. Historical quilts offer us an understanding of the ways women used symbolic motifs, patriotic views, inscriptions and historical events, combined with the handcrafted object as a vehicle for personal thoughts and explorations.<sup>41</sup>

In my own practice, I set out to explore the narration of mythology: how ideas and conventions are portrayed and become embedded within a culture. It became evident to me very early in my research that early Western films carried an obsession with history and historical facts as a narrative vehicle, with plots based around the historical discourse presented by Fredrick Jackson Turner. Here I linked that mythological film narration to the narrative myth of women and the home space within Western film, presenting the quilt as a living history, a document of life in fragments, where the '*piecing offered a particularly moving symbolism of the American democratic ideal*' (Walker 1994: 198).

Travelling across the West, down the major freeways and past small settlements, I would often notice massive national flags outside of domestic home spaces, civic buildings, car lots, airports, shops and business spaces. They dominated the landscape, the flag itself representing ideological power that reinforces industrialisation and the growth of the United States. The mythology of the United States was created in the cities, notably on the Eastern Seaboard, before being transferred to the West then reframed once more in the major cities. As Slotkin notes,

*The myth of the frontier was thus in the process of reformulation by a post-cooperian class of entrepreneurs, journalists, politicians, writers, reformers, and intellectuals, whose aim was to make their traditional myth responsive to the new political economy.* (Slotkin 1985: 117)

The pattern and elements of the Lone Star flag (adopted in 1839) of the state of Texas are said to contain values that Texan people hold in highest regard, with the colours representing bravery, purity and loyalty. The flag also represents a symbolic link between the state of Texas and unity as one with God, state and country, in turn representing defiance, pride and independence. Each point of the star has a meaning related to the required characteristics of an outstanding citizen of fortitude, loyalty, righteousness, prudence and broadmindedness. As Barker and Sabin argue, elements of tradition and popular culture carry powerful messages reflecting a view of a society held by its own citizens, '*Myths can be studied for their capacity to speak a society's view of itself through symbols*' (Barker and Sabin 1995: 182).

I worked with the traditional pattern of the Lone Star quilt, with the star pattern placed in the centre and along the horizontal and vertical axes. The images on these squares highlight the Hollywood star system in relation to Western film and its importance to the mediation of the mythology of the West. The stars become closely associated with the genre, in turn helping to reinforce the embedded ideologies inherent within Western film narratives while at the same time raising the profile – and the Box Office returns – of the film.

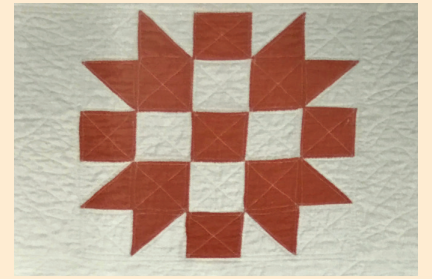


Fig.99: Lone Star quilt, University of Texas Austin archive. Date unknown.



Fig.100: Diesel locomotive, Texas. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.101: Contemporary quilt workshop, Texas. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

41. The Smithsonian Museum contains one quilt that features the motif of a log cabin, *Harrison's Inauguration* (March 1841).



I used the corner squares to explore home space narratives and how 'genres embody fundamental archetypal patterns reflecting stages of the human life cycle' (Ashley 1997: 72). These squares show the same repetitive tropes and conventions as the earlier *Historia* quilts, reflecting the architectural elements of the door frame and windows, along with conventions relating to the use of the table to aid narration. The repetitive action of sweeping the floor of the home (see Chapter Three) relates to the differences between lived experience and the film mediation of social and cultural circumstances. These scenes do not correlate to the conditions of the home space in the US West of the late 1800s, they are placed in the film as symbolic narrative elements, in part to draw a measure of familiarity with the viewing audience. As Bordwell notes,

*Personal habits and set themes allow the audience to decipher the many different layered narratives, not a replicate detail of space, but a map of the principal factors.* (Bordwell 1985: 167)

Just as the cabin and sod house became a symbol of humble origins, myths are translated into national and local symbols and perpetuated both through popular culture and historical narratives.

In contrast to the earlier quilts, the *Lone Star* quilt was largely drafted and planned on the computer. Having developed some key skills and competences in planning, printing, cutting and sewing the *Historia* and *Log Cabin* quilts, including a better understanding of the variables involved in digital fabric printing, I moved on to embrace a more complex quilt pattern and set of visual elements for its construction. Selected images were printed on to 228gsm cotton linen in 2400mm widths and 1000mm lengths. This allowed me to design larger and more complex single panels that included several individual film still images with a quarter inch (6.4mm) bleed which could then be cut out and sewn together before the machine quilting and finishing process added stitching lines to retrace the edges of each individual element.



Fig.102: Sarah Dryden, Texas Lone Star quilt (detail).

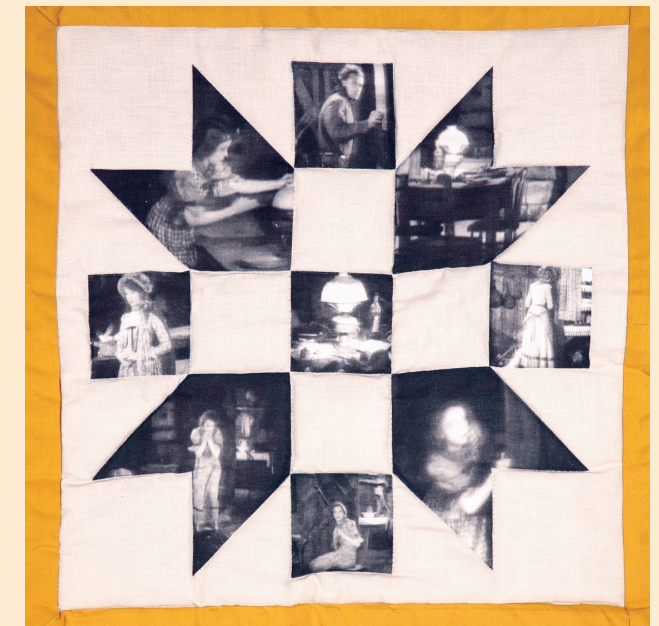


Fig.103: Sarah Dryden, Texas Lone Star quilt (detail).

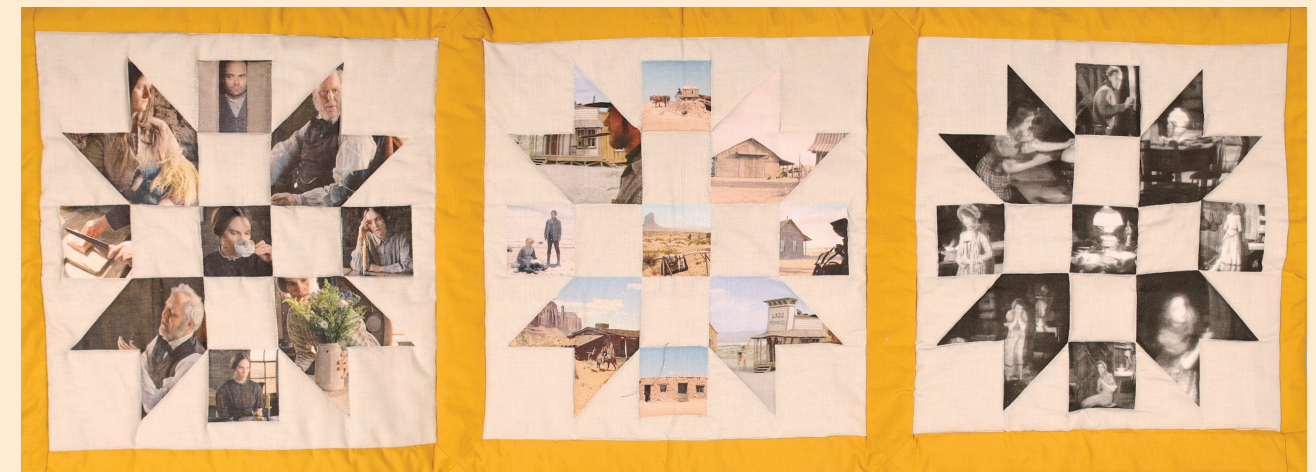


Fig.104: Sarah Dryden, Texas Lone Star quilt (detail).

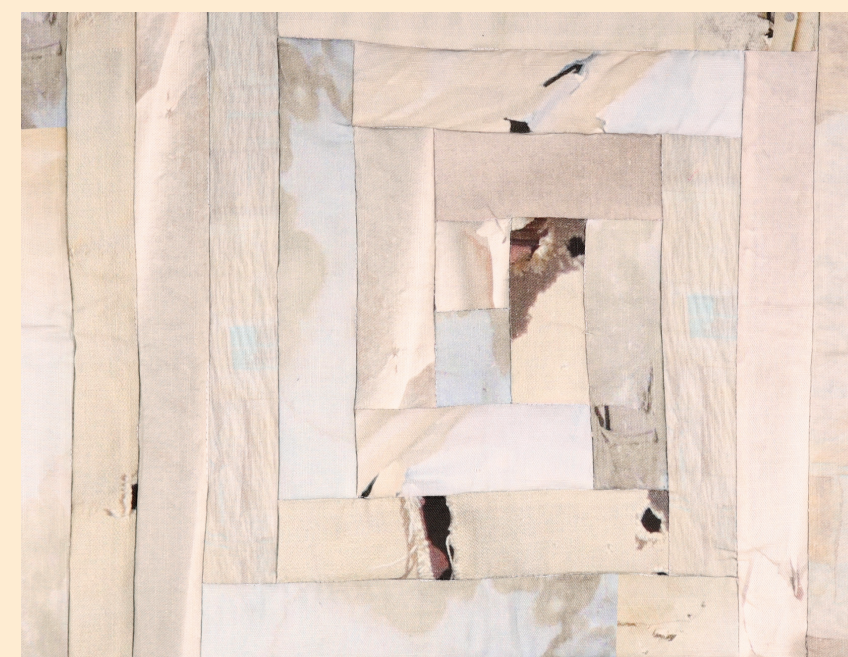


Fig.105: Sarah Dryden, Weathering/Climate quilt (detail).





Fig.106: Sarah Dryden, Weathering/Climate quilt, log cabin pattern.



Fig.107: Sarah Dryden, Texas Lone Star quilt, based on stills from classic Western films.





Fig.108: The Big Trail movie theatre poster, 1930.

## THE WESTERN HOME SPACE AS A VESSEL

This chapter is premised on the notion that many Western films set in the late 1800s reflect the socio-cultural conditions of the time of the film's production. Despite telling a 'historical' story set in the past, the technological, social, political and cultural conventions of the time of production are often embedded within the narrative, with the depiction of the home used as a paradigm through which to convey various contemporary agendas. This broad notion has been explored by scholars in the fields of film theory (Bordwell 1985, Bazin 1971, Zinn 2003, Mulvey 1989), social theory (Kracauer 1995), narrative theory (Ashley 1997, Bal 2007), US history (Slotkin 1992, Kasson 1995) and Western film (Simmon 2003, Stanfield 1999, Lenihan 1980, Brown 2004, Lusted 2003).

However, the concern of this research is not this fact in and of itself, but rather how these values are embedded through the cinematic home. In this sense, the home space in the Western acts as a vessel, a container that holds and helps to structure a combination of narrative disciplines, including technological processes, folklore, historiography, material culture, architectural and interior styling and cultural, political and social codes and conventions. What is evident is that this work reflects and explores this range of scholarship but focuses on the historical shifting patterns of visual representation specifically in relation to the home space within the Western film, from early silent film production ending before the revisionist films from the 1960s onwards. As Slotkin notes, the role of myth and storytelling is central to the ideological construction of the United States, in that

*myth is invoked as a means of deriving usable values from history, and of putting those values beyond the reach of critical demystification. Its primary appeal is to ritualized emotions, established beliefs, habitual associations, memory, nostalgia. Its representations are symbolic and metaphoric, depending for their force on an intuitive recognition and acceptance of the symbol by the audience. (Slotkin 1985: 19)*

Bob Ashley's *Reading Popular Narrative* (1997) discusses mediated forms of popular narrative as a conventional system for structuring cultural products: 'genres embody fundamental archetypal patterns reflecting stages of the human life cycle' (Ashley 1997: 72). The fictionalised domestic space thus becomes a holding place for the narration of periods of life. As Siegfried Kracauer suggests, 'films are never merely the product of an individual artist, but a collaborative expression of mass feeling' (Quart & Auster 1991: 8). This can be seen within gender and family construction on screen: 'universal archetypes' are derived from cultural norms implicit to the fictional era depicted and reflect the earliest origins of the genre itself as a form of literature. As Ashley goes on to note, embedded within the narrative structure are 'the particular preoccupations and needs of the time in which they were created and the group which created them: the Western shows its 19th century American origin' (Ashley 1997: 73).



The house within the Western film becomes the vessel in which everyday cultural patterns embody complex narrative themes, because most individuals first experience with space and how space is used, explored and developed via their first home. Such patterns are reflected by the film producer employing a personal habitat within set scenes, allowing the audience to decipher layered narratives. Within most Western films, the only function of the house is to ground the narrative, as Bordwell states, ‘*in making sense of a scene’s space, the spectator need not mentally replicate every detail of the space but only construct a rough relational map of the principle dramatic factors*’ (Bordwell 1985: 167).

**Western Cinematic Conventions**

As we have seen, the core narrative of the early ‘traditional’ Western references a period of historical migration and settlement – usually the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – set within an epic, untamed landscape and the fight for ‘unoccupied’ territory. This theme remained remarkably unchanged for more than half a century, from the early 1900s through to the late 1950s, essentially embodying ‘*a strict set of thematic and formal codes*’ where ‘*the same manoeuvres are performed over and over*’ (Tompkins 1992: 25). For example, the core narrative within Wallace McCutcheon’s *The Pioneer* (1903), based around a family facing a struggle for survival in a remote homestead, was evoked once again within *The Searchers* (Ford 1956). A refined and updated storyline reflected both social, cultural and technological changes that had occurred in mainstream culture for both producers and audiences across a period of more than fifty years between films. Both films present a sod house, with the latter film showing a very elaborate interior space.

Further examples of repeated narratives can be seen in *Riders Of The Purple Hart* (Lloyd 1918), a film based on a 1912 Zane Grey novel, which gives an early example of film narratives directly influenced by earlier mediated forms such as novels, comics, artwork and later photography. *Riders Of The Purple Hart* (1918) set the criteria for film iconography in terms of the drive West being a call from God. The story is set in southern Utah in 1871, after the influx of Mormon settlers between 1847-1857, and was filmed on location in the same region, and the film was remade several times between 1925 and 1996 utilising different locations.<sup>42</sup> Within each version of the film, the notion of the cinematic home was presented through the same iconic architectural structure. This representation was in line with the early conventions of architecture on screen: a static form, usually an outline, dark shadow or a small detail representing one whole house. As in the early Méliès experiments exploring the shift of the still image to a moving image, the *mise-en-scène* remained static while the actors moved stage left and right to indicate narrative and movement.

Similarly, *The Virginian* was filmed several times over a period of more than eighty years: first directed by Cecil B DeMille (1914), it was remade by Tom Forman (1923), Victor Fleming (1929) (the first sound version that used natural sounds such as cows in the landscape, now celebrated as a classic example of early sound films), Stuart Gilmore (1946) and Bill Pullman (2000). For the 2000 version of the film the story, along with the set location,

changes from California to Canada. The narrative of *The Virginian* remains broadly consistent throughout all versions of the film, but the audience’s relationship with, and understanding of, the architectural spaces depicted changes. In simple terms, the small log cabin of 1914 could be said to be closer to the lived experience of film viewers than the same building in 2000, where it might be associated more closely with nostalgia and historical ‘difference’ in comparison with the modern urban landscape.

Mikhail Bakhtin suggests a number of ways in which time, spatial and temporal indicators work together in order to produce a narrative that is identifiable with the era in which it was produced. These temporal indicators allow for the depiction of the Western house to remain consistent within a representation of the period of the 1800s, while also containing iconic symbols and ideas that reflect the film’s time and place of production. In practice, the visual archetype of the Western home embodies a series of interrelated conventions: the period depicted in the film narrative (typically the late nineteenth century), the time of the film’s production (for instance, the 1950s, 1960s or beyond) and the moment of viewing by a cinema (or television) spectator, which may be an extended period after the film’s original release. As Bazin notes: ‘*The Western is the only genre whose origins are almost identical with those of the cinema itself and which is as alive as ever after almost half a century of uninterrupted success.*’ (Bazin 1971: 140).

The Western can still be experienced today, because it has been influenced ‘*from the outside – for instance the crime novel, the detective story, or the social problems of the day*’ (Bazin 1971: 141). As such, ‘*the Western does not age*’ (Bazin 1971: 140). For instance, when a ‘classic’ Western such as *The Searchers* (Ford 1956) is screened to an audience in 2018 it’s conceivable that it could be linked to contemporary migration and race issues, thus problematising aspects of the narrative that may have been received as more neutral, or even invisible to viewers, in earlier decades.<sup>43</sup> As the film theorist Bordwell notes, ‘*the spectator will almost never be at a loss to grasp a stylistic feature because he or she is orientated in time and space and because stylistic figures will be interpretable in the light of a paradigm.*’ (Bordwell 1985: 164). As David Lusted similarly notes, it is important to reflect upon the contemporary symbolism and cultural conventions reflected within the film as well as the ‘historic’ aspects of a fictionalised past: ‘*a critical enquiry into that history is not just a thing of the past, it also has contemporary concerns*’ (Lusted 2003: 10).

Western films have been produced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, but their narrative has nearly always been set within the 1880s, where, as explored in chapter one, many home occupants would have inhabited a one or two room wooden or sod house with very cramped and unsanitary conditions. Social worker and reformer Margaret Byington (1877-1952) highlighted the original conditions within her 1910 text *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* which focused on the home life of a small US mill town. Byington drew attention to the diverse habitants, including native born white, black and immigrant families living in very cramped conditions

42. It was re-shot in 1925, directed by Lynn Reynolds but this time filmed in Sedona, Arizona, then again in 1931, directed by Hamilton McFadden, once again filmed in Sedona, Arizona. A 1941 version of the film, directed by James Tinling, was filmed in Lone Pines California and it was finally produced as a TV film in 1996, directed by Charles Haid and filmed in Moab, Utah.

43. *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee 1997) breaks the invisibility of anything other than heterosexual stereotypes in the Western. It was a turning point for queer cinema aimed at mainstream audiences.



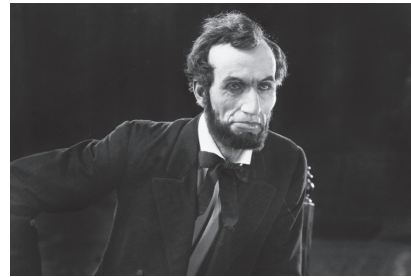


Fig.109: Still from Birth Of A Nation (1915).



Fig.110: Still from Birth Of A Nation (1915).



Fig.111: Still from Uncle Tom's Cabin (1903).

with the inclusion of the extended family. The film *Shane* (Stevens 1953) is unusual in this regard, as it depicts a visit to an extended (white) family structure, but such complexities were to become largely erased from cultural memory and fictionalised depictions of the 'Wild West' as time went on.

### A Symbolic Manifestation - Silent Western Films

Edwin Porter's film *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1903, was conceived after Méliès' original experimentation with moving image based on a system of individual shots used as part of a sequence. The short film is based on the popular novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe with the narrative based on the lead-up to the Civil War of 1861. The novel was popular within early American literature, and the film has been remade many times from its original 1903 version through to Scorsese's reference in his 2002 film *Gangs Of New York*. Porter's 1903 version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was filmed in Edison studios New York with the narrative based in Kentucky in the Deep South. The book and the theatre show had been very popular, with variants termed '*Tom shows*', and audiences were familiar with the characters and the plot, making it easy for the film version to be understood. The opening shot shows the static front view of a wooden cabin with a door and one window to the left of the opening, with the exterior showing a chimney stack on one side.

This is the only view presented throughout the film: the title of the film *Uncle Tom's Cabin* might convey a close relationship with the cabin space, where in fact it was used as a metaphor. The term Uncle Tom was used to describe a subservient person of a lower class based on their race. The same representation of the cabin can be seen in D.W. Griffith's *Birth Of A Nation* (1915), with the director following the same limited technology of the period and representation of the home space simply as a symbolic structure within the *mise-en-scène*. With these conventions in place, the first cinematic home of the Western was constrained by the technological limitations of filming architectural structures. The home was therefore situated within a landscape as part of a static *mise-en-scène*. The home space depicted in film therefore retains some historical



Fig.112: Still from Birth Of A Nation (1915).

connections, but equally was directly influenced by earlier mediated forms such as theatre sets, paintings and illustrations within novels and comics. Film director D.W. Griffith<sup>44</sup> made several films during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that were to be hugely influential on the depiction of the home, such as *In Old California* (Griffith 1910), a melodrama centred around the Mexican era of California and *As It Is In Life* (Griffith 1910), with cinematography by Billy Bitzer. Most of Griffith's early movies were shot in Hollywood and carry the conventions of the silent film.

*As It Is In Life* revolves around a narrative of family ties: even this early on in relation to cinematic conventions, the family is indicated and validated through the image of the home. Two houses are shown within the film, the first a family home where the father is trying to bring up his young daughter on his own. One of the first contextual shots indicates a home space through an element of a window and the walls of the building, with plants covering the walls. Later in the film, although the daughter is now shown as grown up,



Fig.114: Still from As It Is In Life (1915).



Fig.113: Still from In Old California (1910).

44. D.W. Griffith is credited as the creator of a number of highly innovative film techniques such as parallel cross-cutting, fade outs, the use of the close-up shot and the introduction of the first twelve reel feature film ever made. He was also one of the first film makers to realise that film could exercise persuasive power over an audience and has been criticised for the racist content of some of his films, particularly *Birth Of A Nation* (originally entitled *The Clansman*, 1915).





Fig.115: Still from *As It Is In Life* (1915).

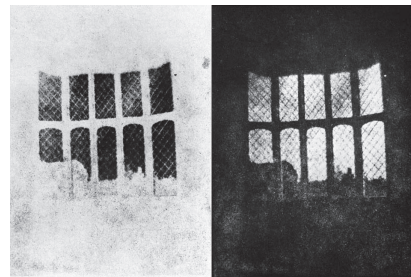


Fig.116: Henry Fox Talbot, *Latticed Window* (1835).



Fig.117: Still from *As It Is In Life* (1915).

the house remains static as is reminiscent of early film technology, even the plants are in the same position. The passage of time is indicated by the written narrative and a change in the actress playing the girl, but the house itself doesn't change at all; it appears as almost a still image, a near mirror image of William Henry Fox Talbot's *Latticed Window* (1835) which was one of the first early negative images to be chemically fixed by using a camera obscura. The second house is the girl's after marriage, a more elaborate modern home indicating different architectural design, building materials and location. However, once again just a single shot of the stairs and the veranda represents a whole house.

It becomes quite evident that only a small portion, a symbolic manifestation of the architectural structure, was required for the spectator to make the imaginative leap to a home space. Very early Western films, like most cinema of the period, were less narrative-driven and more focussed on the spectacle of the moving image and the art and technology of film making within its infancy. However, most films were shot with one camera from a fixed position, with the narrative unfolding in front of the viewer and having a very limited duration. It was not until film-making technology developed far enough to embrace what the spectator might now see as the multi-reel 'movie' that film genres were to become more explicitly defined. One example, for instance, *The Return Of Draw Egan* (Hart 1917) was re-released in 1924 with the central theme revolving around an outlaw gang who are chased by a posse of lawmen to a remote cabin.

### Imagining the Home Space

The home space was referenced within early overland journals and diaries. These were predominantly written by women, but often without any real detail, other than the nostalgic longing for the home that had been left and the imagining of a new home to come. Schlissel (2004) cites several journal entries encapsulating this sense of hope and loss, for instance '*I had nothing to do but be homesick*' (147), and '*we wonder what the folks at home are doing and oh, how we wish we were there*' (222). Zinn (2003) also notes that,



Fig.118: Still from *The Return Of Draw Egan* (1917).

*it was the 1820s and '30s, Nancy Cott tells us (The Bonds of Womanhood), that there was an outpouring of novels, poems, essays, sermons, and manuals on the family, children, and women's role. The world outside was becoming harder, more commercial, more demanding. In the sense, the home carried a longing for some utopian past, some refuge from immediacy. (Zinn 2003: 109)*

It should be noted that these journals and diaries were largely '*the writings of privileged women who had some status from which to speak freely, more opportunity to write and have their writings recorded*' (Zinn 2003: 110). The image of the cinematic home was primarily derived from written narratives that imagine a home space in which to settle and raise a family. This mirrors Western migration historical texts that either exclude any mention of women in the development of the US West, or who position them within a home space, alongside (or behind) male protagonists as explorers, landholders, merchants, political and military leaders.

In fact, post-Civil War social and political movements (1880-1920) saw many changes that encouraged women to move out of the home and into public life and rural industry. This contradiction can be seen within the early Western films focussing on the journey West; here references are made to women taking part in 'male' activities including the driving of the wagons, while at the same time the overall narrative repositions women back into the home space through the establishments of new settlements. Early Western film seldom explored that notion of negativity of leaving a family home, as the emphasis was placed on the excitement of the migration West, of claiming a stake-hold and living in the new territories. Certainly, it is possible that some early Western films took a variety of home narratives directly from journals, but most drew from narratives borrowed and reconstructed from different mediated sources within popular culture, predominantly Western comics, magazines and novels by writers such as Zane Grey, Ernest Haycox and Max Brand. Both written and visual conventions from these sources that hinted at architectural structure



Fig.119: Still from *The Return Of Draw Egan* (1917).



were subsequently transferred – as in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – into the Western film as part of the *mise-en-scène*.

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) focuses on the imagining of a space in relation to built structures. Scholars in the fields of Cultural Studies, Film Theory and Literature, among others, often reference Bachelard's text in relation to the imagining of the home space.<sup>45</sup> This is not surprising, as it is often the home space that an individual first has a personal experience of, and a connection to: it is often within the safety and/or confinement of the home that a personal relationship becomes established, not just in relation to the function of architectural space, but in the development of ideas relating to family structures, behavioural conventions and social rituals.

Bachelard, however, was writing within the confines of European landscape and cultural thought patterns, and it is questionable how this translates to the American social and cultural landscape and how the US Western home space might have been experienced in the same way. The very vastness of untamed land and the social situations that the pioneers might have found themselves in presents a troubled picture for the imagination. The imagining of a home space within Western films is based on the leaving of a home and the happy, contained notion of home as already experienced. The loss of home and its relation to nostalgia – for both the settlers themselves and a contemporary audience – provides an emotional link between the film narrative and audience reception. It also becomes a perceived mirror image of the past where the very foundations of living are transferred to a new setting. For example, the overplaying of Victoriana within the architectural detail and the styling of the interior spaces within the Western domestic space is intended to reflect the imagined home left behind.

Mass production was at that time transforming of the material world under industrial capitalism: new technologies for manufacturing made more goods available, more cheaply to more people, and expensive natural materials were replaced by cheap artificial ones. Mass production and consumption mirrors the earlier cultural and commercial impact of the railroad, which opened new opportunities including those within the home space. *The Iron Horse* (Ford, 1924) builds on the construction of the expanding United States via the Central and Union Railroads and was shot in the Nevada desert. As discussed in chapter one, the opening of the railroad would have given opportunities for building materials to be imported, offering a potential shift within the typology of exterior and interior architecture. However, this did not generally happen in practice, as the Curator of the Homestead Museum in Cedar City, Ryan Paul, notes,

*the only place a difference in style would be seen is within the interior space of the home; this is where you would see specific differences within the material culture. The exterior of the building would remain 'generic' due to the materials available locally and how neighbours would copy each other to maintain a generic look. (2016)*

45. Linda McDowell debates Bachelard's position that all inhabited space bears the essence of home (McDowell 1999: 72), while Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006) relate Bachelard's work to humanistic writings, and Eleoner Andrews, Stella Hockenull and Fran Pheasant-Kelly focus on its philosophical considerations in *Spaces of the Cinematic Home* (Pheasant-Kelly 2017: 2). John Davis Rhodes, meanwhile, explores the work in relation to ontological and psychic experience in *Spectacle of Property: The House in American Film* (2017: 26). Each of these authors seek to explore the home in relation to the complexity of human lived experience.

The key social elements of these films lie not with the reality of methods of production, but rather with the construction and mythology of the West; as Kasson later reflected, '*The independent yeoman was elevated as the symbolic hero of the American struggle and the farmer became a favourite persona of revolutionary literature.*' (Kasson 1976: 7).

Although few films focused on the home, there are exceptions. Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928) features a narrative that centres on the location and interior setting of an isolated ranch in Sweetwater, Texas, with the home space used as the central theme and not as just part of the *mise-en-scène*. While the action takes place within the interior of the home, the film contains and draws on many elements of early Western narratives including the journey west, the railway and the hostile landscape. The narrative is therefore distinguished by drawing from historical data in relation to how women were often left for very long periods on their own whilst the men worked the land. However, the lead woman (Lillian Gish) is portrayed as 'belonging' to the home and to her husband, whilst her husband and the men work outside in the landscape. Gish's role is to overcome her fear of the wind and the isolation of the ranch in order that she might fulfil her role of support for her husband. Even though the home space becomes a site of both physical and emotional trauma, this must be overcome because of the greater importance of life and work outside. At the time of the film's production, US women were widely encouraged to take up domestic roles, a distinct shift away from the agency expected of them during the previous century, where whole families were involved in the hard toil of everyday existence. Domesticity was a strategy to create a 'separate but equal' society, whereby the notion of 'equality' continued to set boundaries for female agency.

*The Big Trail* (Walsh 1930) offers a narrative representing the 1840s overland journey. This was the first film to star John Wayne and it is heavily linked to historical references. The opening written statement is a dedication to those who migrated west and a reference to the pioneer spirit. At the same time, it carries imperialist overtones of 'planting' civilization; a statement of how the journey and settlement in the West would reinforce economic, religious and political strength and through national pride, help expand the American empire. A written narrative informs the spectator that 'their spirit goes on' and 'history cuts the way'. It becomes clear from the very opening of the film that a history lesson is about to start and that the film narrative will focus on the history of the drive west. Further to this, parts of the dialogue are based around a mother giving her daughter a history lesson of the thirteen states. Iconic features of the Western draw upon narratives of the drive west: for example, references to fur trapping, army outposts, cattle drives, wagon trains, gun and knife fights. Every conceivable landscape is presented, ranging from lush mountain ranges and prairie fields to dry deserts, and the dramatic landscape of Monument Valley makes a regular appearance. Many of the shots of the landscape reflect the form of painting, such as John Gast's *Manifest Destiny* (1872). Copies of this artwork were mass-produced as chromolithographic prints in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and would have been a key reference for the public in relation to the mythical Western landscape. Many landscape shots from *The Big Trail* were



Fig.120: Still from *The Wind* (1928).



Fig.121: Still from *The Wind* (1928).



Fig.122: Still from *The Wind* (1928).





Fig.123: Still from *The Big Trail* (1930).



Fig.124: Still from *The Big Trail* (1930).



Fig.125: Still from *The Big Trail* (1930).

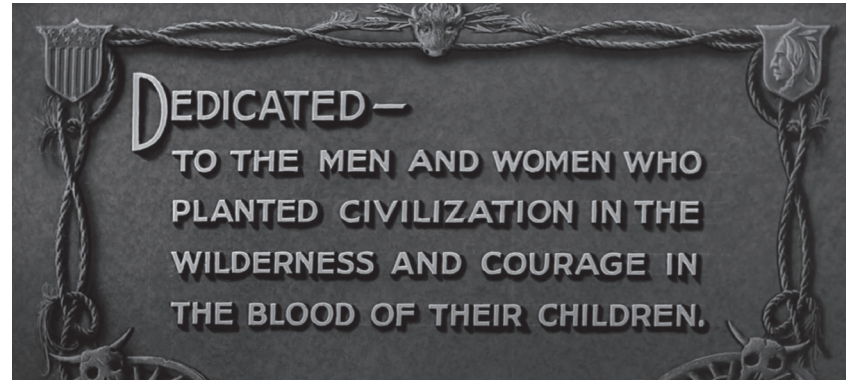


Fig.126: *The Big Trail* opening statement, 1930.

reproduced in other Western films: in a sense, the landscape portrayed within this film has become a stock image of the Western landscape.

The leaving of one location to travel to another indicates the importance of the home space in which a family could settle. Without settlement, the migration west would not have flourished, and the creation of a home and a community was fundamental to the movement. In *The Big Trail* the drive west is symbolised as a move from one settlement to another, with the steamboat indicating the coming together of settlers from different areas to start the journey. This film was released to coincide with the centennial of the Oregon Trail and draws upon past narratives presented within silent films including *The Last Drop of Water* (Griffith 1911) and *The Covered Wagon* (Cruze 1923). As historian Scott Simmon states, '*The Big Trail celebrates history*' (Simmon 2003: 108), albeit exclusively from the perspective of the settlers.

Indeed, in *The Big Trail* the starting point (termed a jumping off town)<sup>46</sup> and the end locations are represented by a single family house that is intended to reflect the whole of a settlement. Within the first settlement, a wooden house with a Victorian-styled interior depicts the family home that is being left behind. The big, heavy furnishings and highly decorated surroundings symbolise the domestic setting and the everyday lives of the characters, with props used to elaborate on details not vocalised. The placement of objects as props highlights the time period of the early 1800s and the shift to machine produced common decorative objects. The spinning wheel and family Bible at the centre of the room help to construct an idea of traditional codes and conventions of the family. Like many early silent Western films, a symbolic fraction of external architecture – in this case the small fraction of an external wall – is used as a link that speaks of the whole structure. The whole concept of a family home is constructed just by this one part, with the rest of the house left to the viewer's imagination. The final scene shifts to a whole settlement structure of architecture: a single wooden house.

Here, the whole community helps to construct the house with the felling of trees and the cutting of planks. This would indeed have happened within new settlements: however, as they were being built, rough non-permanent structures like tents would have been used, and these are not depicted. The only other interior spaces within the film are of the trading post, where wooden

46. A terminus where emigrants met and loaded their wagons before setting off on the journey west, often waiting in the town for better weather over a period of months.



Fig.127: *The Big Trail* movie theatre poster, 1930.

buildings house members of the army and white settlers, and several Native American dwellings of the iconic wigwam shape and structure. The impact of the landscape and climate on the material choices of building – be it sod for dry areas or wood for forested areas – is not considered. The architectural structures represent a historical living space and provide a reference to traditional methods of architectural construction.

## The Popular Western

The B Western became an important feature in the early 1930s. These films were produced on a smaller budget, often part of double bills to encourage those affected by the economic depression to still attend the cinema. These low budget films care little about historical detail and were '*aimed principally at the home market*' (Bazin 1971: 140). For example, in *The Drifter* (O'Connor, 1932) the narrative centres on the return to a cabin in the woods and confrontation with an escaped convict. As with many films within this period, the notion of who is included and excluded from settling within a home is highlighted, with the drifter traveling from one town to the next. The role of women also reflected contemporary social changes, as Stanfield asserts, '*if the ranchers and farmers in Autry's film and in other B Westerns clearly marked as producers who find themselves impotent in the face of an exploitative capitalism, then it is left to the leading female to act out the role of consumer*' (Stanfield 1999: 156).

The development of film technology allowed for the landscape and the home to be seen in very different ways. As more and more films were starting to be shot on location, this situated the home more within the context of the landscape. For instance, *Cimarron* (Walsh, 1931) is based on the Oklahoma land rush of 1889. The narrative contains a trek along the Oregon Trail, shot on location in Santa Fe, New Mexico.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, *Honour Of The Range* (James, 1934) is based on the relationship between twin brothers that employs innovated



Fig.128: Still from *The Covered Wagon* (1923).



Fig.129: Still from *The Covered Wagon* (1923).



Fig.130: Still from *The Drifter* (1932).

47. The film was shot using an early form of widescreen technology – a process called 70mm Grandeur – and the film is renowned for its camera use. Notable features include the depth and the view of the landscape, with many panoramas and very few close up shots.





Fig.131: Still from Stagecoach (1939).



Fig.132: Still from Stagecoach (1939).

cinematography. The introduction of sound and colour film technology allowed lines of dialogue to be added to aid the notion and function of the home space. *The New Frontier* (Pierson, 1935) is set in 1889; the plot involves a pioneer race to claim free land in Oklahoma, placing the theme of home and home ownership as the main narrative. The film is notable for its night photography, a device that was rare for this period; this alone establishes a different reading of both the landscape and the home space, to be seen at different times of day and night. Throughout the 1930s, the exterior and interior of the home might still look generic in terms of the symbolic parts of the architecture, but the introduction of new film technology allows for a different experience in viewing the space. However, while this could have facilitated for a more contemporary reconstruction of the home, the representation itself remained largely static as a nostalgic image. As Kasson notes, this retreat to nostalgia reflected contemporary cultural themes, ‘*imaginatively retreating to a golden age in the past, they discovered both a refuge from the present and a position from which to criticize their own era*’ (Kasson 1976: 187).

Land and the overland journey itself were still the predominant focus for many early Western films, including *The California Trail* (Hillyer, 1933), *The Trail Beyond* (Bradbury, 1934), *The Crimson Trail* (Raboch, 1935), *The Lonely Trail* (Kane, 1936), *Across The Plains* (Bennet, 1939) and *Stagecoach* (Ford, 1939). These overland narratives were based within the landscape and perceived as promoting the American dream and the strength of the individual. Although the narratives were based in the 1800s, the social message could quite easily be linked to overland journeys and the resettlement during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The home space within these films is still depicted through small elements of architectural features and objects, with the home used as a metaphor for protection and a place of settlement. Even as late as the 1950s films focusing on the overland journey do not often show a full picture of the house within a settlement. This can clearly be seen within the 1952 film *Bend Of The River* directed by Anthony Mann, with one window shot with lace curtains and a lamp representing not just an individual family house, but again a whole settlement.

Many of the farmers who had originally migrated in response to the 1862 Homestead Act, which provided settlers with 160 acres of public land, followed by the Kinkaid Act of 1904 and the enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, had no experience of farming but believed homesteading and agriculture would affect the climate of the great plains making it conducive to farming. For many, this was linked to the concept of Manifest Destiny and duty to expand West, and the cinematic depiction of their heroic struggle in wide-open spaces sought to eulogise America’s greatness at a time of increasing regulation and the growth of the urban environment. Western filmmaking of the late 1920s-30s coincided with the events of the Great Depression, with films looking back nostalgically at former days of glory. Narratives often portrayed elements of nationalism and the drive west and the 1920s Western recalled ‘*childhood fantasies, and yearning for an earlier, pre-industrial age and individual ethics*’ (Lusted 2003: 122).

This yearning for a pre-industrial age of simplicity mirrors contemporary events such as the ‘dustbowl’ and economic collapse during the 1930s,<sup>48</sup> particularly heavily felt in the Southern States, which led to a renewed exodus. The film *Cimarron* (Ruggles 1931) features a long trek along the Oregon Trail. While the film is set in 1889, its narrative could easily be related to the onset of drought in 1931. Meanwhile, *New Frontier* (Pierson 1935) is based on the notion of free land in Oklahoma in the 1860s and could equally relate to the contemporary period and opportunities offered by western migration. It is perhaps ironic that the Oklahoma settlers of the previous generation had seen their dreams shattered by the dust storms and crop failures of the 1930s, when an estimated 35 million acres were rendered useless, and their offspring were now being forced to set out West once again in pursuit of a better life.

During the 1930s a central theme for many outlets of popular culture including film was a ‘*fascination with America itself, with its history and geography, its folklore and heritage*’ (Polenberg & La Febers 1975: 267). This also led to a cultural shift in the storylines and structures of Western films, as contemporaneous social and political themes were intertwined within ‘historical’ depictions of the old West, such that ‘*the 1930s B Western is marked by an obsession with ownership of the land under threat of being repossessed by an underhand representative of capitalist interest, the land, unbeknown to its rightful owners, having some hidden value like gold or oil*’ (Lusted 2003: 115). Once again, this highlights the ways in which fiction film, and popular culture more broadly, combined contemporary socio-political and economic concerns with the fictionalisation of US history, placing greater emphasis on the codes and conventions of the present day as a lens through which to critically engage with an (often heroic) interpretation of the past.

In fact, the 1930s saw a decline in Western film production due to competition with other, new popular genres. Franklin D Roosevelt’s New Deal offered US citizens hope for the future, though events on the world stage and the gradual shift toward war in Europe was to shift public opinion once again over the following decade.<sup>49</sup> By the late 1930s and early 1940s global events had brought about significant change in US politics and the economy. Roosevelt rallied communities in supporting the war effort, the financial outlay for which was recorded as \$250 million a day for military purposes. By contrast, the post-war period witnessed a return to Western film production, in part driven by contemporary ideology. As Lenihan notes, ‘*the relevance of so many Westerns to the problems of racial equality and the cold war suggests that popular culture after World War II cannot be easily dismissed as escapist pap or as a reflection of public complacency*’ (Lenihan 1980: 90). Western film makers began to deal with issues of anxiety, alienation, disillusionment and the search for dignity and meaning in a confused and hostile world.<sup>50</sup>

### The American Dream

Following the Second World War, a more urban and technological society emerged, with more than fifteen million civilians moving to new homes and cities. As Lusted highlights, a new trend during the period centred on films

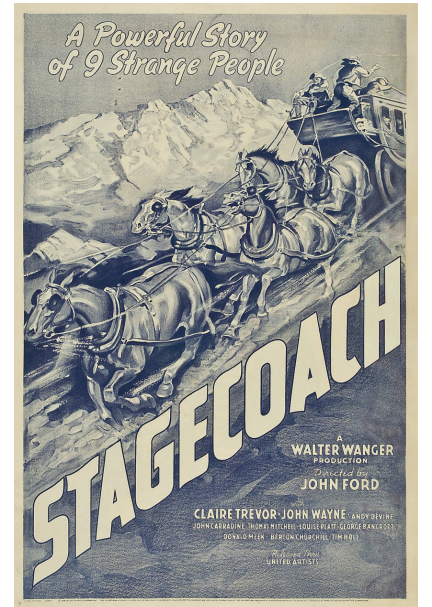


Fig.133: Stagecoach theatre poster, 1939.

48. The dustbowl was the name given to the drought which started across the southern plains (Texas to Nebraska) in the 1930s. Wheat prices in 1910s and 1920s due to increased demand for wheat from Europe during WW1 encouraged farmers to plough up millions of acres of native grasslands. Crops began to fail with the onset of drought in 1931. With over-ploughed land and no deep-rooted prairie grasses to hold the soil, it began to blow away, leading to massive dust storms. The economic devastation lasted for a decade. The Midwest and Southern Great Plains suffered severe drought beginning in 1931, and by 1934 an estimated 35 million acres of land was deemed useless for farming. Regular rain returned by the end of 1939. Poor agricultural value of the land continued into the 1950s.

49. The promotion of a period of prosperity, growth and power via a series of projects and financial regulations and reforms by President Franklin D Roosevelt between 1933-1936 which responded to public needs and demands for reform.

50. For example, a cultural shift during the Second World War in relation to the rights and aspirations of women, many of whom entered the workforce to perform essential duties in support of the war effort (as symbolised in the popular fictional character Rosie the Riveter), led to a reconsideration of stereotypical gender roles in the post-war film industry.



named after Western towns, including *Dodge City* (Curtiz 1939), *Virginia City* (Curtiz 1940) (both starring Errol Finn) and *San Antonio* (Walsh, Butler and Florey 1945). Lusted also highlights a cycle of films set within large ranches, such as *Duel In The Sun* (Vidor and Brower 1946) and *Gone With The Wind* (Fleming 1939). In both cases the narrative centres on conflicts of power and land rights, a theme carried on into the 1950s that places home and land ownership as a capitalist notion. The films concern access to, rather than routes through, land: issues that had been ignored during the development of the railroad. Major US industries modernised and became consolidated, with big agriculture and large, urbanised labour forces centred close to factory plants such as the car industry in Detroit and massive farm projects in California. As a popular form of entertainment, the Western provided a nostalgic look back to a simple pre-industrial lifestyle in terms of living and working conditions with traditional social values and customs.

The late 1940s and early 1950s saw a shift within the narratives of the Western in what film theorist André Bazin identifies as the Super Western; as the genre declined in popularity, the industry responded by producing films with narratives that were more innovative, with added locations, *mise-en-scène* and dialogue. Generational conflicts between older men and sub-cultural youth, a common trope across a variety of Hollywood genres in the post-war period, were reflected in 1950s Westerns such as *The Tin Star* (Mann 1957) and *Man Of The West* (Mann 1958). Meanwhile, other films such as *The Big Country* (Wyler 1958) featured narratives centred on family dynasties feuding over land disputes.

The 1950s also witnessed a shift in the Western home space. It was presented now as not just a space for containing the family group, but as a space of consumption: 'both Hollywood and consumer culture had the same goal: inspiring want, either to watch films or to purchase products' (Addison 2003: 147). Urban growth spilled over into the suburbs as inner cities became overcrowded and a shortage of housing led to high inflation. The melodramas of the 1950s allowed for the interior of the cinematic home space to be seen more within the Western film, with the shift driven by consumption. As Laura Mulvey states, 'the 1950s saw a swing to domesticity that complemented the US economy's expansion in production' (Mulvey 1989: 63).

Mulvey notes, 'it is perhaps no accident that the 1950s are marked by the particular resurgence of the family melodrama, the Hollywood genre associated with the dramas of domesticity, women, love and sexuality' (Mulvey 1989: 64). This lends itself well to the domestic space, the home taking a more predominant place within the Western as more than a small element of the *mise-en-scène*. Stanfield states that when women within the Western were seen outside of the domestic space, it was to act as a mannequin for the latest fashions (Stanfield 1999: 157), pushing further the notion of fostering consumption. Lyons confirms this by stating that films of this period often were 'selling film fashions in stores, and figuratively by presenting glamorous visuals to appeal to the acquisitive fantasies of its spectators, particularly women who were considered the primary purchases of commodities' (Lyons 1994: 58). As Mulvey notes, this



Fig.134: Still from *Calamity Jane* (1953).

relationship between the home, the cinematic home on-screen and the boom in post-war consumerism was particularly relevant to the new bourgeoisie:

*The separation of public and private spheres within the bourgeoisie gave order to the new experience of industrialised city life and the pressures of production while also establishing the home as the area for commodity consumption. (Mulvey 1989: 69)*

Likewise, for Ockman

*capitalist society [is cast] as a gigantic spectacle in which the commodity form has come to dominate every aspect of daily life, reducing social relations to a collection of false images to be contemplated and passively consumed. (Ockman 2000: 191)*

*Calamity Jane* (Butler 1953), starring Doris Day, a film based on a female character and her relationship with Wild Bill Hickok, and is a prime example of 1950 interior trends and styling. Amongst the Wild West cabin aesthetic, various trends of the 1950s blend in, including the pastel colours of pink, turquoise, mint, green, pale yellow and blue, the stone fireplace and wooden panelling. The front door contains stencilling within a bold design that was popular and in complete accordance with the 1950s trend of 'do it yourself' along with the blue and white gingham tablecloth and curtains that were dressed in bold floral-patterned fabrics. Although the lamp within the cabin is placed to indicate day or night, within 1950s homes they were added for decoration. The traditional 'Willow' blue and white Chinese patterned tea service is mixed with a new modern 1950s set indicating a shift to modernity fuelled by the women's magazines of this period including *House Beautiful* and *The American Home*.

The styling of the Western cinematic home had now facilitated a new line in marketing and consumption, with the lead star characters promoting the latest trends. The 'Western' look, which included images of Gene Autry and



Fig.135: Still from *Calamity Jane* (1953).



Fig.136: Still from *Calamity Jane* (1953).



Fig.137: Still from *Calamity Jane* (1953).



Fig.138: Still from *Calamity Jane* (1953).



Roy Rogers, was hugely popular within boy's bedrooms and playrooms at the time. During the 1950s, widespread car ownership and the increased development of the freeway system, intensified by the Federal Highway Act of 1956, enabled a burgeoning middle class to move to the suburbs. Audiences could make this leap back to how the railroads represented in 1950s films are carrying a modern message, encouraging travel on the freeways, although this time the import of goods did make a difference to the domestic house space. Collective viewing could be linked to the collective look of the cabin in chapter one being standardised and the production of mass built suburban houses as also standardised:

*[...] Westinghouse and General Electric made kitchen appliances in rose pink and turquoise to fit into renovation plans, as the big automobile companies designed cars that would function like rockets, as the social infrastructure was refashioned to support home building, interstate travel, fast food business, motel emporing and in general the profitable confluence of strangers. (Pomerance 2005: 3)*

The service sector also grew rapidly, with increased leisure time – and a desire to fill that time with ‘entertainment’ – led to a growth in sports and leisure, travel and tourism, hotels, restaurants, shopping and entertainment centres, including cinemas, together with home-based entertainment offered through the modern technological miracle of colour television. Among the small number of syndicated television shows that adopted colour formats during the period of its early technological development, three were Western-themed: *The Cisco Kid*, *The Lone Ranger* and *My Friend Flicka*. NBC began regular colour broadcasts in 1959 with another Western series, *Bonanza*. In turn, the viewing experience shifted away from the collective audience of cinema and into the private home.

Spurred on by economic growth and a corresponding increase in manufacturing and construction, the home became viewed more widely as socially conservative and materialistic: *‘domestic environments can reinforce certain character traits, promote family stability and assure a good society’* (Wright 1981: 1). Henry Jenkins states that *‘television does not “cause” identifiable effects in individuals; it does, however, work ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world, to circulate some meanings rather than others, and to serve some social interests better than others’* (Fiske 2010: 4). Suburban environments changed not just the function and day-to-day interpretation of town planning and community living, but at the same time moved US society away from the extended family toward its representation of a new, nuclear construction. This 1950s family structure – mom, pop and kids – was reflected within films of the period, reinforcing gender and family roles and social codes:

*[...] people concentrated on suburban family life, home entertainment, homebuilding, redecorating, family vacationing, and shopping as entertainment. The rec room, the remodelled kitchen, the patio, all*

*absorbed much interest, while trips downtown to see the new movie releases were more and more time consuming. (Pomerance 2005: 6)*

The representation of the nuclear family is portrayed through 1940s and 1950s Western films such as *The Searchers* (Ford 1956), whose central family unit comprises a father, mother and three children. Such on-screen activities and stereotypes were a move away from historical social records, where several generations may have been depicted within the same home space, and where all members of the family were engaged in work-based activities. As such, film portrayals operated at a level of social construction, rather than a ‘historically accurate’ depiction, and reflected wider societal trends.

Television mirrored these new social and ideological conventions – from domestic sitcoms, such as *Father Knows Best*, *The Donna Reed Show* and *The Honeymooners*, to popular Western series, such as *Guns, Smoke and Wagon Train* and *The Rifleman*, and comedies including *The Phil Silvers Show* and *I Love Lucy*. The television series *The Little House On The Prairie* (September 1974 – March 1983) offered a nostalgic look back to the period of the 1870s and 1880s, depicting a rural farming community within the fictional town of Walnut Grove. Of all the TV Westerns, the *Little House* series focused the most on a place of family dwelling along with a sense of personal roles and the reinforcement of traditional values at a time where the family group was shifting. The home presented is a wooden shack, which has been constructed in the same style as a homestead within the Western film genre. The narrative focuses on a family farm within Minnesota and is an adaptation of Laura Ingalls Wilder's series of semi-autobiographical books, *The Little House*. The family comprises Charles Ingalls the father, who is a farmer and a mill worker, his wife Caroline and their three daughters. Narratives within the series are based on the day to day living of a local self-sufficient community with moralistic endings to every weekly story.

This represents an attempt to hang onto the nostalgic notion of daily living, including the representation of the domestic space and the compact family group with traditional gendered roles whose local community supports individual aspiration. The use of what might be termed traditional Western conventions reflects the Western itself as a nostalgic set of tropes and conventions, while also suggesting that the indomitable pioneer spirit is still alive. At the same time, television cashed in on new video technology, while Hollywood took on untried film makers who both had some awareness of film history and a personal vision. The *Little House* series was the last attempt to position the Western within a tightly constructed American framework, at a time when notions of cultural homogeneity and community were coming into question, *‘... the haven of the family and the ethnic community (however claustrophobic and prescriptive) cannot be sustained under the fragmenting pressure of the capitalist success ethic’* (Quart 1991: 112).<sup>51</sup>



Fig.139: Still from *The Little House On The Prairie* (1974-83).



Fig.140: Still from *The Little House On The Prairie* (1974-83).



Fig.141: Still from *The Little House On The Prairie* (1974-83).

51. Further research could be undertaken in regard to audience demographics and preferences centred on, for instance, age or gender, in relation to cinematic Western film and television series such as *The Little House On The Prairie*. However, such work is beyond the scope of this particular study.





Fig.142: Wagon wheel carriages, The Homestead Museum, Cedar City, Utah. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

## CHAPTER THREE

*Diary Extract (August 2015)*

Well, I really thought I had it sussed this time, after my terrible sun stroke after my last Bodie visit, there was no way I was going to end up laying on a hotel bathroom floor with a blinding headache, sickness and unable to stand up. This time I had the factor 50 sunblock on, a long-sleeved white top, big hat that covered the back of my neck and the cameras placed in a cool box. How wrong I was as I didn't even consider the inside of my mouth; I had no idea that the extreme heat would cause mouth blisters. As I started to struggle with my sore mouth the park ranger asked if I was having issues and when I confirmed he said, 'oh you women, now if you want to live like a cowboy, you have to act like one'. He picked up a small pebble and wiped it clean on his shirt. 'Now put this in your mouth and keep it moving girl and don't swallow it' he informed me 'haven't you seen John Wayne and Clint Eastwood chewing a blade of grass or smoking a cigar? Well, this is why; so they don't dry up their mouth with the sun'. Well, that might give me a solid reason as to why women are not given a place in the construction of the West, they were probably on some bathroom floor somewhere with sunstroke! Oh, us women! I suspect that Western women had a lot more to contend with than the climate!

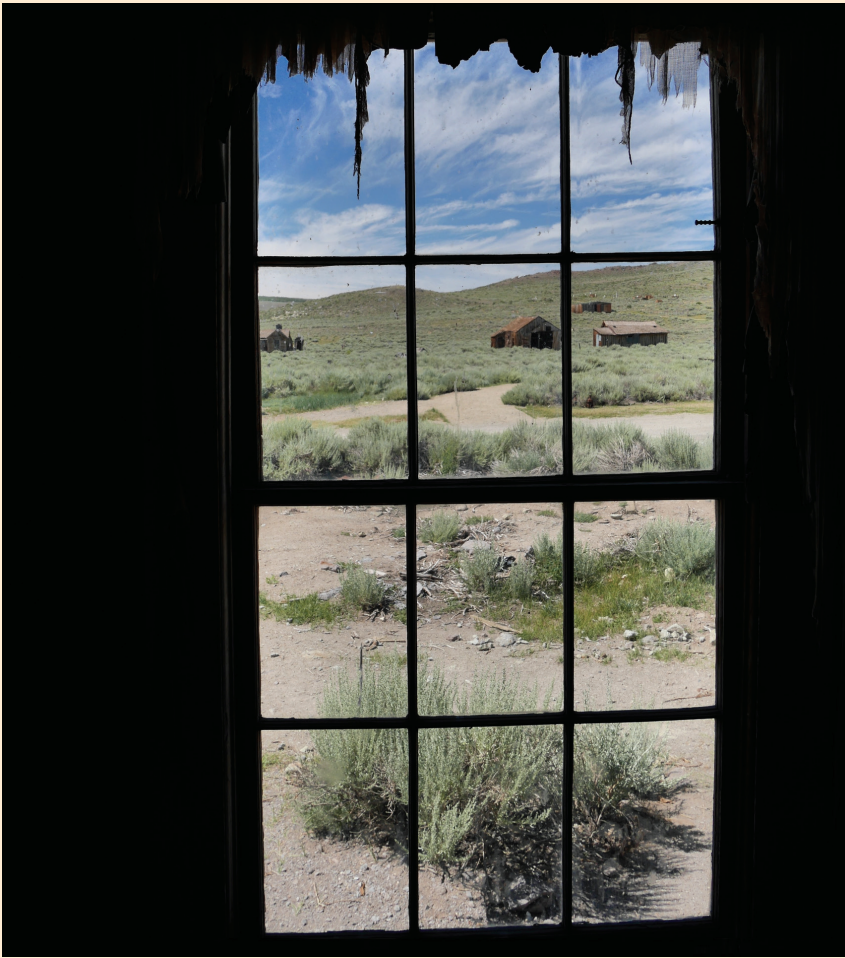


Fig.143: Bodie State Park. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



### THE COLOMBIA QUILT

Although my research focused on the home space of western migration, it quickly became evident that it was impossible not to consider the custodian of the cinematic Western home: the wife and/or mother or the daughter, and her position within the Western narrative. Literature presented Western women 'as generally negative semi-romanticized stereotypes' (Myres 1999: 6), while historian Frederick Jackson Turner disregarded women completely. It should come as no surprise that early Western films, drawing on historical narratives, followed the same principle, presenting either a wholly masculine storyline or featuring women purely as victims of their circumstances and surroundings:

*The long-suffering female seemed to be the closest thing to an authentic innocent victim. Torn from family and civilization, overworked and lonely, disoriented by an unfamiliar landscape, frontierswomen could be seen to be tragic martyrs to their husbands' wilful ambitions.* (Limerick 1987: 48)

The female characters within early Westerns were primarily positioned in give support to the male protagonist. She herself is often not considered important, but rather it is the way she supports other characters that warrants her screen time. In many ways this reflects wider societal and cultural attitudes toward women and power, as feminine figures stand as symbols of home spaces. As Rose states:

*The visual encoding of nineteenth-century Western hegemonic masculinist constructions of femininity, sexuality, nature and property are at their most overly intertwined in the landscape with figures set in the colonies of Europe and America.* (Rose 1993: 94)

Two stereotypical female characters appear in the Western: she is portrayed either as a harlot or a victim who needs protection, these stereotypes 'derived not from the reality of women's lives, but from nineteenth-century ideas of what women should be' (Myres 1999: 6). Even when the woman herself is placed as the key protagonist, she is subjected to the same limited set of conventions. For instance, in Victor Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928) the female lead (Lillian Gish) must overcome her fear of the wind on the Texan plains simply to stay in the West to support her husband. These conventions were seldom recognised or critiqued even in more recent revisionist Westerns. In Gavin O'Connor's *Jane Got A Gun* (2015), for instance, the female lead (Natalie Portman) is defending her father and subsequently the home space. The narrative focuses on her past life of being kidnapped to become a prostitute who is rescued by a male character, with another male character helping her fend off the final attack, only for the pair to ride off into the sunset together. The title of the film may suggest a woman with a powerful presence, but the narrative harks back to traditional conventions of a woman who needs to be rescued by a man.

Tommy Lee Jones' 2014 film *The Homesman*, said to be a Western historical drama set in the 1850s Midwest, follows this same format. The main female lead (Hilary Swank) is hired to take women who are mentally 'sick' and cannot

cope with living in the Midwest back across the country to gain the help that they need. On the journey, Swank's character hangs herself in a state of depression as she cannot find a man to marry her, leaving her male counterpart to deliver the women safely to their destination. It is clear to see that even revisionist films do not reposition and represent women as strong characters. Culture may well have shifted over the timespan of the Western genre, but the representation of women remains the same, an idealized role that highlights the subordination of women and does not conform to the reality of most women's lived experience.

*As evidenced by diaries, letters and autobiographies, pioneer women no less than men were bold, daring, strong willed, determined individualists, their plain robust behaviour reflecting their austere life close to the earth* (Wallmann 1999: 28).

The women of Western migration took on many roles. Both men and women would routinely change roles, even driving the wagons, the reality of conditions not always allowing for the ideological separation of the sexes: 'heroism in Westerns should thus be read and understood as a human necessity, capable of being present in both genders' (Wallmann 1999: 28). Sandra Myres notes that as the frontier became more stable, men moved back into the marketplace and women ceased to be seen as productive in the same way. Instead, their meaning became constructed 'by the idealisation of women as the moral guardians of home and family life. Women were assigned a new role confined within the carefully defined sphere of women's place' (Myres 1999: 6).

Along with limited roles and screen time, female visual representation on screen, just like other film genres between 1934-1968, was governed by the Hays Code that placed restrictions on film production, in particular on sex scenes, nudity and sexuality.<sup>52</sup> Films produced during the 1950s and early 1960s would focus on woman's upper torso, often fixating on the breast area as a less-than-subtle strategy to break the limitations of the rules. Rarely would the female look directly at the camera; instead, she was busy discussing something with another character, busy with a task or staring into the distance.

The *Colombia* quilt is a response to both the Hays Code and the visual representation of women on screen and the need or want for a more powerful representation of the female protagonist within the Western film narrative (Colombia being the feminisation of the term Columbus). Parker states that 'it is not only home and family that embroidery signifies but, specifically mothers and daughters' (Parker 1984: 2), while 'embroidery also evokes the stereotype of the virgin in opposition to the whore, an infantilising representation of women's sexuality' (Parker 1984: 2). This relates closely to the two female stereotypes presented within the Western film.

The pattern and shape of the quilt was taken from the twin ideas of the film poster and the wanted poster. Still images, production stills and film posters are often produced to support a film and used as advertising in advance of the film's release, creating 'a bridge between the irretrievable spectacle and the individual's

52. A production code set by the film industry as moral guidelines for the censorship of content that was applied to most films in the USA between 1934-1968. The Western became the only film genre that was allowed to have revenge as a theme or premise.



imagination' (Mulvey 1989: 161). Thus, the passive representation of women is made visible even before the film is seen.

The 'wanted' poster is often seen in and associated with Western films, usually based around the male character of the hero or the villain. The image of the wanted person would be looking directly at the camera, reflecting a powerful stance. I have extracted the image of the female from Western films, taking the image of the women out of the film's narrative flow and repositioning her within the mediated form of the quilt to offer a comparative reading. Here it is clear to see how the female character does not always confront the viewer and is often distracted, looking into the distance, conversing with another character, or just staring into empty space.

The colour balance of the quilt relates to early Victorian photography and the sepia toned print to offer an aesthetic which relates to the narrative period of the Western (the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). The quilt also features a text taken from the closing frame of Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928), '--- because I'm your wife --- to work with you --- to love you ---!', a phrase that encapsulates the position of women in relation to the history of the pioneers, their narrative role in Western film and their exclusion from the history of the US West.

Like the *Lone Star* quilt, the *Colombia* quilt was largely planned on the computer. Having designed a grid of portrait 'windows' on a 60 inch (1524mm) square grid, I selected images of women in Western film (24 different still frames that were repeated in make up the size of the quilt) which were printed on to 228gsm cotton linen on a 1400mm square. I added a bleed around each individual image to allow for folding and sewing, so each photograph/frame would be realised at 8 inches by 6 inches (203.2mm x 152.4mm) on the final quilt. I also printed a single large sepia colour field measuring 1800mm x 1000mm with the added text caption from *The Wind* to run at the bottom of the quilt. This sheet could then be cut into strips to add the borders between individual photographs and the four-inch strip around the outside edge of the quilt.

DEFERRED ACTION QUILT

This quilt focuses on the domestic space and the depiction of familiar roles, including the observation of tea drinking as seen in many films<sup>53</sup> and John Ford's repeated use of the willow pattern tea service. Ford often used this convention to emphasise a pause in the narrative or a scene where the characters are gathering around the table. The willow pattern tea service was first established across Europe during the industrial revolution and utilised the application of transfers before firing. The willow pattern became one of the most identifiable design patterns of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was produced by large scale potteries such as Minton from 1780 and was still being produced two centuries later. The pattern illustrates an English version of a Chinese legend, developed and popular in Britain. This was while Chippendale was producing Chinese influenced furniture and architect John Nash designed the Brighton Pavilion which includes Chinese-styled interiors. Both designers responded to the expanding trade interests of the

53. See for example *Calamity Jane*, *The Searchers*, *Shane*, *The Unforgiven*.

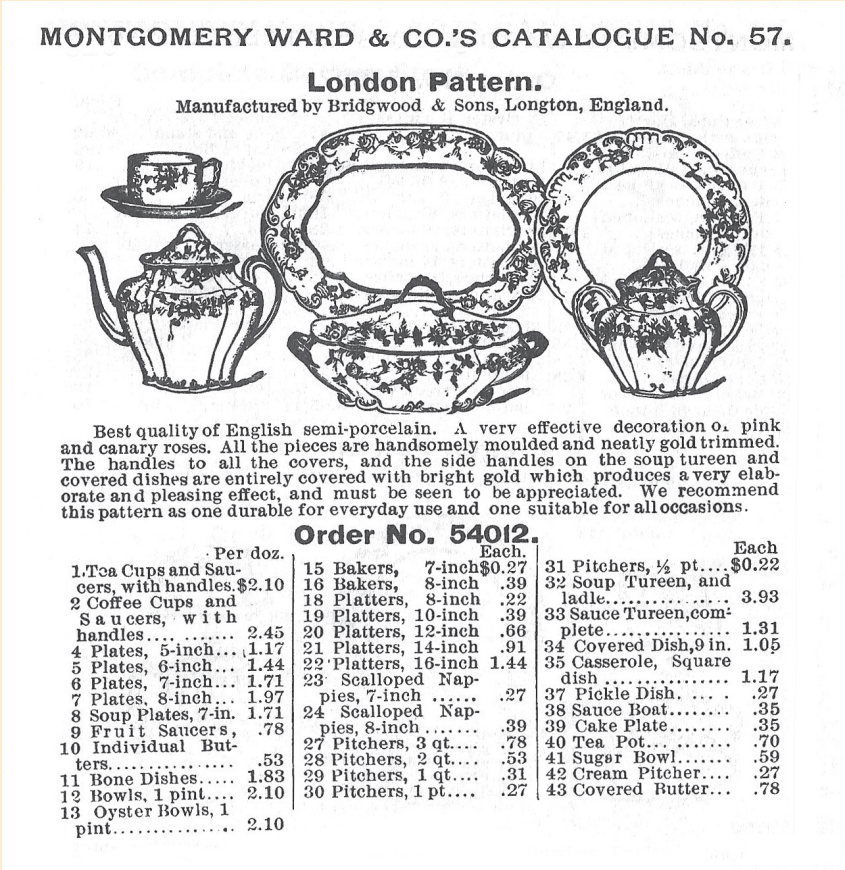


Fig.144: English tea set advertisement, Montgomery Ward & Co. catalogue 1895.

East India Company in Asia where the British Empire was expanding to countries such as Singapore. Its use within Western film reflects an emblem of the Victorian period that invokes an atmosphere of a cosy domestic home environment. Equally, when the development of the US West reflected a time of expansion, perhaps paralleling the growth of the British Empire, the tea service becomes a signifier of that expansion.

Research indicates that historically, those who migrated to the US West from across Europe may well have taken a tea service with them (although it is highly unlikely that many full services would have survived). The willow pattern tea service itself was not widely available for US citizens to purchase. Original *Sears and Montgomery catalogues*, the *Sears Roebuck & Co. Consumers Guide 1894*, *The 1897 Sears Roebuck & Co. Catalogue* and *Montgomery Ward & Co. Catalogue & Buyers Guide* indicate a wide range of domestic objects that were available to buy within the 1800s, with many tea services imported from England including Utopian, Columbia, Lexington, London, Yale, Peach Blossom and the Forget Me Not, but not the Willow Pattern. Dutch settlers would go on to produce the first whiteware pottery in 1684 to avoid excessive overseas taxation. These early 'American' goods were functional and sturdy, reflecting more of a utilitarian functionality than a historical or cultural aesthetic.

Within the *Deferred Action* quilt, the nine top rectangles are designed in the shape of a tablecloth. Layered behind are twelve corresponding rectangles directly referencing the willow pattern. A pale blue background complements the



Fig.145: Example of Blue Willow pattern china. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



Fig.146: Example of Blue Willow pattern china. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.



dark blue of the border and gives the illusion of a blue and white tablecloth. The top rectangles show images from Western films where the tea service and the convention of tea drinking is used as part of the narrative. This quilt has been completely machine made in its production shifting the emphasis from hand-crafted domestic object to an item intended solely for display and capable of mass production. This quilt also highlights the repetitive convention of the table that situates the ideology of the family group and gendered roles.

The *Deferred Action* quilt followed along similar design and production lines to the *Colombia* quilt and was again largely planned on the computer. The complex, layered pattern and individual elements in this instance had to be constructed in InDesign then deconstructed piece-by-piece – with the addition of image bleeds and cutting guides – to lay out each individual panel that would be required to sew the quilt back together in a series of connected layers.

This meant printing the foreground (darker blue) image layers on one sheet of 228gsm cotton linen measuring 1400mm x 1080mm, then the background (lighter blue) image layers on another sheet measuring 1400mm x 1080mm together with a third dark blue colour field measuring 1080mm x 1600mm which could be cut into strips to provide joining sections and the border around the finished quilt. I added a quarter inch (6.4mm) bleed around each individual panel to allow for folding and sewing, and the final construction drew from my experience in creating the *Lone Star* and *Colombia* quilts, utilising a combination of machine sewn individual images and smaller panels along with larger multiple-image panels which were then ‘picked out’ as the machine quilting and finishing process added stitching lines to retrace the edges of each individual element.



Fig.147: Sarah Dryden, *Colombia* quilt (detail).



Fig.148: Sarah Dryden, *Deferred Action* quilt (detail).



Fig.149: *Deferred Action* quilt digital construction template.



Fig.150: Sarah Dryden, *Deferred Action* quilt (detail).





Fig.151: Sarah Dryden, Colombia quilt, based on stills from classic Western films.



Fig.152: Sarah Dryden, Deferred Action quilt, based on stills from classic Western films and photographs of blue willow pattern china tea set.



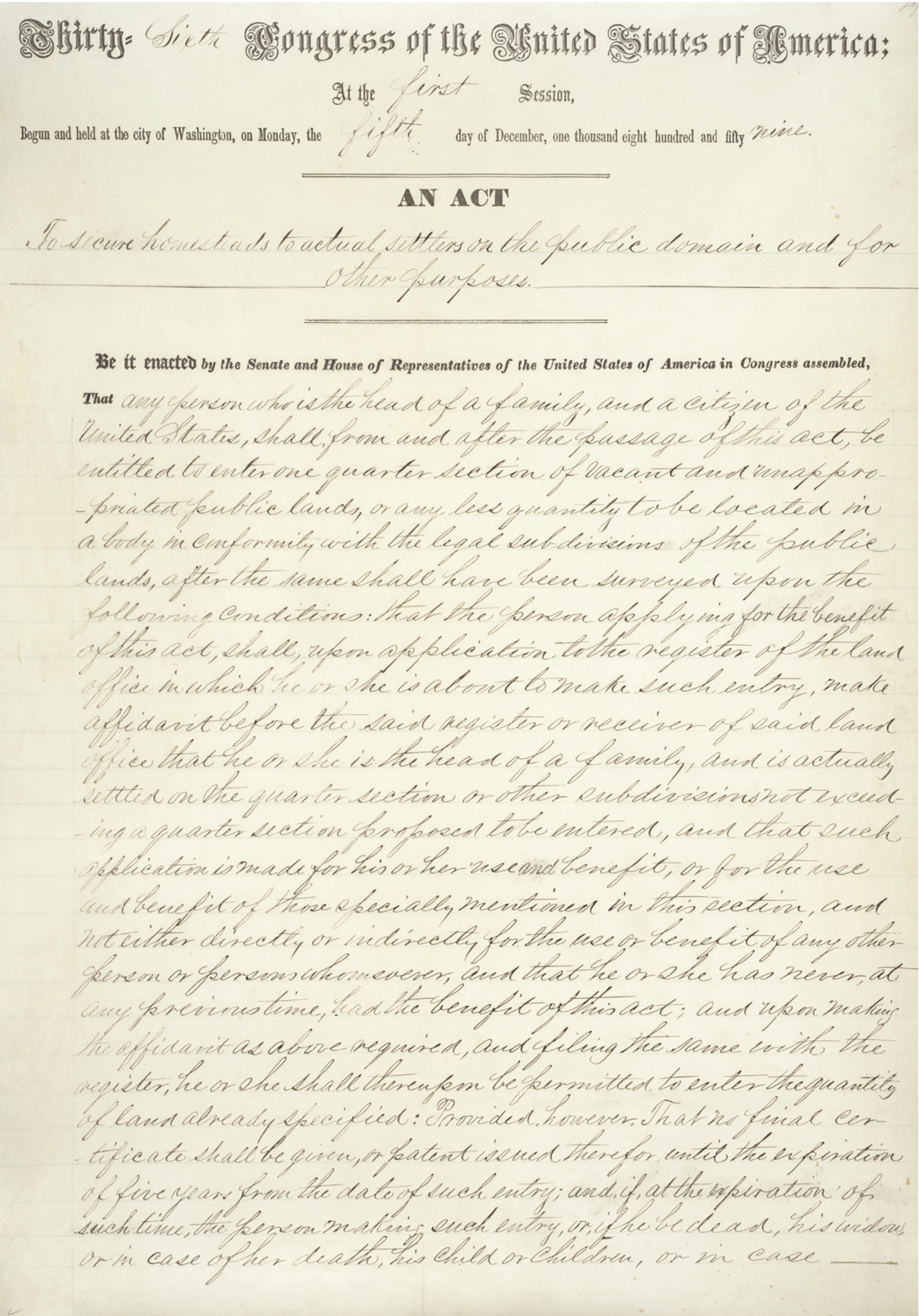


Fig.153: The Homestead Act, 1860.

# VISUAL CONVENTIONS OF THE WESTERN HOME

As David Lusted has highlighted, the Western ‘imaginary’ was consistently utilised to reflect the day-to-day concerns, aspirations and ideologies of its audience, as film viewers ‘used the Western imaginary to play out in symbolic form matters impinging on their own individual and group identities’ (Lusted 2003: 9). This also reflects the communal nature of the audience during the heyday of Western films, where the cinematic experience was very much a collective one. In narrative terms, the domestic interior in Western film highlights the personal behaviour and rituals of the characters, giving insights to ‘lived’ behaviour and a sense of audience familiarity through the illusion of similarity and reciprocity: ‘we find ourselves mirrored in it, see what had been not yet visible, and integrate the reflection back into our sense of self’ (Marcus 2007: 1). A connection between lived experience and the filmic image is essential for an audience to interpret meaning, ‘for what audiences do, when they see a film, is to apply a certain mental perspective to it, so that they understand it, so that they can make sense of the world that they are offered’ (Porter 1985: 42).

It is within this structure that the mediated home space becomes important as a vehicle for the director and screenwriter to convey meaning. As the plot unfolds, the space between the characters, events and the progress of the plot aid the viewer’s engagement in relation to their own lives, such that ‘people transform those raw materials – the images, stories, characters, jokes, songs, rituals, and myths of popular culture – in ways which gave expressive shape to their own lived experience’ (Fiske 2010: 16). The importance of a character to the narrative is reinforced by their relationship to the home, with the diegetic structure acting as an anchor in which both imaginative and ideological narratives can be presented. This idea is also highlighted by Linda Smein in what she describes as the ‘valences of cultural power’ in relation to gendered domestic spaces ‘that were articulated in the public discourse on identity’ (Smein 1999: 21).

This third part of this body of work focuses on the cinematic Western home in relation to the key characters who interact with the fictional domestic space: the way they are framed, how narratives are constructed around them and the reoccurring architectural tropes, conventions and themes that help to drive the Western narrative. This chapter will explore visual conventions within the Western film genre that allow the exterior and interior domestic space to support the characters, setting and plot. It will also explore the ideological gendered role of the home maker.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

The Western film genre is as old as cinema itself, making it one of the first narrative conventions that others followed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As highlighted in Chapter Two, the representation of the home space was driven by the limitations of early film technology, in turn drawing upon ‘older traditions of popular entertainment, particularly melodramas,





54. These characters live by their own codes; domesticity is an alien concept to those outside of social order. They belong to the landscape, in the wilderness and are not part of a civilised community. The main narrative structures for these characters tend to revolve around a small number of key scenarios; riding up to the outside of a home, attacking those inside the home space, hiding from an individual or group within the home or taking somebody hostage inside.

55. The minister visits the house to make sure social order is in place. He acts as God's mouthpiece (reflecting the social structure of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the minister is predominately male). His narrative relates to bringing and reinforcing what is moral. Unlike the villain, gun fighter, outlaw he is welcomed into the home space to promote the power of the church and to help to maintain domestic social order.

56. The lone hero belongs in the landscape and is the centre of discourse within the home space and the local community: his relationship to the home space is temporary, driven out back into the void either by the character's own lifestyle or by the local community.

*vaudeville skits, musical exhibitions and blackface minstrelsy'* (Stanford 1999: 163). Up until the 1950s, Western films were largely indistinguishable from the wider output of the commercial film industry in terms of plot, narrative and characterisation. The central characters within classical Hollywood film interact with space and other characters; they converse, enter conflict and struggle to solve problems leading to either resolution or defeat. As Bordwell notes in his analysis of narration in fiction film, *'the principle causal agency is thus the character – an individual endowed with a consistent batch of evident traits, qualities and behaviours.'* (Bordwell 1985: 157)

The domestic space depicted in film creates an illusion of lived experience. The audience witnesses individual and group dynamics along with familiar conventions of family interaction: gossip, advice, argument and emotional exchanges. This underlying narrative interrupts the conventional Western all-action plot, providing a reassuring sense of the familiar and allowing more complex narratives to be explored. The house can become a stopping point or a safe place to hide from others, or a space transgressed when the character is attacked. It is also a space from which to remotely view others in the landscape and a space of gathering: a space where family and friends converse, plot and scheme, the perfect backdrop for multiple layered narratives to develop.

Bordwell (1985) notes that the generic structure of the film fiction of classical Hollywood is based around a set of conventionalised traits. Characters struggle to solve issues or to attain a certain goal, and within that struggle they enter conflict with other characters or events, leading to a resolution, defeat or victory. The characters require a setting to support the narrative: it is here that the Western cinematic house functions in a denotative way, since *'the home is a canvas that mediates between the household and the imaginary visitors'* (Miller 2001: 66).

Although characters come and go, several important male figures have a minimal relationship with the home space in Western film. The gunfighter, the outlaw, the villain,<sup>54</sup> the minister<sup>55</sup> and the lone hero<sup>56</sup> provide key characters through which to centre (usually male protagonist) action, though they are normally depicted in the landscape or the town and seldom in a domestic setting. The characters having a direct relationship with the space, who are thus usually placed within the home, are the housewife, husband and the family group – sometimes including the extended family in the guise of grandparents. The following sections develop each of these types.

### The Husband/Father

The husband/father character usually mirrors what Penny Sparke describes as

*The Nineteenth-century notion of the 'separate spheres', the idea that is, that with the advent of industrialisation middle-class men and women come to inhabit distinct environments, the public sphere of work and the private sphere of the home.* (Sparke 2004: 2)

The father is portrayed as the person who protects the home and provides for the family. The father comes and goes as the narrative plot demands, since *'much of men's power has resided in their privileged freedom to pass at will between the public and the private'* (Tosh 1999: 2). Reference is sometimes made to the burden of providing for the family, travelling to new territories and building a home. Reflecting gendered social roles and conventions of the 1800s, *'patriarchy remains an indispensable concept, not only because men have usually wielded authority within the home, but also because it has been necessary to their masculine self-respect that they do so'* (Tosh 1999: 3). The character of the cowboy, the rancher, the gold prospector, or miner needs to project a sense of agency that reflects the virtues of autonomy and independence beyond the home space. As Laura Mulvey notes:

*The home characteristically marks the formal space of departure for the narrative, the stasis which must be broken or disrupted for the story to acquire momentum and which also marks the sexual identity of the hero, both male and Oedipal, as he leaves the confines of the domestic, settled sphere of his childhood for the space of adventure and self-discovery as an adult male.* (Mulvey 1992: 55)

### The Housewife/Mother

The cinematic house across different film genres mirrors historical social conventions, placing female characters within the home in support of family members and the male protagonist. Mulvey contends

*it is the mother who guarantees the privacy of the home by maintaining its respectability, as essential a defence against outside incursion or curiosity as the encompassing walls of the home itself.* (Mulvey 1989: 69)

There are two key areas of importance in relation to the representation of the wife and the mother within Western film. First, she highlights the differences between gendered and social space: the architectural exterior (male space) and interior (female space). Secondly, she reflects economic and social aspects of sexual difference. She does not belong in the landscape, but to the home space, and is thus portrayed as a weaker character with less agency or authority than her male counterpart: as Gillian Rose states, *'a dualism bound into the power relations of a society, including its masculinism'* (Rose 1993: 48).

Before the 1862 Homestead Act, a woman could not own a property in her own right, hence she had few means through which to contribute financially. This placed the female as subservient within a patriarchal system of ownership. The unpaid and often unrecognised work she was engaged with in caring and nurturing occupied a fundamental role, albeit one that was often viewed as insignificant and inferior to that of her husband. The main focal point for the housewife in Western film is to support the male protagonist and the family unit: she negotiates the space around them, and she anchors the main narrative.







*The viewpoint women represent is introduced in order to be swept aside, crushed, or dramatically invalidated. But far from being peripheral, women's discourse, or some sign of it, is a necessary and enabling condition of most Western novels and films. (Tomkins 1992: 41)*

The visual representation of the housewife reinforces the notion of family stability and social control, making theatrical entertainment both more popular and more respectable in the process. Sandra Myres (1999) identifies stereotypical female characters drawn from early literature, namely the frightened tearful woman, the Madonna of the prairies and the bad woman:



*The frightened tearful woman [was] wrenched from home and hearth and dragged off into the terrible West where she is condemned to a life of lonely terror among savage beasts and rapine Indians. Overworked and over birthed, she lived through a long succession of dreary days of toil and loneliness until, at last, driven to or past the edge of sanity, she resigned herself to a hard life and early death. (1999: 1)*



The Madonna of the prairies was 'the sturdy helpmate [who] could fight Indians, kill the bear in the barn, make two pots of lye soap, and do a week's wash before dinnertime and still have the cabin neat, the children clean, and a good meal on the table when her husband came in from the fields – all without a word of complaint or even a hint of an ache or a pain. (1999: 3)



The bad woman was more masculine in behaviour; 'the backwoods belle, hefty, grotesque, and mean with a pistol', as portrayed by the likes of *Calamity Jane*, 'who drank, smoked, and cursed and was handy with a poker deck, a six-gun, and a horse'. (Myres 1999: 2-4)



Western film capitalised on these past representations in literature, with the narrative conventions of the Madonna – the good girl, the daughter or schoolteacher associated with youthful innocence, home and family who at times transforms into the domestic drudge of the frightened tearful woman – contrasted with the bad woman with a heart of gold and loose morals of the dancehall or brothel. These contrasts can clearly be seen in *The Wind* (1928) where Letty (Lillian Gish) was sent West by her relatives and had to overcome her fear of the wind and in *The Homesman* (2014) where women who had moved out West are driven insane by their living conditions.



The Madonna who overcomes her fear and becomes a help to her male partner can clearly be seen in Stanley Donen's *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* (1954). Based on a narrative set in the 1850s, Milly (Jane Powell) marries Adam (Howard Keel) and when they arrive at his home, she meets his six ill-mannered brothers who all live in the same cabin. The brothers kidnap six local girls who move through the process of the frightened tearful woman to the Madonna who transforms the brothers into 'proper' patterns of behaviour.

In Gavin O'Connor's *Jane Got A Gun* (2016), Jane (Natalie Portman) not only takes care of her dying father but defends the homestead from the outlaws who shot him. These female characters are contrasted with the bad girl, more masculine than feminine as portrayed in *Calamity Jane* (1953) where Calamity (Doris Day) can be seen riding the stagecoach, firing guns and dressing like a man, before she transforms into the Madonna, transforming into her feminine form to marry Wild Bill Hickok (Howard Keel).



These female characters are not based on individual personality traits but, just like the representation of the home space, reflect an exaggerated stereotype that is narrated again and again, so that 'what appears to be random quirks of individual characterization are in fact intimately linked to pattern, one built on the war between oppositions and seeking perfect symmetry' (Yorke 2013: 139).



The wife/mother stereotype – the bonneted pioneer inspired by the conventions of literature – was reflected in other media including dime novels, comics and women in film more broadly, particularly in melodrama which frames the notion of female respectability. The domestic space then provides a backdrop within which to situate the implicit tensions between characters: 'the home, that can hold a drama in claustrophobic intensity and represent, with its highly connotative architectural organisation, the passions and antagonisms that lie behind it' (Mulvey 1989: 74).



What remains prevalent is the focus on the social and moral codes within the family group, led by the wife/mother figure who in terms of both the Western and the melodrama is reduced to a stereotype. As Celia Lury notes, 'historically women have not generally been recognised as individuals' (Lury 1998: 222). Director John Ford considered his characters less individual and more representative of idealisation: the decent, upstanding, honourable and chaste Madonna overseeing the respectable American family. The wife in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1954), played by Dorothy Jordan, mirrors the wife and mother in Douglas Sirk's melodrama *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), portrayed by Jane Wyman. Both characters are reminiscent of 1950s social and moral codes, in turn reflecting gendered ideals that had prevailed since the nineteenth century.



In fact, during the 1800s migration West, far from being 'weak' and fully dependent on a male partner, pioneer women were 'full and vigorous participants in history' (Limerick 1987: 53). The 1862 Homestead Act provided rights for women to claim land in their own name, as active agents in migration and resettlement. It was only through symbolic images and narrative moralizing speeches in fiction and film that femininity was to become more closely associated with pity. The wife civilized the wild frontier including, but not only, through participating in the activity of 'homing'. Just like her male counterpart, she helped to build and create a safe environment, where a household becomes part of a community, where a family develops and where social interactions happen. Without her and the home, the settlement and growth of the West would not have been possible. Far from taking a







supporting role, she was instrumental to the very success of Jefferson's dream of colonisation, as Western women became 'the moral guardians of the family and, by extension, the republic' (Myres 1999: 6).

### The Family

As previously explored, the Western film genre is underpinned by key themes relating to US expansion, pre-industrialisation and urbanisation, with the narrative representing 'the West's infatuation with village life and rustic homesteads' (Lefebvre 1991: 123). This in turn highlights traditional family and gendered rituals, with the house positioned as an anchor where the family group gather and interact. Historian Thomas Jefferson's public addresses, which aimed to aid the migration and settlement of the West, were focused on government policy in relation to the support of the family group. In setting up family farms via the Homestead Acts, Jefferson saw the preservation of the traditional family unit as being key to the success of US expansion as 'the family is closely related to and implicated in the process of production of society in general' (Wolf 1993: 77).

Christopher Latch suggests that 'by the end of the eighteenth century, the main features of the bourgeois family system were firmly established in Western Europe and the United States' (Latch 1977: 4). Characteristics of the family include the ways in which marriage shifted from parent-arranged to self-chosen, with young women taught at an early age to accept male advances but to protect their reputation. Marriage itself was linked to the notion of romantic love where 'husband and wife, according to the ideology, were to find solace and spiritual renewal in each other's company' (Latch 1977: 4). All these ideas were directly transferable to Western film, where the idea of the family group is often constructed around the notion of love, romance and settlement; 'The Big Trail and most wagon West films rest upon this idealization of family units' (Simmon 2003: 133).

Most Westerns show one home owned and lived in by a single-family group. Again, the reality of this situation would have been much different. Families on the migration trail became quite diverse, with different families grouping together after the death of loved ones. A single room would often have to hold different generations alongside fractions of family groups. Overcrowding was often the norm: 'ten children living in two "moderately sized rooms and a loft", seven girls slept in the loft and the younger children "on the floor in the front room by the fireplace"' (Schlissel 2004: 147).

In 1910, social reformer Margaret Byington highlighted the difficult living conditions of the extended family group in the US in the 1800s, though this representation did not apply to all living situations. As Schlissel states, 'in terms of family size and family formation, the diaries show thirty-two women traveling with 108 children among them. The average overland family in this census was one that held 3.4 children' (Schlissel 2004: 151). However, as the pioneers began to settle the family unit became more stabilised, in that

as long as emigration was a primary intention, large numbers of children provided the model for family formation. But once the family began to understand itself as geographically stable, family size and age of first marriage began to alter towards the formation of smaller family units. (Schlissel 2004: 151)

This equates well with the typical family unit depicted within Western films, that of the small nuclear family, though it is questionable whether this historical change in the family unit is being reflected or, perhaps more likely, the family unit being portrayed is more in line with cultural conventions (and therefore audience expectations) of the time of production of the film (typically the 1930s to 1950s).

### The Home Situated in the Landscape

Within most Westerns, the home anchors the narrative to an environment. While it could be a house, town or suburb, the real focus of the Western narrative remains the open landscape, with the house giving contextualisation to an area of settlement and habitation. Within traditional Western films (notably those based on the theme of the Wild West, for example *The Searchers* and *High Plains Drifter*) the plot takes place outside the home. The home space is used as a stopping point that embodies familiarity for the audience as well as pauses and shifts in the narration of the story. The house interior is therefore used as a point of anchor within the overriding narrative, which is largely centred on exterior spaces (the plains, the mountains, the prairie, the range etc.).

As discussed in Chapter One, the interior of the cinematic house is usually nothing more than a backdrop or a studio that represents a contained setting, such that it often represents a distorted space that does not match the exterior in height or width and is often not true to any historical form. When architecture is viewed through a camera lens, the experience is visual and static. With the camera directing the focus within the frame, low angle shots are used to emphasise internal walls, windows and floors, the effects of time on a building and 'the sentiment of age' (Ruskin 1989: 188). Thus, a mythological space can be created to favour any viewpoint.

### WESTERN NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

The importance of the home space to the evolution of the Western states has been greatly underestimated, particularly within fictionalised depictions in film. Within narrative forms, home sequences allow for the contextualisation of belonging; those who do not belong pass through or are excluded. The home space contains the characters and highlights their relationship to each other, allowing for familiar tropes and conventions to be visualised while the more complex main narrative is played out. If the audience associate with the situations that on-screen characters find themselves in, then the home interior and the objects that the characters engage with help to support the narrative.







Fiction relies upon verisimilitude and the suspension of disbelief: the audience is often expected to ignore incongruities and inconsistencies in the depiction of background sets, props and other physical ephemera placed within the frame purely as a context for the central narrative. If the viewer has an interest in materials, for instance, they must make a conscious effort to look for them, acknowledging the difference between things that move on screen and the static background. In many ways, this should come as no surprise – as Chapter Two explored, fiction film evolved from theatrical performance, where backdrops and scenery could often be rudimentary and simplistic: purely figurative props to denote a place or an activity. Audiences are intrinsically familiar with such devices, and the denotative action of simple visual codes and props supports the narrative development without challenging the viewer or standing out strongly enough to highlight incongruities.

With the Western film traditionally placed within a time frame of the mid- to late-1800s, these moral and social codes are played out time and again. The Western repeats the messages portrayed within Victorian novels, that of the female placed in ‘*the shadow of a more important male*’ (Tompkins 1992: 40), although the female character is often essential to the narrative:

*women are the motive for male activity (it's women who are being avenged, it's a woman the men are trying to rescue) at the same time as what women stand for – love and forgiveness in place of vengeance – is precisely what the activity denies.* (Tompkins 1992: 41)

### Spatial Movements

Nicholas Vardac identified how the early Melodrama stage setting historically employed distinct narrative areas of downstairs, upstairs, and outside. The camera would move simultaneously between each area, with the narrative being supported by connecting movements, lighting, and sound. As Vardac states, ‘*action proceeded simultaneously in each of these areas with the story line cutting across from one to the other*’ (Vardac 1949: 21). Along with this, often two storylines would be running at the same time, a minor and major narrative that demanded certain locations and times for each element.<sup>57</sup>

Western film narrative employs several distinct spatial configurations of the home, with the action usually located within a single-story building.<sup>58</sup> Zoned interior areas are directly linked to everyday domestic life, with scenes reflecting the fusion of family, social, cultural and moral codes. The movements of the characters within each space link to a certain time within the narrative, as Sholomith Rimmon-Kenan states ‘*time is not only a recurrent theme in a great deal of narrative fiction, it is also a constituent factor of both story and text*’ (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 44). These zoned areas allow characters to converge, with camera movements and lighting that highlight their gestures, expressions and actions to give the audience clues regarding the various relationships on screen, while also helping to structure the film’s narrative, through what John Rhodes calls ‘*the space of the house as the medium of suspenseful narration*’ (Rhodes 2017: 43). There are certain times of the

day and night when key areas of rooms would be used and engagement with movable props would be utilised. For instance, the table is used to indicate rituals of breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea or supper, giving opportunity for the characters to engage with appropriate utility objects on the set. The hearth further represents rituals indicating a certain time of day but can also indicate the climate with a lit or unlit fire.

These props then project everyday practices to viewers and facilitate communication between the characters. Interior configurations within the Western predominantly include the use of windows and doors, the table setting and the hearth, and occasionally if the home space includes additional rooms within its structure, the bed, blending private and public spaces. Judith Flanders notes that historically, right up until the first part of the nineteenth century, the table and chairs and other furnishings would remain lined up against the walls until required, leaving the centre of the room empty. However, within film the characters move around these interior spaces as the plot demands. They converse or avoid each other, moving for instance from the zoned spaces of the hearth to the table, back to the hearth, then across to the fireplace, as they mimic the rituals and spatial patterns of everyday life. These actions often slow the narrative down, allowing space for the individual characters and the plot to slowly develop. As characters move around the space, they pick up and use key props to further denote a domestic space, for example the coffee pot, the broom, fabrics or tableware. Such gestures signify a specific ritual and time, with lighting used to illuminate or shadow objects within the frame, guiding the audience to specific detail.

### ARCHITECTURAL TROPES AND CONVENTIONS – STRUCTURAL AND FIXED ELEMENTS

Within literature the author takes time to reveal in detail the personality of each fictional character, whereas film relies upon visual clues with the *mise-en-scène* providing the setting, lighting and movement. The home space provides additional opportunities for traits of speech, action and gesture to develop the plot, with structural elements providing a familiar setting. Below are several key architectural and structural elements of the building interior that are utilised in framing narrative within Western film.<sup>59</sup>

#### Inside But Outside - The Veranda

*The balcony is a familiar element from both stage and auditorium.*  
(Heathcote 2012: 111)

The veranda is an outdoor shelter that adjoins and wraps around the front or side of the house, surrounded by a railing. It has its roots in Spanish colonial architecture and was popular in areas of the Western states where the weather is warm all year. It has historically become a key feature within rural American architecture: typically positioned to face the sunrise, it becomes a sun trap and a cool space in the evenings. Within film it can support the notion of the changing of time: as the sun sets and light starts to fade it is the ideal space for



57. Parallel editing or cross cutting was a film technique developed by D.W. Griffith whereby two or more scenes would be shown in different locations, playing out simultaneously to add more drama or suspense. The technique as first seen in *A Corner in Wheat* (1909).

58. Obviously, a great deal of action in the traditional Western, particularly in relation to inter-character conflict and gunfights etc., takes place in public buildings with multiple floors, notably the saloon, store, chapel or brothel. This research, however, is centred on the home space, which is usually portrayed as a single storey dwelling such as a log cabin or sod house.

59. A number of other architectural conventions, including the mezzanine and the cellar, are frequently used in Western film, but are not considered directly relevant to this body of research. Please see Appendices for further detail.





characters to exchange dialogue. The veranda defines a living space between the internal and the external, a space where characters can meet in private away from the general household, where information can be exchanged or where a lone figure can sit and reflect. This convention alone has made the rocking chair an iconic object both within the Western landscape and in popular culture: the male character tilts back in the chair as they converse and plan with other characters or the female character rocks back and forth as she watches the horizon. Here the veranda separates her from the landscape: she is within the exterior, but still attached to the home space. The veranda functions as an external boundary and a viewing platform, where the character can survey the landscape without becoming part of it, to watch who is arriving and departing. The veranda shot in John Ford's *The Searchers* is mirrored in Andrew McLaglen's *Chisum* (1970) although the house in the latter film is a ranch house, not a sod house. This suggests a visual convention of a particular building style, with the rocking chair also placed on the veranda in both shots.

### Doors

The door is a focal point of the house. It is technically a moving mechanism used to block off and allow access to the interior space of the home, separating the external from the internal. The door within early sod (adobe) houses was built around the door frame which was set on the ground and packed around with sod bricks. Other homes that were excavated deep into the landscape such as caves and dugouts only used a curtain or piece of material to keep the elements out and to signify the entrance. The door of the wood or log cabin was usually of single wooden construction, sometimes including an upper and lower opening, i.e., barn door style. The door protected the interior from the external landscape, helped to prevent the spread of fire and provided settlement, ownership, warmth and a barrier to weather.

Within Western film, the door is one of the most often utilised domestic architectural elements. For instance, within Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928) there are a total of thirty-six separate door shots used to highlight various twists and turns of the narrative. As Bachelard states: '*An object, a mere door, can give images of hesitation, temptation, desire, security, welcome and respect*' (Bachelard 1994: 224). It has become a Western genre stereotype for the audience to witness the villain (or hero) kicking open the saloon swing doors, guns in hand, with his boots echoing on the floorboards, as the piano stops, and everyone looks towards the direction of the door. In other scenes, the tinging of the bell on the door of the general store announces to the shop owners that somebody needs serving; or the door of the jail is blown off with dynamite just like the bank safe.

All these conventions are situated within the architectural conventions of the town. Leaving the town, the character rides into a void landscape. A long shot will often then show a homestead building; as the character gets closer, the architectural structure of the home can be seen, with the external door acting as a signifier of settlement that is associated with family, ownership, privacy, control and protection. This transitive space within the Western film closes the

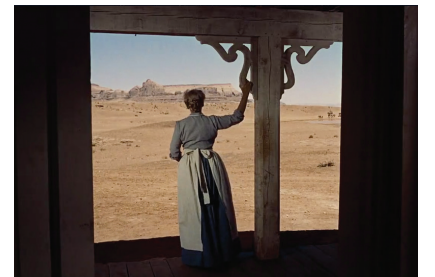
frame on the wilderness as it separates the two elements of wild, open space in contrast to the contained, domestic space. When the camera peers through the door, it gives visual clues for the audience as to which characters are invited into the space and which are excluded. In this way, characters and the plot are introduced to the audience by the crossing of the threshold. Within these scenes it becomes clear who the character is and whether they are welcomed inside or pose a threat to the inhabitants. Four major themes can be observed in relation to the use and depiction of the door in Western film:

### The Establishing Shot

Within literature, the door is often used as a metaphor for a transition point, to indicate the entering of new spaces or the leaving of certain narrative situations. Doors within film are often used as an establishing shot to start or finish a scene as a portent of narrative change. In this sense a door can start the narrative, change the direction of the narrative and/or close the narrative, punctuated through the cinematic conventions of dissolve, fade, wipe or a sound bridge. Early on in Tommy Lee Jones' *The Homesman* (2014), Mary Bee (Hilary Swank) arrives at the door of several homesteads to pick up three insane women who are to be transported to a safe haven in Iowa. She is invited into each home to ascertain the mental health of each woman as she picks them up to journey with her. Toward the end of the film, the church reverend in Iowa, Alath Carter (Meryl Streep), is framed by the door as she takes in the women. Here, the film is almost book-ended by the narrative inclusion of the domestic external door.

The threshold is also an important lingering space for characters to discuss events, news or to give information to each other. The extent to which the door is open reflects the characters' feelings, the meeting outcome either indicating a positive relationship or a level of distrust. With the door open and the characters crossing the threshold, the spectator gets a glimpse of what lies beyond. Usually, the space within the Western is either one contained multifunctional room or there are additional doors or thresholds leading to adjacent private or public areas. Internal doors sometimes present different levels such as an upstairs or basement. In narrative terms, internal doors shut off space, allowing private and public areas to be demarcated: often the closed internal door signifies barriers within the narrative that need to be overcome. In *The Wind*, (1928), Beverly (Edward Earle) invites his cousin Letty over the threshold to live with the family. Beverly's wife Cora (Dorothy Cummings) is not happy with the prospect of Letty, a young attractive girl, joining the family group, as she views Letty as a personal threat. Cora is shown standing behind the interior door, not welcoming the arrival of the new occupant.

In *Shane* (1953), the lead character Shane (Alan Ladd) and Marion (Jean Arthur) avoid each other by the opening and closing of various internal doors until Shane walks through the external door, in the process putting a solid barrier between the two of them and their unspoken attraction to each other. The closing of the internal bedroom door in many film scenes signifies a sexual act that the audience does not witness, with guidance on the direction







of simulated sex scenes being governed by the studio’s regulations.<sup>60</sup> Instead a rhetorical scene is played out as in *The Wind* (1928): when Roddy (Montage Love) rapes Letty (Lillian Gish), the audience witness the event via a rhetorical image of wild horses running through a windstorm.

Transition/Passage

The cinematic door often signifies a transition or portal to another time, place or world. This ploy is instrumental in supporting the flow of narrative time: here, cinematic space creates an illusion via the use of partial elements to create a continuous perception of place and time. As part of a montage sequence within the Western, the character might open the door onto hot desert sand or windstorms or snow scenes representing the shifting seasons and, in the process, indicating that a period of time has elapsed.

The internal door is also employed as a key prop to support the portrayal of ceremonial milestones within family life cycles such as birth and death. The ritual of birth sees the father of the family removed from the birthing room, walking back and forth in front of the closed door, pacing time, until the sound of the baby’s first cry sees him rush through the door to meet the new arrival. The ritual of death is similar, as the dying character is seen by the doctor or is nursed by the female characters, while the male characters wait outside until summoned into the room at the time of death.

The Intruder/Violation

The intruder is one of the key characters in many films as they arrive unwanted and proceed to move or change the direction of the narrative. To keep out the intruder, the external door is closed and characters are contained within the home space for safety or security purposes. The unwelcome intruder will either force entry or attack the infrastructure of the house itself, often burning it to the ground. This can be seen, for instance, in *The Searchers* (1956): as an Indian tribe arrive outside to attack the homestead, the external door is seen being closed with the wooden bar lock lifted across it. Subsequent scenes witness the home burnt to the ground after the violation of its occupants. In John Huston’s *The Unforgiven* (1960), the mother of the Zachary family (Lillian Gish) steals a child from Kiowa native Americans and the family are later forced to defend themselves from attack on their property as the tribe try to take the child (then an adult) back.

Exclusion

The door also acts as a metaphor for social exclusion. These scenes reflect those characters who do not belong within a domestic setting; they are wanderers with no set destination. As in *The Searchers* (1956) and *Shane* (1953), these characters although welcomed into the interior space do not hold social currency and by their own and others’ admission they remain on the outside of domesticity. To emphasise this, the door is often used as a framing device: the most famous shot is that of John Wayne as the character Edwards in John Ford’s *The Searchers* (1956), standing framed by the door, symbolic of the loner, the hero who belongs within the landscape. The main function of these

60. The Hays Code regulated nudity and sex scenes in film until 1968 when formal rating systems were developed.

characters is ‘to cause transformation to others’ (Wallmann 1999: 26): in the case of Wayne’s character, once the family is reunited Edwards turns his back and walks back out into an unknown, empty landscape.

Internal Walls

*The wall is the element which encloses, protects and supports, it is, along with the roof, the most fundamental part of the structure.*  
(Heathcote 2012: 150)

Although modernist architecture created by leading figures such as Frank Lloyd Wright in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was changing domestic buildings to function more closely in line with the external landscape, especially in terms of construction materials and the continuity of interior/exterior, the mediated image of the Western home still relied on the representation of earlier construction methods. Thick heavy walls reflect conventions of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, while load bearing interior structures create private and personal space within what is ‘an immediately recognisable force of familiarity of a visual and spatial rhetoric of pastness’ (Rhodes 2017: 174). It is the characters themselves that validate the interior home space; the set design is constructed with them in mind, for them to be able to play out their narrative roles, such that the space reflects the choreographed demands of the narrative, not architectural conventions.

Film often uses the interior wall as a neutral backdrop against which to highlight aspects of a character or key narrative action. However, as not all facets of a whole architectural space can be perceived at the same time, the director must make a selective choice on just what is seen. This is often based not on their knowledge of architecture or the built environment, but on the genre conventions of the Western film. The process of film editing adds another layer of abstraction, which further allows for a mythical space to be created. Film in this sense does not visualise physical space, it conceptualises and creates it. The experience of space, depth, edge, colour and light are reflected in film, allowing for a range of possibilities of interpretation, for example emphasising the size of John Wayne’s body in *The Searchers*, where ‘the beamed ceilings of the cabins confine Wayne’s body’ (Simmon 2003: 109).

Not all pioneers would have had good building skills. Often the walls of the building would collapse or fall into the interior space. The mud daubing in between the planks would often dry out and fall away, allowing light and weather to penetrate; ‘hasty construction often led not only to leaky roofs but to leaky walls as well’ (Myres 1999: 142). Whitewashed walls were traditionally utilised not just within sod houses, but also within the wooden cabin to reflect natural light. This can often be seen in Western film conventions: although historically correct, the main reason for this in film was to not distract from the focus on the character and the narrative being deployed. When used as a framing device, the wall allows close-up shots of individual characters, giving the spectator first-hand information on the type and







position of the character and elements within the narrative. The walls in this sense act in the same way as a photographic white screen. This narrow depth of field can indicate the position, distance and dialogue between two or more characters. The bodies are often angled against the wall in such a way that they face the camera's gaze, giving the illusion that the character is speaking or looking directly at the viewer. This also mimics the conventions of documentary photography in the 1800s, which demanded that the person within the frame held a forward-facing position to allow for a long camera exposure time. With the birth of photography paralleling the same historical period portrayed within most Western films (the 1800s), these visual conventions also offer interpretative possibilities for the audience to enter a historical narrative.

The corners where two walls converge become the perfect narrative space in which to either illuminate a character withdrawing or to reflect their individual strength and position. The fixed locus lends itself well to indicate the significance or insignificance of a character: in some instances, a shadow dominates the interior space, connoting a strong and independent character, the director utilising 'harsh shadows and low-key lighting as a way of heightening the drama and spatially disorienting the audience' (Ahi, Karaoghlanian 2020: 11). By positioning the character within the architectural corners, the camera can project the space as converging and unstable; 'the space of a home can then relate, metaphorically, to the inside space of human interiority, emotions and the unconscious' (Mulvey 1989: 74). A good example is Victor Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928) where the star, a young Lillian Gish, plays a fragile young woman who has moved to the isolated plains of Texas. Her fear of the wind is emphasised by her cowering into the corner of a room where the two walls converge. Later in the film, to emphasise her failing psychological state of mind, the whole architectural set of the room is shown in movement with the walls converging into each other.

Interior spaces are often divided into either a multiple roomed occupancy or a one-roomed multi-functional space traditionally known as a 'keeping room',<sup>61</sup> examples of which can be seen in *The Drifter* (O'Connor 1932) and *Calamity Jane* (Butler 1953). In *The Wind* (Sjöström 1928), one single keeping room is used as a kitchen, a family space and a workspace, with the interior furnishings moved or changed to accommodate the change of function. Lillian Gish does the ironing, whilst the mother of the family Cora (Dorothy Cumming) cuts up an animal carcass, referencing the Western's pre-industrial period where different forms of work or activity were merged within the same space. Mediated spaces featuring additional rooms reflect the division of public and (semi-) private spaces, i.e., bedrooms and other service areas including basements and lofts. Externally, several popular architectural styles of the 1800s contained semi-open spaces that were utilised for shade and shelter during the summer or for physical work such as construction or sometimes cooking. Here the internal space directly opens onto the external space.<sup>62</sup> This key style of American architecture is not often seen in pre-revisionist Western films.

61. A multi-purpose room which acted as a living room, dining room, kitchen and often a bedroom combined.

Scenes are sometimes divided between two rooms, the action moving from one room to the next while parties in adjacent quarters either sleep or eat or listen. One common narrative function of the division of interior (and exterior) wall space within Western film is the eavesdropping on another character's position and plans. Here, the audience is party to the eavesdropping, and secrets are shared with the viewer as they become aware of the progression of the narrative. Examples include Sergio Leone's *For A Few Dollars More* (1965) where the character played by Clint Eastwood uses the division of the walls to eavesdrop on spoken plans, with the shadows of other characters highlighted on the whitewashed walls.

Within John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) it becomes clear that Ethan (John Wayne) and the mother/wife of the family Martha (Dorothy Jordan) are attracted to each other and portray a personal bond. Martha leaves the room and moves to an adjoining room to pick up Ethan's coat and the division of the space allows her to hold the coat close to her for a few moments. It becomes clear to the spectator that they are witnessing via non-verbal communication an untold truth; here the 'unspeakable at the point where the private becomes the secret, is the sphere of sexuality' (Mulvey 1989: 70). With the multi-room system, the division of the private space often indicates sleeping quarters where the camera creeps in to witness the sleeping arrangements or/and intimate narratives. In *Shane* (Stevens 1953), the narrative focuses on the central character Shane's (Alan Ladd) infatuation with the wife of the family he is staying with, Marian (Jean Arthur). The many different rooms within the homestead allow space for both characters to monitor and avoid each other, with doors to different spaces being opened and closed thus allowing for moral codes and conventions to be observed. Within both films the romance is silently acknowledged, while domestic and family tranquility remains central. This carries a social message from the film's time of production, with both films produced post-Second World War where families were subjected to many external factors and threats.

A more temporary division of interior space in the Western was often facilitated through the iconic object of the American West, the quilt. Uses ranged from blocking light and weather within the wagon in Raoul Walsh's *The Big Trail* (1930) to the division of space within the interior of the home, as in Tommy Lee Jones' *The Homesman* (2014). This reflects a level of historical accuracy as fragmented families were being constructed and the general overcrowding of the home interior demanded flexible private spaces. Additional areas of space were created, 'breaking the boundary between the private, the personal and the public both psychologically and formally' (Parker 2012: 7). However, the architectural space and location in Western films are often not matched to the correct quilting patterns from the period, though the use of fabrics and textiles does at least allow a level of audience engagement: 'While the cinema's immateriality rules out a literal touch, the feeling of weight or the resistance of a surface, it can still provoke tangible experiences' (Fife-Donaldson 2014: 4). Equally, the relationship between craft and industrialisation in terms of the production of the quilt is never considered: the availability of 'offcut' or



62. The dogtrot style of architecture (also known as a dog run or possum-trot) was common throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and featured a large breezeway through the centre of the house.





surplus materials for use in quilting, for instance, was tied closely to mass manufacturing processes since many early settlers had little opportunity to own or transport more than a very limited set of clothes or textiles.

### Floorboards

Characters in Western film often use the space underneath the external veranda floorboards as a hiding place, for example in Sergio Leone's *For A Few Dollars More* (1965). These narrative tropes are often used in conjunction with sound to highlight key links and shifts or to emphasise suspense, as can be seen in *High Plains Drifter* (Eastwood 1973) where a low angle shot showing the external floorboards is accompanied by a menacing sound as Clint Eastwood's boots walk across the veranda. Low angle shots also often support the narrative of a character creeping up on someone.

Floorboards are also utilised for very low angle shots that emphasise the perceived size of the space and the position of the character in the room. Here the audience gets an indication of the material construction of the building, with the architectural space directly supporting the narrative. The floorboards also indicate the building skills and materials of the 1800s, with wide boards and minimal joins. The identification of a character can often be gauged by boots or shoes hiding behind a curtain or shot from under a chair, with the styling of the footwear giving an indication of the gender or age of a character, while the mood and atmosphere is highlighted by shadowing or the tapping of a foot. Floorboards can also support the narrative of interactions between two or more characters. This is emphasised by close-up shots of boots or shoes, with the characters moving back and forth to represent insecurity, as in a scene in *The Wind* (1928), which reflects the narrative of indecision between the newly married couple.

### The Chimney/The Hearth

Historically, the chimney was not always required within the early Western house as the interior was often a very small single room space with the cooking happening outside. The chimney and an open fire in the hearth for heat and cooking would have only been possible if the construction materials allowed for suitable building techniques. For instance, the introduction of stone or brick and a fire flue system would have been required to construct an open fire space that did not kick the smoke back into the room. Often, the design of a house would have been copied from another country (an example of this is the use of English colonial architectural plans for buildings in the Caribbean islands). The flue of the chimney acts as a gateway from the interior space to the exterior, used in other film genres to teleport characters such as Father Christmas or within the Harry Potter films for wizards to fly down. Within the Western film one major example of narrative function of the chimney flue relates to the violation of the interior space by the traditional 'smoke out': the top of the chimney is either blocked so smoke enters the interior and the occupants must flee, or something is dropped down the chimney leading to a similar outcome.

The hearth and mantelpiece are often a key narrative trope, changing the direct warmth of the sunlight to that of the fire. The hearth also replaces the table setting as a key zoned space for narrative exchange, as in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), mimicking the convention of withdrawing from the dining room to the drawing room. As a source of heat, the hearth becomes a key interior position for the family to gather and individuals to migrate to, with the husband/father as head of the family often taking up the space in front of the fire. Here, the hierarchical social codes and conventions of the 1800s are reinforced. The hearth can also invoke a space in which the male persona can be viewed in a less aggressive stance; within this space the tough cowboy can take off his boots and present to the audience a softer side. It also becomes a space where the narrative can pause and characters can project within a less constructed, more contemplative persona whereby 'narrative activity becomes a tool for collaborations reflecting upon specific situations and their place in the general scheme of life' (Ochs, Capps 2001: 2).

In John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) Laurie Jorgenson (Vera Miles) burns a letter sent by Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter): an act of personal agency to indicate that she is not agreeable to the continued absence of her suitor and the way that he has addressed the letter to the general household. In David Butler's *Calamity Jane* (1953) Katie (Allyn Ann McLerie) turns her back on her suiters, Wild Bill Hickok (Howard Keel) and Lieutenant Danny Gilmartin (Philip Carey). Facing the fireplace, she busies herself boiling the kettle to make the tea within the narrative act of coyness, the convention of an everyday task artfully buying her time to not give a definite answer as to which suitor she prefers. These acts both represent strategic, tactical behavioural patterns that the audience can identify with, the structure of the chimney and hearth allowing them to be played out in a comfortable and familiar setting.

It is often within this zoned space that the soft chair is introduced, occupied by the husband/father character as in Michael Winner's *Lawman* (1971), where the main character stands in front of the fireplace by a leather chair; 'the armchair was frequently shown as a masculine setting of preference in the house' (Andrews et al. 2017: 132). Within the Western, the main male character projects his authority and surveys his home and family or relaxes in his chair as the female counterparts work around him, a hallmark of the social codes of the late nineteenth century.

### Windows

The window frame is one of the key elements within the cinematic house that links the exterior to the interior space, acting as its own framing device within the frame of the screen. The blending of the outside and the inside via the window contextualises the house within the landscape and indicates which characters are important to both the exterior and the interior areas. It also denotes how the house itself is being used to aid the main narrative. From the external viewpoint, the camera movement through the window to the interior space allows the occupants to be viewed as the narrative develops; the window acts as a lens into the internal space, almost as though the audience is standing







right outside of the window so that they become a witness to the proceedings within. This reflects the notion that *'classical narration ... depends upon the notion of the invisible observer'* (Bordwell 1985: 161).

The main architectural function of a window is to let light and air into a building. Within historic houses in the United States West, the windows were just holes in a roof space that let light in, and which would be covered with animal skins to keep out the cold. This convention changed with the influx of migration across the West, initiated by those who brought architectural construction and design methods with them. Any window glass would have been shipped into the area and constructed in the window frame as a means of controlling interior temperature and as protection from the weather. The use of glass within the window frame can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Europe with smaller panes of glass available from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Early Pueblo Indians in North America had already developed a process of making a glass substitute by using a product called Mica. This could not be seen through but did provide a way of controlling light and air. Windows within the cinematic Western house are often small and framed within a latticed structure. This does reflect historical detail in terms of the high cost and availability of glass in the mid-1800s.

Lighting techniques utilising the window echo the use of light and shade for compositional emphasis in classical painting. Not only can time be visualised, particularly regarding the passage between day and night – given further emphasis using artificial light – but the attention of the viewer can be directed toward key elements in the narrative using ambient light and shade, as Nicholas Vardic notes, *'Lighting effects, of course, provided sensational if conventional spectacle'* (Vardic 1949: 10). There are obvious parallels here between the window frame and the technique of cinematography itself. Sometimes the window is used as a framing device for the protagonist or star character of the film. This helps to highlight the character by framing their body behind the window itself, and a medium or close-up shot highlights the key features of the star. Body language and non-verbal communication are also employed, in which physical behaviours as opposed to words are used to express and convey information.

From inside the Western house, the window has a voyeuristic function as a space to spy on others, where idiosyncrasies and personal traits can be guessed at. This often includes a person looking out of the window watching, observing and witnessing what is happening in relation to another person outside. The window may also indicate someone arriving to the home space. A different form of voyeurism, where the character within the interior space and the audience is given narrative detail of the arrival (invited or not) of visitors. From behind the window frame, a character can secretly watch and eavesdrop on any activity within the landscape and anyone that might be approaching, and this action becomes a narrative driver with the window becoming an object that anchors the shifts and turns of the plot. The window frame is also used to indicate the passive figure of the female character whose predominant role is

to remain within the domestic setting; she can be seen nervously peering out of the window into the landscape.

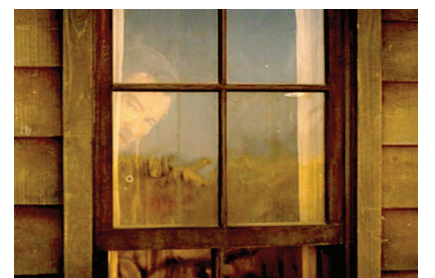
This kind of shot is also used to indicate where a character is waiting for someone to arrive, the space in front of the window is focused on by the character, with the character pacing up and down across the floor space. A framing device that allows for a dialogue to happen between characters within different spaces. Here it is clear who is based within the home space and who is excluded. The building is used as a physical barrier, with the window space allowing for forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. This kind of shot is also used as an aid for romantic narrative. A physical structure i.e., the window in the house is positioned between two people, a reflection of acquired connections, sometimes with a stranger. The window then acts as a space of contemplation, as a pause within the narrative or to indicate the character's state of mind. Here the window reflects the act of gazing or thinking, not really looking at anything but using the window as a frame in which to suggest a personal reflection or dream state. This shot is used to pause the narrative, giving the audience time and space in which to witness the thought process of the character. D.W. Griffith was credited with developing a cinematic technique to emphasise conjoining narratives:

*Griffith's narrative solution to the sensation scene embodied what has come to be known as parallel editing, a strategy of intercutting from one locale to the other at increasing tempo until the two storylines are joined.* (Fell 1986: 23)

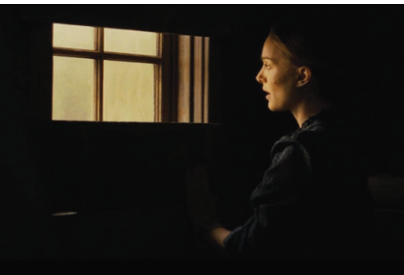
Subsequent cinematic techniques include the split screen, where scenes from two different places (internally and externally) can be viewed, the window joining the two scenes together. For example, in *The Homesman* (2014) Mary Bee Cuddy (Hilary Swank) looks out the window to observe George Briggs (Tommy Lee Jones) in the surrounding landscape.

The window frame can also be used as an architectural feature locating and giving space between two characters. From inside the home space, the window is often used as a backdrop between two characters to contextualise the setting within the narration, for example the characters within *The Homesman* (Jones 2014). This style of window shot also gives an indication to the weather conditions and landscape outside the building. Within these shots, the narrative indicates what is domestic 'tamed' land that belongs to the home and what remains untamed. The hue of the indirect light also gives an indication of the climate and weather conditions outside the building.

Within many Western films, the window is one of two exit points where somebody can leave the house space, either within a narrative of forced exit (i.e. being thrown through one) or under cover as the narrative proceeds. The open window is used as an escape route for a member of the family, or an entry point for either a private visitor or an uninvited visitor. One of the key functions of the window is that of counterattack, where the window is used to







63. The table is also used heavily within the staged interiors of US ghost towns to demarcate and define the space.

force a gun through to shoot at someone outside. It is also regularly viewed from the exterior when an approaching character is attacking the home: they can throw something through the window, be it a stone or a cloth on fire or can simply shoot through the glass. Window shutters also play an important role within narration. They are primarily used to shut out or let in the light, but additionally they offer protection from anybody on the outside that might be attacking the house be it with a gun or an arrow. This can be seen in *The Searchers* (Ford 1956) where the shutters can be seen being closed when it has become obvious that an advancing Indian group were approaching. Similarly, in *The Unforgiven* (Huston 1960), the shutter (with a hole cut out as a viewing point) is lowered when enemies are seen outside the building.

From the late 1940s the window frame was sometimes employed as a place of consumption, where the latest interior fashions could be presented. Within this period, interior design magazines (for example, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion*), television and advertisements would portray domestic elements of comfort. These were hugely influential in the rise of post war consumption. The cinematic house became 'simply a frame for attractive objects, a kind of shelf, a storage and display system so overflowing with objects that the architecture itself dissolved' (Beatriz Colomina 2001: 7). This gave the opportunity for the interior film set to be painted using colours from the latest trends, with the architecture of the home used as a backdrop in which the interior styling could be presented. This can clearly be seen in the 1953 film *Calamity Jane*, where the interior and the door were painted with stencils, the table supported a blue and white gingham tablecloth, and the net and main curtains were produced using modern textiles.

## INTERIOR MOVEABLE ELEMENTS

### The Table

The archetype of the family sitting around the table is one of the most used interior shots within Western film, with many scenes depicting family or/ and groups eating or drinking.<sup>63</sup> It also functions on a narrative level as a site for repressed family frustrations. From early silent films such as Victor Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928) to the Coen Brothers' *The Ballad Of Buster Scruggs* (2018), it is this shot that establishes the socialisation of the family and family groups and the etiquette of dining as a cultural event in pre-20<sup>th</sup> century Western society.

The table provides a place where the camera can move around the different characters and follow individual conversations, and the spectator can imagine becoming part of the narration. From the cinema seat to the table seat, the setting provides familiarity for the viewer, since 'conversational involvement is a hallmark of familiarity' (Ochs & Capps 2001: 8). As a mediated form based on photographic realism, film can mirror the physical and emotional connections of the home, family structures, behavioural and social rituals, as humans recognise themselves through cultural conventions, objects and patterns of behaviour.



Fig.154: Dining room and kitchen tables advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.

The traditional family can be seen sitting around the table, the father as the head of the family, the mother supporting the father and the children mimicking the parents constructed stereotypical roles. The father sits at the top of the table, the wife/mother at the bottom and the children or guests in between. This reflects the hierarchical family system portrayed since early Victorian times. Both the family and the table grouping introduce the spectator to the familiar, often disguised as a secondary underlying conversational narrative. Within this projected environment gossiping, philosophizing, exchanging advice and ideas, specifying detail and other informal discourses diverge from the main narrative or move it forward. As a narrative play, often utilising close-up or the medium shot, the characters sitting at the table are all at eye level and any conflict of attitudes or anxieties can clearly be signified.

The table is the perfect setting, a widely recognised social space and set of conventions within which characters in the Western can talk out their plots before leaving to re-enter the landscape. Sitting around the table, family hierarchies are played out and power relations established: for instance, in John Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1960), where one family member wants to exact revenge of an Indian group waiting outside, the acting head of the family sits at the end of the table and instructs the group on how to proceed and behave.

In John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), the daughter lays the table, setting the plates in the right order, copying her mother's movements as if in training for her own destiny. This is akin to Freud's psychosexual identity development, the third stage where three- to six-year-olds start to identify with the same sex parent: 'The family is also superstructural in its role in the reproduction and maintenance of sexist and patriarchal attitudes, and in the construction of gender differences in children' (Wolf 1993: 78). A key convention of the Western interior is the reinforcement of these stereotypical gendered roles, where girls mimic their mother's actions in domestic chores, whereas boys on the other hand learn to shoot as in George Stevens' *Shane* (1960) since they







*'must be trained to stand on their own feet as a necessary foundation of manly independence'* (Tash 1999: 4).

The setting of the various objects placed on the table signifies the family's status and wealth, from a stage set design perspective, the objects give scale to the table and the interior space and speak of the characters living in the house, the food, plates, pots and crockery. From a cinematic point of view, the table is the perfect vehicle in which to temporarily freeze the frame as it offers compositional possibilities with the objects that the characters are using as props. Movements are organised around static moments, a convention drawn from earlier literature and theatre; *'the device is common in Dickens, whose enthusiasms for theatrical melodrama and its techniques were immense'* (Fell 1986: 59).<sup>64</sup>

Similar conventions can be observed in Western film; John Wayne's character in *The Searchers* (1956) picks up a cup or puts the fork to his mouth and the frame pauses as an indication that the character is thinking about an element within the narrative. Film and cultural theorist Stanley Cavell links this internal processing of what a character thinks in addition to what a character does to the relationship between the still image and the film's frozen motion. Describing it as 'stillness', he notes its function to question *'the illusion of our presence at these events'* (Rothman 2005: 122). The Western film draws upon 'stillness' to communicate *'the power and the willingness to communicate one's presence, to have one's existence matter, one's own terms taken seriously'* (Ibid: 126). The table signifies a perfect location, allowing that notion of stillness where the audience is party to the inner thought patterns of the character and the possible narrative outcomes.

### The Tea Service and Table Settings

Although historically most cooking and eating for the basic family group would have happened outside of the home space, the way the mediated table is styled and set for family meals indicates status and wealth, as well as offering contemporary cinema viewers a greater level of familiarity with daily rituals. The table setting also carries signifiers of both social and cultural codes. Couples share intimate moments over a meal, as in Tommy Lee Jones' *The Homesman* (2014) when Mary Bee Cuddy (Hilary Swank) asks Garn Sours (Jesse Plemons) to marry her. Since *'The tablecloth acts as a sign of civilised living, one of the markers of the new emphasis put on communal meals'* (Flanders 2014: 152), a more 'feminine' setting might also indicate a place for suiters to gather to romance the female character, as in *Calamity Jane* (1953) where Wild Bill Hickok (Howard Keel) and Lieutenant Danny Gilmartin (Philip Carey) compete for the affections of Katie Brown (Allyn Ann McLerie).

The red and white or blue and white gingham tablecloth material was also used for curtains, aprons and practical work wear in many Western films – for example in *The Cowboys* (1975) directed by Mark Rydell. In *Calamity Jane* (1953), *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* (1954), *Oklahoma* (1955), Chisum

64. Harold Pinter employed a commonly referred to technique 'the Pinter pause' in theatre, while Roland Barthes drew parallels with the notion of the punctum – a seemingly insignificant point within the photographic still image that draws the viewer's attention.

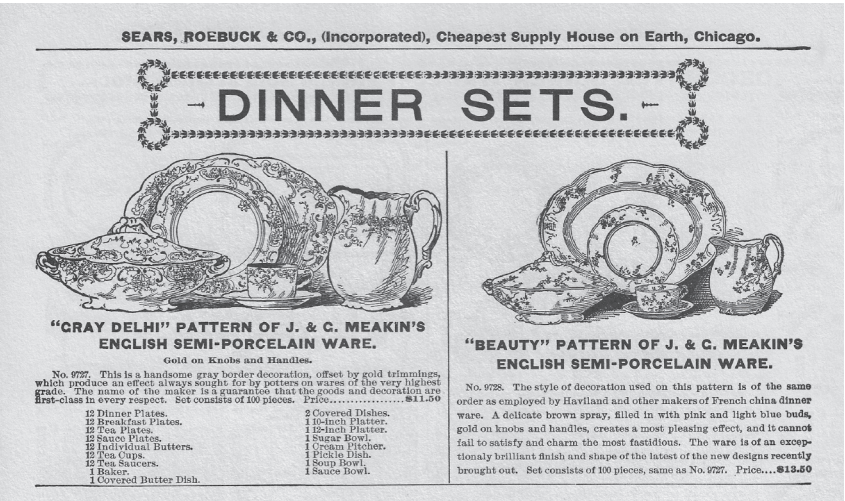


Fig.155: Dinner sets advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.

(1970) and Lawman (1971), the pattern signifies an authentic rustic style associated with the West and the frontier. Gingham as a textile was popular in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, linked to patriotic notions of a period when the United States was producing its own cotton. It is also symbolic of a nostalgic simpler way of life and domestic authenticity – a visual device that could be utilised to invoke the consumer boom of the 1950s and the marketing and promotion of nostalgia through home décor. This reflects a commodified world where *'[c]onsumption became institutionalized in-home decoration as advertising promised new ways to promote family togetherness, social prestige and self-expression'* (Wright 1981: 1).

More recently the very notion of the family group gathering at the table has shifted, and *'the family exists for us no longer as a symbol of cultural unity, but as an embodied expression of cultural re-description'* (Heller 1995: 4). Values have changed along with conventions in relation to the use and function of the dining table. In modern times, the table acts as a multi-functional space: it is also often used as a metaphor for a feminist space in direct contrast to its 'traditional' signification. For example, The Kitchen Table Press was co-founded in 1980 by Barbara Smith to produce black, feminist and lesbian writings. However, the representation of family rituals in the 1800s remains consistent in the Western, offering a level of viewer familiarity at the same time as a nostalgic vision of 'traditional' life in the old West.

### The Oil Lamp

The lamp featured most often in the Western is the functional hurricane or barn lantern that was developed in the 1780s and sold through distributors such as the Sears Roebuck & Co catalogue of 1895 where it could be purchased for 30 cents. This object was essential both historically for the pioneer and within cinematic representation. It was used variously within the interior space of the wagon and its surroundings, when visitors approached in the dark, in the stable or outbuildings and to illuminate the home.<sup>65</sup> Lamps were only used sparsely: the rhythm of getting up with the sun and going to bed at nightfall was a convention adhered to by most farmers and ranchers, with the use of candles



65. Oil lamps were used since the palaeolithic age. Early settlers in America used lamps fuelled by whale or vegetable oil, then later after the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania the convention shifted to paraffin. Flattened kerosene/paraffin cans were used in Bodie ghost town as external cladding or roofing material to protect homes from the extreme climate.





SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., (Incorporated), Cheapest Supply House on Earth, Chicago.

# REGULAR ANNUAL LAMP SALE

The Lamp Season with Us Means a Season of Rare Bargains.

OVER 10,000 LAMPS TO BE SOLD at prices never before heard. If there is a forced sale in any of the markets of the country our buyers are always on the spot. There was a big lamp sale and our buyers were there and secured all the desirable goods at their own price, a price much less than actual cost to manufacture, hence OUR ANNUAL SALE will be greater than ever.

Any lamp will be sent to any address by express, C. O. D., subject to examination on receipt of a sufficient deposit to cover transportation charges both ways, balance and express charges payable at express office.

THREE PER CENT. DISCOUNT allowed if cash in full accompanies your order. Your money refunded immediately if you are not perfectly satisfied.

No. 95003. Vase Lamp. Extra large size. Nicely proportioned and an excellent to any parlor. Large oil-burner. The decoration is a finely executed design of flowers in natural tints and colorings. Price.....\$1.75

No. 95004. Vase Lamp. A very stylish lamp. Decoration is similar to No. 95003, except that it is on a more ground which gives a much richer appearance. Price.....\$2.00

No. 95005. Lamp. 19 inches to top of chimney. Decorated shade to match font. Cast metal base. This is the best and cheapest lamp in the market. Price.....\$1.25

No. 95006. Lamp. This is an extra value. 19 inches high, decorated shade and font to match. Cast metal base. Price.....\$1.50

No. 95007. Lamp. With extra large top shade. The lamp is tinted in nice colors and decorated with flowers in natural tints. Price.....\$1.50

Fig.156: Annual lamp sale advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.

still providing an additional light source along with the fireplace. Across the 1800s the means to be able to control additional light sources shifted from the lamp to gas and then the early transition to electric light. Indeed, as ‘American families of the 1820s and 1830s moved further out of night time darkness than had any previous generation’ (Larkin 1988: 42), no longer was the interior space solely dependent on the sun or candle power alone.

Within the cinematic Western home, the lamp was portrayed as a functional object to illuminate the room when natural light faded, for example in William A O’Connor’s *The Drifter* (1932), Carl Pierson’s *The New Frontier* (1935) and George Stevens’ *Shane* (1953), where the storm lantern can be seen in the sparse interior, usually placed on the table. Very occasionally the lamp would be situated on the inside windowsill as a juxtaposition of natural and constructed light. For example, Anthony Mann’s *Bend In The River* (1952) shows the storm lantern in conjunction with a window shot to highlight the idea of fading light and the shift to artificial light (albeit through studio lighting that is engineered to resemble lamplight on screen). Lamps were not very sturdy and were prone to blow out by the slightest breeze or even worse to fall over. This can be seen in Victor Sjöström’s *The Wind* (1928) where the lamp falls over on the table during a wind storm and starts a fire.

As the conventions of the cinematic home developed, the lamps used in Western films became more decorative (including a shift toward more sophisticated and expensive materials such as brass) and were often presented as part of the interior décor of the house. This can be seen, for example, in John Ford’s *The Searchers* (1956) and David Butler’s *Calamity Jane* (1953) where a decorative lamp can be seen on top of the fireplace, styled toward what were 1950s trends in interior design, a symbolic shift

SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., (Incorporated), Cheapest Supply House on Earth, Chicago.

No. 95009. Banquet Lamp. An extremely handsome lamp of an entirely new design. The center column is treated in a French olive green, with cast ornaments in old ivory. The rest of the lamp is of cast brass finished in genuine gold plate. The oil font is detachable for re-filling and burner is the famous “Miller,” connected by a pipe to be burned. The globe is a copy of the popular “Fountain” design. The design well executed and harmonizes with the base column of the lamp. Price.....\$12.50  
Globe only..... 2.50

No. 95010. Banquet Lamp. This is the best proportioned lamp ever made, and handsome enough to grace the parlor of a millionaire. The column is of turned Mexican oak of the very highest grade, with garlands of cast drapery, enclosing the lower part. The cast head and base are encased in Egyptian design, and gold plated. The lamp has removable Miller font with all the latest devices to make it first class in every respect. The globe has crests of cupids on four sides, and is stippled with gold, giving a beautiful effect. Height to top of burner, 22 inches. Lamp complete.....\$13.50  
Lamp only..... 10.00  
Globe only..... 3.50

No. 95011. Library Lamp. This is one of the best lamps ever offered for the money. The frame is of solid brass, finished in rich gold. The shade and font are full tinted and decorated with flowers and heavily stippled with gold, trimmed with genuine cut glass, prism, automatic spring extension, length closed 19 in., draft burner, 65 candle power. Price complete.....\$6.50  
No. 95012. Library Lamp. Has extra heavy frame, handomely decorated shade and font to match automatic spring extension. Length, closed 19 in., extended 21 inches. Price, extra large No. 2 burner, Price.....\$8.50

No. 95013. Library Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95014. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95015. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95016. Square Hall Lamp. This is a larger and better lamp than the Zenith and costs very little more. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95017. Square Hall Lamp. This is a larger and better lamp than the Zenith and costs very little more. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95018. Store Lamp. The best and cheapest in the market. For large areas where good light is required only the best lamp should be provided. We keep them, and guarantee every lamp we sell to give perfect satisfaction. The “Juno” gives a steady and white light. Just the thing to throw light on a window display. Complete as illustrated. 14-inch tin shade, suitable for store or window light, 65 candle power. Price, brass finish.....\$5.50  
Price, nickel finish..... 5.50

No. 95019. Square Hall Lamp. This is a larger and better lamp than the Zenith and costs very little more. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95020. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95021. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95022. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95023. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95024. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95025. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95026. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95027. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95028. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95029. Zenith Hall Lamp. Just the thing for a small hall. Ruby, opal, or pink globe. In two colors, crystal, or in two colors, crystal, as desired. Be sure to state color desired. This lamp lamp is some enough for any dwelling. It is an exact reproduction of the high priced gas lamp that has always been so popular. Length 26 inches. Our price complete with burner and chimney.....\$4.50

No. 95030. B. & H. Mammoth Store and Hall Lamp. 400 Candle Power. The strongest and best finished lamp on the market. The wick movement is perfect and complete. Has a child can to lock the lamp. Front locking to hold font in ring obvious all lamps of this kind. Parting out of frame. Front taken out from be live for filling. You are taking no chances with this lamp, as we guarantee every one to give perfect satisfaction or we will replace them and pay all expenses. Just the lamp for churches and halls, where the ceilings are high. Does away with use of step ladders and chairs in lighting or cleaning. The look ring used to hold the “B. & H.” is a great convenience. The font can easily be taken out from below for refilling. Complete, as illustrated, spring extension, 14-inch plain dome shade, suitable for churches, hall, store use. Price, brass finish, \$5.25, nickel finish, \$5.75

Fig.157: Decorative lamps advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.

from the object as being purely functional to decorative. The lamp is also featured in romantic scenes. In this case its use goes beyond pure functionality: the lamp does not give off a bright light, it glows, giving the illusion of a warm radiance and a feeling of intimacy. This can be a particularly useful tool for directors and follows traditions in theatre and film more broadly. Good example of the technique can be seen in George Stevens *Shane* (1953) where Marian Starrett (Jean Arthur) moves under the light of the lamp to converse with Shane (Alan Ladd) who is standing at the window within the exterior of the house, the lamp portraying an intimate moment between the two characters.

## The Bed

Historically, within the colonies the bed would have been a very expensive item of furniture that only the wealthy could afford. The act of sleeping would happen in stables, kitchens or attic spaces of the house. The bed itself would have consisted of a bed frame with a mattress stuffed with hay. With their expense, the bed would often be placed in full view of any visitors. However, in cinematic conventions, the very opposite is presented. Scenes within early Western films staged within the bedroom were governed by production

## Car Inspector's Lantern.

No. 19355. Car Inspector's Lantern. This lantern is used by car inspectors. It throws a powerful light to a distance. It has a 5-inch silvered glass reflector which will never tarnish, and a 5-inch beveled glass bull's-eye. Takes 1-inch wick, burns kerosene. It is an excellent lantern for rough usage. Price, each.....\$2.25

## Fireman's Lantern.

### Square Tube Brass Fire Department Lantern.

No. 19356. Our Solid Brass Fire Department Lanterns are made of heavy material and are handsomely polished. While made especially for fire departments they are bought by those who desire a handsome, strong and durable lantern. Has No. 1 burner with ½ in. wick, takes the common tubular lantern globe, weighs nearly 3 lbs. Price, each, polished brass, \$2.95; Price, each, nickel plated.....\$2.75

## Dash Lanterns.

No. 19362. Buckeye Tubular Side and Dash Lamp. No. 1 burner, ¾-inch wick, No. 0 globe. This is really a very handy combination; it serves as a hand lantern and a dash lamp. We furnish this lantern japanned blue. The lamp can be fastened under the body of the vehicle by means of a Warner holder. We furnish this lamp with our new bull's-eye lens—a bull's eye attached to the perforated plate. It is superior in every way to the bull's-eye globe. Price each......65c

No. 19365. Cold Blast Dash Lamp. No. 2 burner, 1-inch wick, No. 0 globe. This lamp is intended for use when a very powerful light is required. It will not blow out in the strongest wind, and does not “chick” as much as a lantern without wind-break. We furnish this lantern japanned blue—and with bull's-eye lens, which is attached to the perforated plate. Price, each.....\$1.15

## The Gem Driving Lamp. Improved.

This lamp gives a fine light. Is elegantly finished. Has copper reflector, silver plated, bevel plate glass in door.

No. 00 Burner, ½ wick; Gem Globe. We claim for the Gem Driving Lamp that it is a perfect lantern in its burning qualities. The light produced is stronger and brighter than the light produced by any lantern using a ½-inch burner. We have this lamp in three finishes. We furnish dash clamp with each lantern.

No. 19372. Black enameled. Each.....\$2.65  
No. 19373. Polished brass. Each.....\$2.70  
No. 19374. Nickel plated. Each.....\$3.20  
No. 19375. Extra globes for Gem Driving Lamps. Each, 6c; per doz......65c

## Tubular Side Reflector Lamps.

No. 19380. Tubular side lamp. These lamps operate on the same principle as our tubular lanterns and are not affected by wind, never heat, and are perfectly safe. Can be lit, filled and regulated without removing the globe. They are japanned blue and are unsurpassed for use in shops, halls and factories. No. 2 burner, 1-inch wick, No. 0 globe. Has a 6-inch silvered glass reflector; gives a large light; can be exposed to the wind and will not smoke or blow out. Can be filled, lighted and trimmed without removing the globe. Lamp is japanned blue. An excellent lamp for use in stores, warehouses, barns, engine rooms or any place which is exposed to drafts and where a brilliant light is required. Price, each.....\$1.45

Fig.158: Storm lanterns advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.





codes (1933) that prohibited nudity, passionate kissing, or any sexual act. Under the code of cinematic conduct, the characters were not allowed to be shown horizontal, meaning that one of the characters in the scene would always have a foot on the floor.

Beds were not allowed to accommodate more than one person, and even married couples had to be shown sleeping in separate beds. That being said, these codes were abandoned in 1968 when the film rating system came into play. Hence any bedroom scene had to be built with the production codes in mind, making them either very stylised or the director would just not show the bed and the room in too much detail. Often the door would be just open enough for the room containing the bed to be seen, as in Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928) where Cora (Dorothy Cummings) can be seen with the children as Beverly (Edward Earle) is introducing Letty (Lillian Gish) into the home. Along with the bed, objects associated with washing are featured in the room, such as the water jug and bowl.

The Socialisation of Space

The bed, like other utility household objects such as the table and chairs, is usually situated as a functional object in the traditional Western. Such items would only change to objects of display as the importance of socialisation within the domestic space became acknowledged as a cinematic convention. Under this convention, the bed would be utilised as a place for the characters to sit and converse and for the narrative to be driven forward, as in Gavin O'Connor's *Jane Got A Gun* (2016) where Jane Hammond (Natalie Portman) and Dan Frost (Joel Edgerton) surround the bed of Jane's husband Bill Hammond (Noah Emmerich) who is riddled with bullets after duelling with an outlaw gang, the Bishop Boys. A large portion of the film is based around the bed; as Bill Hammond lies potentially dying from his wounds, Jane must find a way of protecting the family group and the homestead itself.

The table would traditionally be placed with the chairs to aid social interaction of the characters as the plot unfolds. Historically, wooden benches or the chest box would have been utilised as a sitting place before the availability and affordability of the chair, and children would be encouraged to stand, not sit at the table. Later, through industrialisation, the production of upholstery would change behaviours. The comfortable chair was then placed in spaces around the home for the purpose of socialisation.<sup>66</sup>

Domestic Activities

Domestic chores embody patterns of lived experience. The Western film reflects this, with habitual activities often used as a supporting narrative function. The viewing audience can recognise and engage with these scenes easily because of their familiarity. As Pierre Bourdieu (1977) notes, different social classes situate themselves either through personal experience or observation of the social conventions and habits of those around them. As such, these scenes can help the audience to establish their relationship to the characters portrayed on screen. Historian Joanna Stratton deconstructed archived dairies of over eight

hundred different women who migrated West to Kansas between 1840 and 1890 and states that:

*Their writings were filled with the simple details of their day to day lives. They describe their families, their homes and their communities; they wrote about their fears, their hopes and their dreams.* (Stratton 1981: 18)

Historically, habit and routine remained important, no matter the varied and often difficult living situations that the pioneers – and particularly pioneer women – found themselves in:

*Whether they lived in tents or cabins, temporary shelters, soddies, or dugouts or had fairly comfortable houses, there were still meals to be cooked, the washing to be done, clothes to be mended, children to be cared for, and a myriad of other chores which had to be done and done under new and unfamiliar circumstances.* (Myres 1999: 146)

The sense of the everyday often runs alongside the main narrative which is centred on high drama and action with plots that do not reflect familiar situations for the audience. The everyday act of sweeping the floor offers a primitive pre-industrial link to daily tasks that situates the Western within its 19<sup>th</sup> century time frame. It also links the external landscape and the internal space, as the dirt and grime from the land penetrates the home. This can be seen in Sjöström's *The Wind* (1928), where the housewife (Lillian Gish) can be seen sweeping the floor as it is repeatedly penetrated by dirt and sand from outside. The act of doing housework also allows for pauses and shifts within the film narrative. The over-exaggerated gestures of sweeping the floor, a hallmark of the melodrama, centres women onscreen with limited accompanying vocabulary. It is within the repetitive movements of domestic tasks that the narrative moves forward. Through familiar rituals, the audience can identify the everyday, with characters often portraying their own habitual routines. The familiar ritual of sweeping the floor, cleaning the dishes, washing clothes and drinking a cup of coffee mirrors lived experience and the ways that people organize their daily lives.

*Personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic system to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present and yet as yet unrealized experience.* (Ochs, Capps 2001: 2)

It is within this context that domestic rituals and symbolic patterns are given meaning by the spectator who has 'a desire to see dramatized allegories of human experience' (Fell 1986: 14). The everyday practice of housework and the repetitive and trivial events of day-to-day life are performed on screen by the wife/mother within the Western film, Such a depiction mirrors cultural codes more widely, as Pierre Bourdieu notes, 'inside the house, woman is always on the move, she bustles like a fly in whey; outside the house, nothing of her work

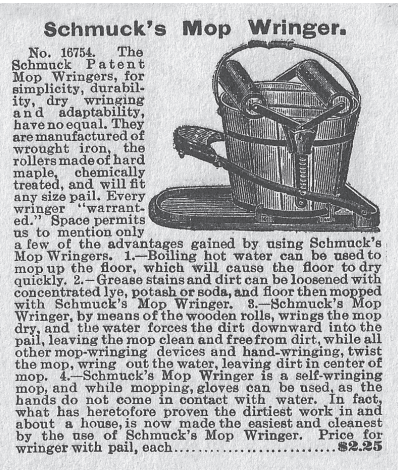


Fig.159: Schmuck's Mop Wringer advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.

66. A number of objects are used to define the spaces of a room within ghost town houses, just like the cinematic interior: the table and chairs and upholstered chairs and beds denote the different use of the interior spaces. These are placed in zoned areas to signify the space and its importance to social interaction.





is seen' (Bourdieu 1977: 142). She is the most active character within the zoned areas of the home space as she serves and performs domestic chores for the rest of the household, 'and they straightened up and ordered the objects in homes and removed all intrusions-soot, sand, mud, polluted air, dust, grease, body odors-that were disapproved' (Palmer 1989: 147). Hence the Western narrative is symbolic of conventional ideals whereby 'oppressive ideologies are at their strongest when they are normalised, made part of the fabric of everyday life, and habit and routine can be an important part of this process' (Kelley 2010: 183). Performing chores produces narrative change; they are natural and essential, and the character constructs and maintains gender asymmetries. In this sense gender is not what a person is, but what a person does. Gender is maintained within institutional contexts and the Western film reflects this notion for an audience who know the codes; here the

*home is a spatial imaginary integral to identity formation – our ideas of ourselves are produced through the repetition of unremarkable routine and familiar daily routines that become an almost invisible setting for our lives. (Andrews et al. 2017: 110)*

Men's chores reflect masculine roles: cattle drives, chopping wood, using tools or weapons as props, supporting the home and house building. Women are usually portrayed as unable to handle the tools and dependent on male help, again reflecting conventional female gender roles and further reinforcing the gendered narrative of settlement in the US West:

*Such stereotypes were reinforced by a twentieth-century interpretation of frontiering as primarily a male enterprise in which women played a largely invisible and subordinate role. (Myres 1999: 6)*

Far from being meek and mild, the pioneer woman played a very active role, as Schlesinger notes, the 'day to day lives of the early pioneers were shaped by the topography of the land itself' (Schlesinger 1981: 58). The prairie sod had to be turned and cut, water had to be collected, fuel had to be gathered, the soil had to be prepared for farming, ploughing completed, crops planted, tended and harvest, livestock had to be cared for, slaughtered and prepared, additional hunting and where appropriate fishing had to sustain food supplies. All of this along with cooking, cleaning, washing and caring for the family. Most of the chores were participated in by the whole family;

*Men and women worked together as partners, combining their strengths and talents to provide food and clothing for themselves and their children. As a result, women found themselves on a far equal footing with their spouses. (Schlesinger 1981:57)*

This image goes against the grain of what is often portrayed within both historical and fictional accounts of the US West, as 'unfortunately, these literary stereotypes have found their way into historical portraits of frontier women' (Myres 1999: 1). It is of no surprise that the Western film would follow the

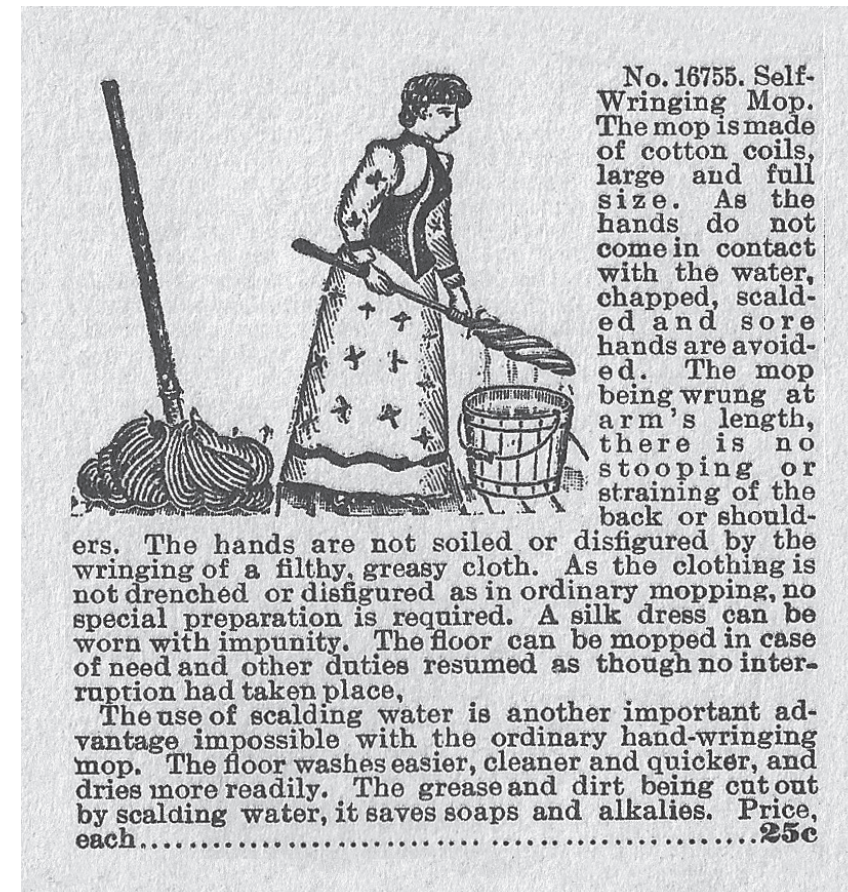


Fig.160: Self-Wringing Mop advertisement, Sears Roebuck catalogue 1897.

same negative format, with women playing a supporting role to their male counterparts. The cinematic image of women doing housework is voyeuristic and places the female body within certain contexts and constraints. This reflects the conditions under which masculinity and femininity are depicted and socially understood. As Laura Mulvey notes, there is an erotic element conveyed through gestures,<sup>67</sup>

*The spectator's position, active and voyeuristic is inscribed as masculine and through various narrative and cinematic devices, the woman's body exists as the erotic, spectacular and exhibitionist 'other' so that the male protagonist on screen can occupy the active role of advancing the storyline. (Mulvey 1989: 162)*

The wife is subordinate to her husband through the rituals of 'homing', where she constructs and manages the home space: 'women became the caretakers of daily human life, while men presumably organised the larger social and economic framework that enabled this specialization' (Palmer 1989: 4).

In *Calamity Jane* (1953), Calamity (Doris Day) meets Katie (Allyn McLerie) and they agree to share Calamity's cabin which when first viewed matches Calamity's masculine persona of being in shabby disrepair. Katie encourages Calamity that the place needs 'a woman's touch' to attract the 'right' man. The cabin interior space like Calamity herself needs to be dressed, to look and act more like a lady. Through cleaning and sanitizing the space it becomes more



67. The researcher is aware of the shift of thinking latterly explored in Mulvey's work, where she states that the voyeuristic notion within women is in fact a masculine trait, wrapped up around an exploration of Freudian theory. It is a conscious decision not to include this within this investigation.





feminized, with ‘the house arranged as a theatre of clean surfaces for commodity display’ (Scanlon 2000: 138). Historically, sweeping the floor of the cabin or the sod house would have been very problematic and in a lot of cases a complete waste of time. The floor of most home spaces would have been dirt or hay, and within sod houses the occupants would have been sharing the interior space with all the animals that lived in the sod. When it rained, the ceilings often allowed water to flood through, sometimes taking up to two weeks to dry out.

*Despite the dirt floors and canvas ceilings, the snakes and centipedes, the sagging roofs and leaning walls, women described their first frontier homes with a sense of accomplishment in their ability to cope with unusual situations.* (Myre 1999: 23)

Victoria Kelley (2010) discusses cleanliness and dirt in the Victorian home, the same period as the fictional Western narrative, noting that ‘cleanliness was about familial care and social display’ (Kelley 2010: 112). The (feminine) homemaker reflects the cinematic role of Victorian ideological conventions, since ‘the idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity’ (Douglas 2002: 44).

### THE LAST FAREWELL

Within the Western film, the home acts as a symbol for family and stability that was fundamental to the migration West. As Rosemary Marangoly George notes, this familiar narrative was essential to the creation of family, community and – ultimately – nation: ‘it is necessary to outline the ways in which the metaphor of the home enables the nation to take on its signification force’ (George 2019: 77). As such, when the home is destroyed, the transgression is symbolic of the destruction of the family and community. The final narrative convention of the home space in the Western relates to the breaking up and burning down of the home building. This scene draws from literature’s longstanding convention centred on the break up plot of early attraction, surrender and painful separation. These three stages are often transferred to the Western film genre through depictions of domestic space and settlement, since ‘the boundaries of the nation are often represented in literature through the metaphor of the home’ (George 2019: 78).

### Attraction

The domesticated home space is often established early on within the conventional Western narrative, since, as discussed, it helps to separate the tamed space from the wild landscape. It also offers a shift in the narrative which introduces other characters who are either linked to the main protagonist or present a change in their narrative direction. There are many examples of this convention, including for instance the opening scene in *Shane* (Stevens 1953), where Shane (Alan Ladd) rides up to the family home; *The Wind* (1928), when Letty (Lillian Gish) is introduced to her cousin’s home and family; or the opening framing shot in *The Searchers* (1956), where the door



Fig.161: Still from *The Searchers* (1956).

opens and Ethan (John Wayne) steps into the Edwards’ family home. In the opening scene of *The Unforgiven* (1960), Rachel Zachary (Audrey Hepburn) walks from the family’s sod house to a water source to collect water, while Clint Eastwood (as director and lead actor) employed similar conventions to establish the distinction between a settled community and an outsider in *High Plains Drifter* (1973): the drifter with no name (Eastwood) wanders into a small town (the fictional town of Lago) during the title sequence for the film. Within these scenes the home space and domesticated land is fully established as a narrative convention.

### Surrender

Often within the ensuing narrative the home space is reintroduced as it becomes the vehicle that drives the story forward. In *The Wind* (1928), Letty becomes trapped within the home due to a wind storm and her psychological state deteriorates after she is attacked by a past suitor, Whit Roddy (Montagu Love). John Ford sets the premise for *The Searchers* (1956) through a scene where the home space is burnt to the ground; the Edwards family are slaughtered by an Indian tribe and their young daughters Lucy (Pippa Scott) and Debbie (Natalie Wood) are kidnapped. These examples become the catalyst for the revenge narrative to develop: the home space becomes an important metaphorical element in which the family group is destabilised and the resulting narrative moves to revenge or resolution.

### Painful Separation

Many Western films finish with a final scene where the home space is either re-entered or the characters reunited. For example, in *The Searchers* (1956), Ethan (John Wayne) brings the family back together: he has fulfilled his purpose and remains on the outside of the home, a wanderer. This narrative is also seen in *Shane* (1953), where Shane (Alan Ladd) supports the valley settlers against a ruthless cattle baron then, once victory is secured, leaves the homestead and rides off into the sunset. In *High Plains Drifter* (1973) the stranger (Clint Eastwood) fends off a band of criminals who have been terrorizing the local community of Lago. The outlaws set fire to the town, then the drifter revenges the people before ultimately riding back out of town.







Fig.162: Still from *The Unforgiven* (1960).

These films endings highlight those who are excluded from the domestic home space; they are characters that remain alienated, detached from everyday society as they ride out into the landscape to an unknown place.

The burning down of the house changes or finalises the relationship the characters have with the home space, a narrative convention that is often seen in both early and revisionist Western films where the conflict between pioneers and those already established on the landscape is played out. The notion of the burn out links back to the attraction phase of the story, as the act unhinges the narrative, pushing it into a certain direction with the possibility of new beginnings or endings, as in Scott Cooper's *Hostiles* (2017) with the opening scenes of close-up shots of the house burning down. This is a dramatic scene often at the start of the film with the home character established as the central protagonist wherein a rival group violate and penetrate the homestead, as in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), where the home is burnt to the ground and the inhabitants either killed or taken. This is then the catalyst for the landscape revenge narrative that becomes central to the film where Ethan (John Wayne) revenges the death of the mother and the kidnapping of the daughters. By contrast, the house burning down at the end of the film signifies a permanent spectacular climax, as in Carl Pierson's *The New Frontier* (1935) where the house and town are burnt down by opposing forces.

Occasionally the film narrative would be built around the constraints of the film's production. From a cinematic perspective, the burning of the home space was sometimes just woven into the narrative due to the simple fact that the land where the film was shot had to be returned to its natural state. This is certainly true for Clint Eastwood's *High Plains Drifter* (1973), where at the end of the film the entire town is destroyed by fire. At the start of the film, the drifter (Clint Eastwood) wanders into a small town. The location of Lake Mono was chosen for its photogenic qualities, though the site is 300 miles away from the Hollywood studio where the film's production was based. 150,000 feet of timber was used to build the fictional town of Lago (which is taken from the Spanish word for a lake or body of water), which was fully destroyed within the last scenes of the film. The site is linked historically to the Indigenous Kutzadikas people and remains a conservation site today.



Fig.163: Still from *The Searchers* (1956).

Similarly, in the final season of the Western television drama series *The Little House On The Prairie* (Michael Landon, NBC), the location had to be cleared at the end of production. The filming for this series was conducted in the Simi Valley in California, a location of pioneer settlement in the 1800s. In the final series, entitled *The Last Farewell* (1984), the townspeople of the fictional hamlet Walnut Grove<sup>68</sup> decide to blow up their town rather than hand it over to a corrupt land baron. The production company had filmed there for over ten years and leased the land from the Getty Oil company and the Newhall Land and Development Corporation with an agreement that when filming finished the location would be restored to its original state. The whole set was dynamited under the guise of a farewell storyline, but the *little house* itself that was said to represent the home of pioneer and diarist Laura Ingalls Wilder was left intact as a tourist attraction. It was sadly destroyed by wildfire in July 2004 and no trace can be seen of it now, with the area subsequently developed for housing. In the process, the site has changed from 19<sup>th</sup> Century pioneer housing to a mediated representation of housing and now back to a physical landscape of modern dwellings.



Fig.164: Still from *High Plains Drifter* (1973).

68. The real Walnut Grove is a city in Redwood County, Minnesota.





Fig.165: Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

## CONCLUSION

The body of research presented in this thesis employs both theory and practice-based methodologies to offer a critical reflection on the historical Western American home and its representation within the Western film genre. The thesis has been constructed to allow for the reader to integrate theoretical and practical elements either together or separately. My contribution to knowledge extends an established body of knowledge through in-depth research into one film genre that could be utilised and expanded upon by other scholars and applied to different genres. The focus on links between the historical and mediated forms of the home offers a unique resource, providing new insights and critical reflection on accepted historical and fictional narratives. My second contribution to knowledge is based around a comparison between the historical and mediated forms of the home, with a practical work in the form of a series of quilts highlighting different visual tropes and conventions therein.

As a cultural and symbolic convention of the American home, the quilt references the female and the notion of craft, within a mediated form that crosses from the private to the public. The quilt as an object carries its own mythology linked to industrialisation and American patriotism, along with methods of self-sufficiency and pioneer settlement. The quilt became the perfect vehicle through which to freeze frame, taking the film images out of their time-based context to facilitate a much deeper contemplation. This practice allows the craft itself to drive the production of the work towards an almost meditative act of looking. This process helped me to understand the close looking of both theoretical and visual material. My research processes also offered a personal sense of reflection regarding how I define myself in relation to the work. The meditative process of quilt construction allowed personal space for me to evaluate various fragments of the project.

As a form of expanded photographic practice, my quilt making relates to several lines of enquiry. It has shifted the photographic frame and construction of images in which to tell stories and represent discourses on the domestic house and the landscape within the Western film. In doing so, it offers an artistic approach that is different from the male-led, combative narrative tropes that have been associated with Western migration, from the original paper by Fredrick Jackson Turner to the fictional narrative within the Western film.

Three distinct areas of study are highlighted in this research: the relationship between architecture of the US West and its mediated form; technological, cultural and social methodologies underpinning the representation of the home in the Western film; and the way the home space supports the film narrative in the framing of scenes. Together, these three approaches indicate how the domestic space has been underplayed as central to the migration West, both within historical records and Western film. This thesis has therefore sought to investigate and confront this under representation, opening up a new field of research.



It is clear to see that the frontier home space was fundamental not only to the mapping and settlement of the West, but also the re-enactment of that settlement within Western film. However, as this research has highlighted, the importance of the home space has been largely erased from history – and historical fiction – in favour of the iconic landscape and masculine endeavours. This research has argued that what the Western film genre presents is a mythical landscape that bears little resemblance to the physical geography of the United States. In Western film, a fictional ‘pioneer’ or ‘Wild West’ landscape reflects the concept of the American West as a space for travelling across or circumvention – or perhaps perilousness and conflict – and not a place of settlement. Early Westerns followed the expansion narrative of historian Fredrick Jackson Turner, reflecting a mythologised (male) endeavour to conquer the landscape through a combination of loose historical facts and storytelling, accumulating in the production of a fictional, generic Western space.

As noted in Chapter One, the Homestead Acts (1862-1890) afforded expansion and the construction of new settlements across the Western States. During this period, many architectural changes would have happened as families either moved on to different properties or added to the structure of their home. This evolution of architectural styles and conventions is referenced in museum sites, with sections recorded as having been added to the buildings over a period, but the same progression is not reflected in film. Cabins and sod houses were often constructed in haste and then replaced with other structures, so the mismatch of buildings within one evolving town or city space would have contained tents, dug outs, basic cabins or sod houses alongside more complex structures. Again, this evolution is rarely referenced within the Western film, with only one style or convention of building depicted as static and unchanging. The only contrast to this occurred in revisionist films (notably the ‘Spaghetti Westerns’ of the 1960s and early 1970s) where more than one culture was being represented within a rhizomatic, fictional space.

This research has identified several material properties and stylistic tropes employed in the construction of the home in the Western States, with an emphasis on interior architecture and the physical conventions and everyday lived patterns of domestic space. It highlighted the fact that while early architecture followed the same design principles as its European counterparts, building methods and styles changed over time to represent a deliberate philosophical and political mythology of Americanisation following the expansion of the Union and settlement of the US West. Additionally, I have highlighted how the Western film genre borrowed its narrative formula from popular literature, journalism and other mediated forms, including dime novels. Early Westerns repeated familiar ideals that the audience could follow, reflecting the same ensemble of characters along with architectural tropes including the main street, saloon, jail or church, with homesteads and small farm settlements placed beyond the town space. It is this landscape that the audience relates to as belonging to the Western, with a sanitised log cabin or sod house representing lived domestic experience regardless of the geographical territory being represented. Within this set of conventions, the

cabin or sod house acts as a signpost to the past; like the life story museum, the past is packaged and sold as a fading social folklore and the disappearance of a period in history. The cinematic Western home is presented as a stage set, a replica of the built environment. Home in this sense is an ideological prop to support fictional storytelling that often denies historical reality. This generic depiction was repeated over the timespan of production of the popular Western film (typically 1930 to 1960), a static representation that does not change.

I have maintained that these inconsistencies were incorporated in the Western genre for several reasons. Firstly, with little historical reference to the home to draw upon and the narrative pulled from other mediated forms, the home is no more than a backdrop, a vessel to aid narration. Meanwhile, the home indicates a stopping point or narrative pause and creates a clear distinction between tamed and untamed space. Secondly, since cinema is enjoyed and consumed within the urban environment, the audience is often unfamiliar with the ‘real’ Western landscape, allowing film to create a mythological image centred on a limited palette of stylistic conventions.

My research also explored the tropes and conventions of the home space that reflected social codes and audience world view at the time of film’s production. Technological processes and the development of film as a medium did not shift the overall visual representation of the home space, but film – being a hot medium with rich sensory data – is the perfect vessel in which to infuse propaganda and the portrayal of stereotypical ideologies. Western films produced during the economic boom in the United States following the Second World War moved beyond the use of the home for purely narration purposes. As consumption shifted, the home space also became a vessel in which to showcase home trends and branding, taking its inspiration from popular magazines such as *House Beautiful*, the static image incorporated into the moving frame.

This thesis has also aimed to readdress the importance of the melodrama to the Western film and its appeal to a female audience by virtue of the notion of the everyday, offering meanings through domestic rituals that are performed within the interior space of the home. The visual conventions that communicate shared experience within the repetition of chores often act as a support for the main narrative. Although the female is often depicted as a main character, she remains the custodian of the home space and her character is placed in domestic roles that typically act as support for the male protagonist and the external landscape. Women are not portrayed in an active light, and they often do not feature well. The role of the female character in Westerns is often that of purely a narrative anchor. Revisionist Westerns of the late 1960s and beyond reflected contemporary social agendas of class and race to re-situate the original Western narrative. However, while we may well see women playing the protagonist role in modern Westerns, the female character is still usually related to the domestic home space and reliant on male support or rescue.



I have also argued that the visual image of the Western cinematic home was not solely devised from historical records, but also drew from popular culture including photographs taken from those who migrated west such as Solomon Butcher. These visual conventions were supplemented with archives and diaries kept by those who settled in the West along with advertising and newspaper images and progressed into popular culture through dime novels and comics before directly influencing Western film. Coming full circle, these images have become standard representations of what US migration was perceived to be like, to the extent that modern day historians and architects have drawn on film's representation to rebuild or redevelop historical Western towns as heritage sites evoking their former semi-fictionalised 'Wild West' status.

The journey through the PhD gave me the opportunity to engage with practice, leading to the creation of six quilts for the final submission. I also explored other forms of practical research that centred on engagement with local communities, taking part in and running workshops, creating local exhibitions and making visits to craft and sewing hubs in the United States and the United Kingdom. The establishment of links between quilting groups in Plymouth, UK and Huntsville, Texas has offered opportunities to extend the notion of creative exchange well beyond the scope of the PhD itself.

### Opportunities For Further Research

Several opportunities have presented themselves as the work has developed. My research right at the beginning involved an analysis of different mediated forms in relation to the US Western home space that included the notion of home in literature and in historical country or traditional folk songs. While a decision was made to narrow the focus to film, a wider range of popular depictions of the Western 'home' can now be explored beyond the submission of the PhD. I also wish to further explore the notion of the everyday that acts as a catalyst to embed the notion of the familiar within different areas of popular culture, for instance the use of comics as a familiar object to aid teaching and learning.

Methods of comparison between archive, historical and fictionalised film narrative could be applied to other areas of study such as different genres of film. Different forms of practice would be based on specificity of the context. The use of the quilt as a form and a vehicle for communication is very specific to history, locality and the cultural context of the Western. The context of research into other film genres would change the artistic or practical method to reflect the specificity of the genre under investigation.

Working with the rangers at Bodie State Park, it became evident that the various wall hangings which date back from the 1880s right through to the time of the town's last inhabitants in the 1960s have never been studied or archived. I would like to work with the Bodie Foundation to develop an historical record of the site's material culture. The notion of the pioneer spirit and the American dream of independence also runs deep within contemporary American culture and can be seen in the naming of streets and

businesses. I am interested in exploring how this theme still manifests itself within the sense of the everyday and the built environment.

Over the duration of my PhD research, I developed three exhibitions featuring various iterations of my practical work, including photography, film essays and textile works. This trajectory is now being extended through a prestigious solo exhibition at the Wynne Home Arts Centre in Huntsville, Texas, an historical house that acts as the town's arts centre. In many ways, this is my own contribution to the rhizomatic mythological Western; research from the US transferred to the UK and re-situated back within the United States.

Additional future research relates to non-academic spaces relating to traditional quilting and women in the craft tradition. Through the process of the research, I came to realise that working through practice-based research is a collective endeavour, and that a contribution to knowledge is communal, drawing on the work of others that contribute to a collective understanding of the subject. That collective understanding exists beyond academia: for example, the museum staff, the site rangers and the quilting groups all contribute, hence this body of research is not just designed to exist in an academic space. In this light, I have started an online site that encourages quilt makers in both the UK and the USA to exchange ideas and thoughts around the production of their quilts and to share information and possible exhibition spaces.



Fig.166: Sarah Dryden. Photograph by Steve Hogg.





Fig.167: Bodie State Park, California. Photograph by Sarah Dryden.

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*A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), directed by Sergio Leone

*Across The Plains* (1939), directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet

*All That Heaven Allows* (1955), directed by Douglas Sirk

*Annie Get Your Gun* (1950), directed by George Sidney

*Annie Oakley* (1935), directed by George Stevens

*As It Is In Life* (1910), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Battle Of The Alamo* (1960), directed by John Wayne

*Battle Of Elder* (1913), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Bend Of The River* (1952), directed by Anthony Mann

*Billy The Kid* (1930), directed by King Vidor

*Billy The Kid* (2013), directed by Christopher Forbes

*Birth Of A Nation* (1915), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Brokeback Mountain* (1997), directed by Ang Lee

*Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* (1969), directed by George Roy Hill

*Calamity Jane* (1953), directed by David Butler

*California* (1910), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Chisum* (1970), directed by Andrew V. McLagen

*Cimarron* (1931), directed by Wesley Ruggles

*Django* (1966), directed by Sergio Corbucci

*Django Unchained* (2012), directed by Quentin Tarantino

*Dodge City* (1939), directed by Michael Curtiz

*Dodge City* (1939), directed by Michael Curtiz

*The Drifter* (1932), directed by William O'Connor

*Duel In The Sun* (1946), directed by Vidor and Brower

*Gangs Of New York* (2002), directed by Martin Scorsese

*Gone With The Wind* (1939), directed by Victor Fleming

*Hells Heroes* (1929), directed by William Wyler

*Her First Adventure* (1908), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Her Mothering Heart* (1913), directed by D.W. Griffith

*High Noon* (1952), directed by Fred Zinnemann

*High Plains Drifter* (1973), directed by Clint Eastwood

*Home In Oklahoma* (1946), directed by William Witney

*Honour Of The Range* (1934), directed by Alan James

*Hostiles* (2017), directed by Scott Cooper

*Intolerance* (1916), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Jane Got A Gun* (2016), directed by Gavin O'Connor

*Kidnapping By Indians* (1899), directed by Sagar Michell and James Kenyon

*Last Drop of Water* (1911), directed by D.W. Griffith

*Law Man* (1971), directed by Michael Winner

*Man Of The West* (1958), directed by Anthony Mann

*Nevada Smith* (1966), directed by Henry Hathaway

*New Frontier* (1935), directed by Carl Pierson

*Oklahoma* (1955), directed by Fred Zinnemann

*Once Upon A Time In The West* (1968), directed by Sergio Leone

*Paint Your Wagon* (1969), directed by Joshua Logan



*Ramona* (1910), directed by D.W. Griffith  
*Repas d’Indian* (1895), directed by the Lumiere Brothers  
*Riders Of The Purple Hart* (1918), directed by Frank Lloyd  
*Rolling Home to Texas* (1940), directed by Albert Herman  
*Romance Of A Jewess* (1908), directed by D.W. Griffith  
*San Antonio* (1945), directed by David Butler and Robert Florey  
*Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* (1954), directed by Stanley Donen  
*Shane* (1953), directed by George Stevens  
*Stagecoach* (1939), directed by John Ford  
*The Alamo* (2004), directed by John Lee Hancock  
*The Ballad Of Buster Scruggs* (2018), directed by the Coen Brothers  
*The Big Country* (1958), directed by William Wyler  
*The Big Trail* (1930), directed by Raoul Walsh  
*The California Trail* (1933), directed by Lambert Hillyer  
*The Covered Wagon* (1923), directed by James Cruze  
*The Crimson Trail* (1935), directed by Alfred Raboch  
*The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* (1966), directed by Sergio Leone  
*The Great Train Robbery* (1903), directed by Edwin S. Porter  
*The Green Berets* (1968), directed by John Wayne  
*The Homesman* (2014), directed by Tommy Lee Jones  
*The Iron Horse* (1924), directed by John Ford  
*The Lone Ranger* (2013), directed by Gore Verbinski  
*The Lonely Trail* (1935), directed by Joseph Kane  
*The Magnificent Seven* (1960), directed by John Sturges  
*The Massacre* (1912), directed by D.W. Griffith  
*The New Frontier* (1935), directed by Carl Pierson  
*The Pioneers* (1903), directed by Wallace McCutcheon  
*The Pioneers* (1916), directed by Franklyn Barret  
*The Plainsman* (1936), directed by Cecil B DeMille  
*The Renunciation* (1909), directed by D.W. Griffith  
*The Return Of Draw Egan* (1917), directed by William S. Hart  
*The Searchers* (1956), directed by John Ford  
*The Tin Star* (1957), directed by Anthony Mann  
*The Trail Beyond* (1934), directed by Robert Bradbury  
*The Unforgiven* (1960), directed by John Huston  
*The Virginian* (1914), directed by Cecil B DeMille  
*The Virginian* (1923), directed by Tom Forman  
*The Virginian* (1929), directed by Victor Fleming  
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*The Virginian* (2000), directed by Bill Pullman  
*The Virginian* (2014), directed by Thomas Makowski  
*The Wind* (1928), directed by Victor Sjöström  
*Trail To Mercy* (2015), directed by Jared Isham  
*True Grit* (1969), directed by Henry Hathaway  
*True Grit* (2010), directed by the Coen Brothers  
*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1903), directed by Edwin Porter  
*Vampire Indiana* (1913), directed by the Lumiere Brothers  
*Vera Cruz* (1954), directed by Robert Aldrich

*Virginia City* (1940), directed by Michael Curtiz  
*Wagon Train* (1940), directed by Edward Killy  
*Wells Fargo* (1937), directed by Frank Lloyd

Television Documentaries

*California Gold* (1992), Huell Hower Production  
*Forgotten Planet* (2011), Flight 33 Production Company  
*Ghosts Of California* (2003), Lynn Stevenson

Television Shows

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*Father Knows Best* (1954-1960), NBC  
*Gunsmoke* (1955-1975), CBS  
*Have Gun – Will Travel* (1957-1963), CBS  
*High Chaparral* (1967-1971), NBC  
*I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), CBS  
*The Cisco Kid* (1950-1956), ZIV Television Programs  
*The Donna Reed Show* (1958-1966), American Broadcasting Company  
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*The Honeymooners* (1955-1956), CBS  
*The Little House On The Prairie* (1974-1983), NBC  
*The Lone Ranger* (1949-1957), American Broadcasting Company  
*The Phil Silvers Show* (1955-1959), CBS  
*The Rifleman* (1958-1963), ABC Four Stars Production  
*The Virginian* (1962-1971), Paramount Pictures  
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*The International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Taylor and Francis  
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Archives and Study Centres

American Museum & Gardens, Bath, UK  
American Library of Congress  
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British Library American Memory section  
Centre for American Studies, University of Kent  
Centre For Studies At Home, the Geffrye Museum, London  
Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum  
Harry Ransom Centre, the University of Texas, Austin  
Little Hollywood Kanab Museum of Movie Sets, Kanab, Utah  
Museum of Domestic Architecture, Middlesex University  
S. George Ellsworth Photographic Collection 1940-1995  
Senator John Heinz History Centre  
Smithsonian, National Quilt Collection  
Tennessee State Library and Archive  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Utah State University



APPENDICES

Additional practical work can be viewed at sarahdryden.com.

Appendix 1

Original photographic grid system created by Sarah Dryden to support the planning and structuring of ghost town location shoots, 2015.

House / Site Name	Location / Site	Date and Time
Observation and Practical Production Notes		
Historical / Archived Documents Available		
Narrative / Fiction References		
Notes on Shooting / Recording / Lighting		
Similarities and Differences Observed		

Appendix 2

A number of other architectural conventions, including the mezzanine and the cellar, are frequently used in Western film, but are not considered directly relevant to this body of research.

Stairs and Mezzanine

Stairs within the Western film are mainly seen in public spaces such as the local hotel or saloon as these buildings demand multiple levels. Occasionally the wooden or sod house would be seen with an internal mezzanine, a raised platform between the floor and the ceiling that does not count as an additional floor as it is not factored into the building’s square footage. The term comes from the Italian mezzanine – its function is to provide additional space, light and air. Within the Western, both the stairs and the mezzanine are used for the narrative function of conflict that happens inside of the home space, with the stairs representing an area of movement against a static structure, the tumbling down the stairs of a character, shot, pushed or losing footing, for example in Carl Pierson’s *The New Frontier* (1935) or Andrew McLaglen’s *Chisum* (1970). In revisionist Western films that are situated outside of the US West (such as the so-called ‘Spaghetti Westerns’ of the 1960s), the position of the stairs changes in relation to regional architectural differences. The cinematic home in these films often includes Spanish architectural influences, with the position of stairs changing to the exterior of the building, for example in Sergio Leone’s *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964).

The Cellar

A cellar is an architectural space positioned below the ground floor of the house, not used by the family on the day-to-day basis, traditionally opened with a hatch. This space is used and portrayed in Westerns as a storage space for the food crops, fresh and bottled, as seen in Gavin O’Connor’s *Jane Got a Gun* (2016). It is also used generically in film as a hiding space: the Western is no different, with the space used for family members to hide when unwanted visitors are approaching or attacking, for example in Ray Milland’s *A Man Alone* (1955). As Andrews et al. note, the cinematic convention of the cellar or basement has a long history;

*In terms of its location, the basement is obviously marginalized, not only through its position within the structure of the house, but also operates as a carnivalesque space that provides the prospect of temporary liberation from external forces.*  
(Andrews et al. 2017: 46)





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